

Mainly about books

Like every other interest, industrial archaeology attracts books. Books are written, books are published and elderly books of more-than-usual interest are re-published. Unlike many hobbies, sports and general interest subjects, IA does not attract too many 'coffee-table' tomes. Quite the contrary for many of the book-notices which come our way, hoping for a brief mention, concern booklets, pamphlets (call them what you will) restricted (usually by finance) to a small number of pages and a soft-back binding. We also hear of quite expensive books, occasionally running into a vast number of pages, which are consciously written for a small and selective audience making their viability a somewhat doubtful proposition. But which ever category they fall into, there is one thing all IA books have in common. They are written by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts, and it shows.

On a purely personal note I enjoy books which are produced with loving care, to a high design standard, taking into account all the traditional typographical guidelines, line-length, leading (the distance between subsequent lines), type-size and the use of 'white-space', but am bound to admit that these are, sadly, too infrequently seen.

How pleasant then to be able to begin our short 'book-review' section with a small, paper-back, volume, A5 in format, 104 pages in length and at the modest price of £3.90 which is literally a joy to hold and fulfils most of these criteria. *Stone and Steam in the Black Mountains* is actually a reprint for it was first issued in

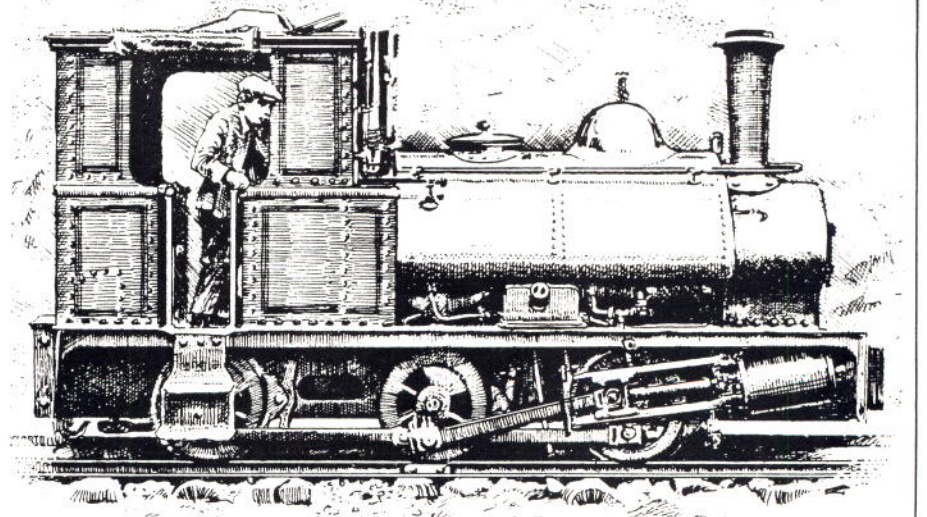
1975 but has recently been published in a revised form by Bloreng Books of Abergavenny, Gwent. Written by David Tipper and superbly illustrated by Michael Blackmore (35 maps and drawings) and a collection

of 25 carefully chosen vintage photographs, it has been edited by Chris Barber and put together by Eagle Image and Design. Everyone who had a hand in it can be proud of the result. I can do no better than



The Surveyor, John Francis Jupp

The Contractor, William Underwood



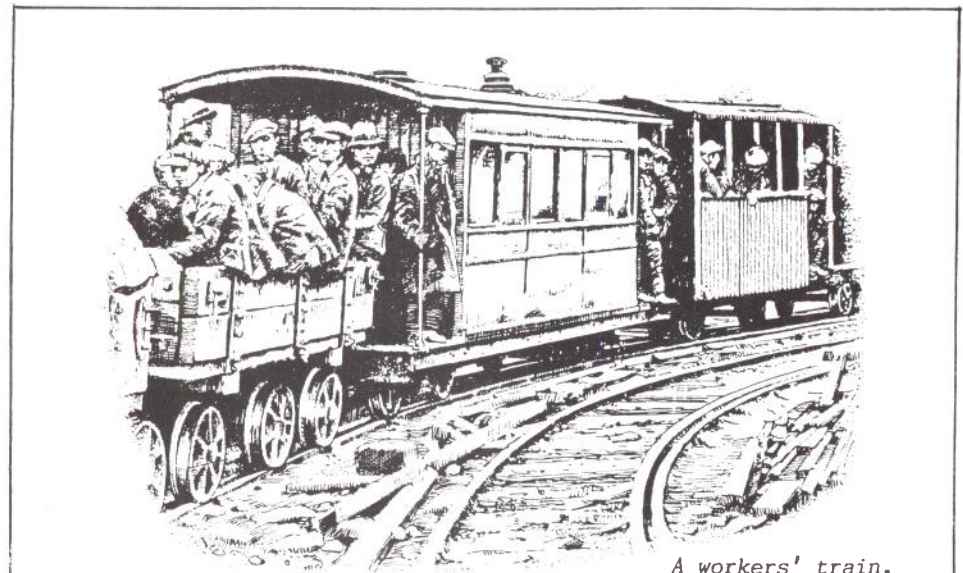
One of the locomotives, Duckinfield

quote from David Tipper's introduction to describe the subject matter and let a few of the illustrations speak for themselves.

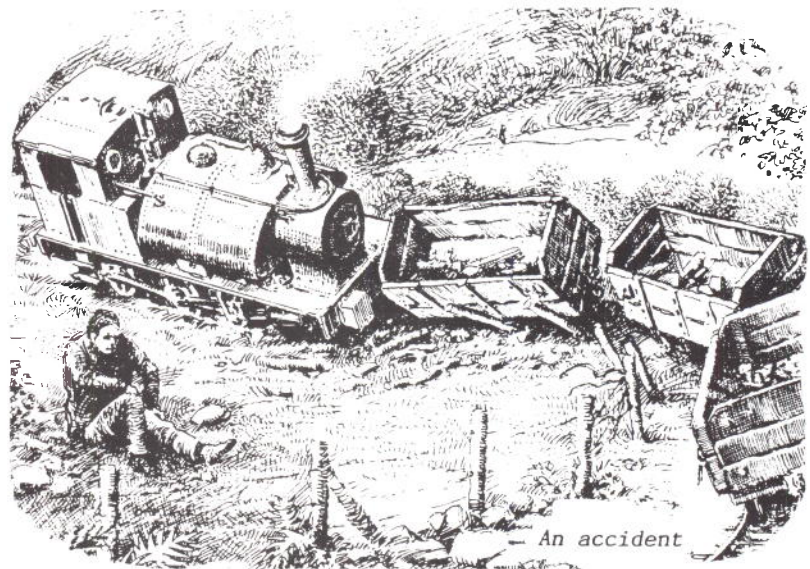
'*Stone and Steam in the Black Mountains* is an account of the Water Works construction carried out by the former Abertillery and District Water Board between the years of 1911 and 1928. It includes a description of the Board's road and railway route into the heart of the mountains. The latter was never officially authorised because it was considered to be impossible to operate. However, it had to be built to enable construction of the Grwyne Fawr Reservoir to proceed and remained in use for some fifteen years. Today few people can still remember the laying of the pipeline, the village built at Blaen-y-cwm for the work people and the train that transported men and materials to the site. It is to them that this book is dedicated'.

The Merthyr Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway and Branches, W W Taska, Oxford Railway Publishing Company, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1LL, 1986, hardback, £14.95. This railway was essentially a mineral line with more than 5,000 tons of coal a day passing over it at its peak. Although it generated a respectable revenue from passage traffic and carried an extensive amount of excursion traffic at holiday periods, mineral traffic was its life-blood. The railway was connected to many of the large ironworks in South Wales and the traffic included ironstone, limestone and coal plus the finished products from the ironworks. The line was leased and worked by the London and North Western Railway from its opening in 1882. The railway together with its subsidiaries formed a vital part of the LNWR although cut off from the rest of the LNWR system. The 150 page book is profusely illustrated not only with pictures of locomotives but also of stations, line-side features, original graphic material and diagrams of the route. Altogether a very well researched publication of considerable interest to historians in South Wales.

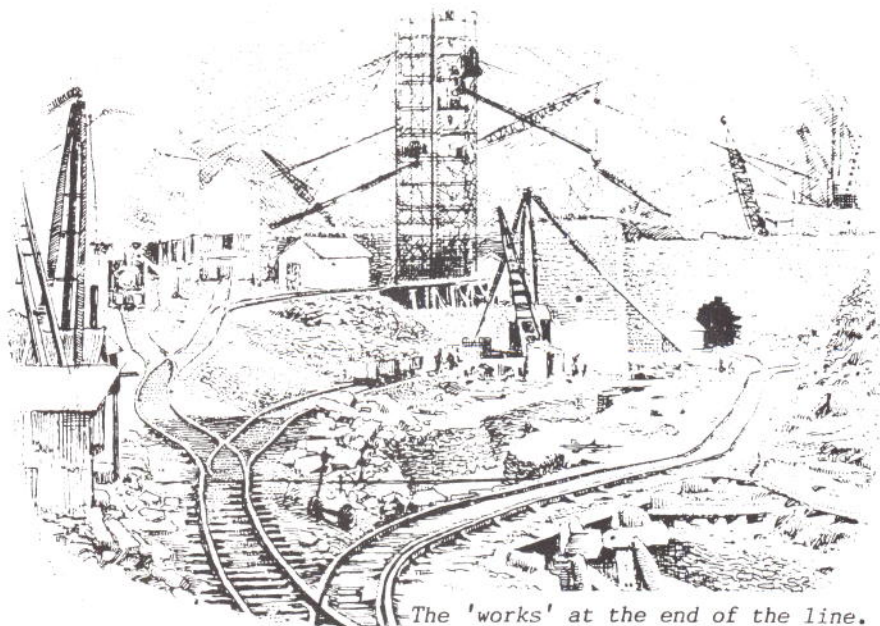
Historic Farm Buildings Study, Sources of Information. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food published a booklet on sources of information for those interested in the study of historic farms as the Ministry is increasingly concerned with rural conservation. It was undertaken by Mr Nigel Harvey who started work in 1984 and was assisted by a committee consisting of Dr Henry



A workers' train.



- An accident



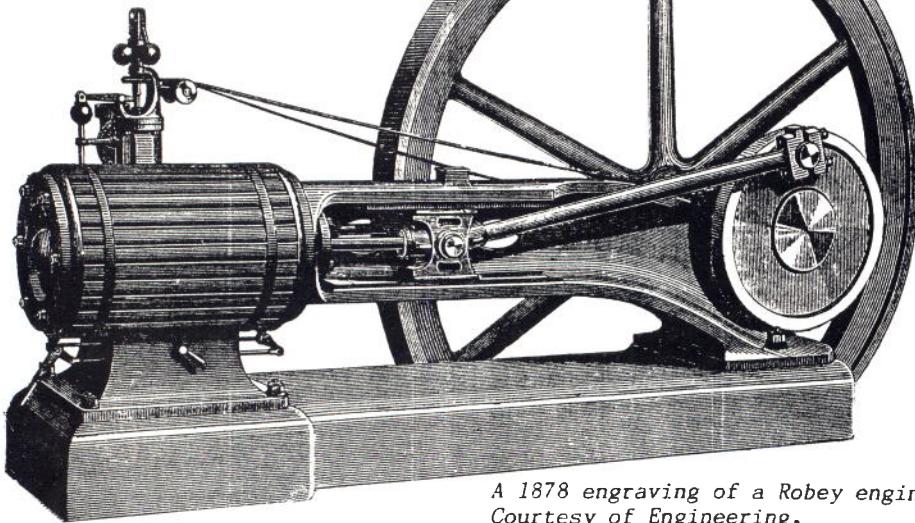
The 'works' at the end of the line.

Cleere CBA, Miss Francis Campbell, Ministry of Agriculture, Mr John Weller of the Historic Farm Buildings Group and Dr Philip Dixon of Nottingham University. It reviews the policies of Central

Government and then undertakes to note the various national surveys and studies that have been carried out together with local surveys on a county basis. There are interesting conclusions and a

bibliography of published and reference sources. Copies of the booklet are obtainable from the Project Officer, Miss Francis Campbell, Principal Architect, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Land and Water Service, Farm Buildings Group, Great Westminster House, Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AE at £5.

Robert Robey founded Robey and Company, engineers and steam engine builders in 1854. Forty years later 'upwards of 14,000 Robey engines were at work and seven years later the number had reached 21,000'. Today very few remain able to be 'steamed' but interest in the products of Robeys of Lincoln has never been higher. Interest is one thing, the enthusiasm to transmit this into print, or to be more precise, into a superb set of pictures of the products of this famous firm, is something quite different, and one which most people would shy away from. P J M Southward of Chesterfield has written and arranged *Some early Robey Steam Engines*, and published in a large format (A4 with fold-out plates and a centre spread showing a giant cross compound) running to 44 pages and including fifty-four photographs.



A 1878 engraving of a Robey engine, Courtesy of Engineering.

These pictures of engines built by Robeys between 1874 and 1885 were taken in the days when photographs meant tripods, rising front large format cameras, lengthy exposures, infinite patience and pin-sharp glass plate negatives. These produced on coated paper by a printer who obviously relished the job in hand, have produced an excellent result. Apart from illustrations of stationary steam engines ranging from single cylinder to one which was rated at 650 horse power, this book contains descriptions and drawings of the various valve types employed and explanations (and drawings) of the Proell and Richardson governors. It also contains photographs of Robey steam

locomotives, portable engines, a steam crane and a traction engine. In all an outstanding buy which can be obtained from 6 Kennet Vale, Chesterfield S40 4EW at £3.90 including postage and packing.

South Wiltshire Industrial Archaeology Society. Recent publications of this Society include their historical monograph number 10 on *Medieval Engineering in Salisbury Cathedral*. This is written by *William G C Backinsell*, and describes the daringly new structural techniques and illustrates their successes and shortcomings in surmounting the problems they faced. This is obtainable at 75p plus 13p postage.

Historical monograph number 11 which concerns the *Maltings in Salisbury*, is written by *Douglas Jackson* and concerns itself with Malthouse Lane in Salisbury. Although the street now leads to the theatre, the City Hall and shopping area not so long ago it was the way to Williams Brothers Maltings which despite covering

an area of 3½ acres seems to be remembered vaguely, even by Salisbury's older inhabitants. This monograph describes the buildings which stood on the site for a century and the process of malting and is obtainable at 90p plus 20p postage from *Douglas Jackson*, 2 Byways Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2QS

Swindon Works, Apprentice in Steam. *Ken Gibbs*, Oxford Publishing Company, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset, 1986, £10.95. Renowned throughout the world as a centre for engineering excellence, the Swindon Works of the former

Great Western Railway, hold a special place in the affections of rail enthusiasts. With its untimely passing in 1986, the famous phrase 'Built in Swindon' will no longer adorn new rolling stock. However the reminiscences of former Swindon apprentice, *Ken Gibbs*, rekindle the days of Great Western steam and the hustle and bustle of a unique institution. From fitting and turning to locomotive erection, the working practices and craftsmen of Swindon Works are recalled with great nostalgia and affection. There are line drawings by the author and numerous illustrations in black and white.

David Bick is on the way to being recognised as one of the original IA book-writing enthusiasts. Mention of David usually make one think of metal mining in Wales but he has had occasional aberrations. One of these concerned the *Gloucester and Cheltenham Tramroad and the Leckhampton Quarry Line*. This is the classic case of a re-print appearing through a standard reference ceasing to be obtainable. Now it has been revised and enlarged with additional maps and photographs, and can be obtained from the Oakwood Press, PO Box 122, Headington, Oxford at £4.50.

The Old Churches of Snowdonia, *Harold Hughes and Herbert L North*, Republished with additional material by the Snowdonia National Park Society, *Capel Curig, Betws-y-Coed, Gwynedd*, £9.95. Possibly an unusual book to mention in an Industrial archaeological publication, but the social and ecclesiastical history of this part of North Wales is intimately involved with the industrial development of this unique area. The 300 page volume is full of interesting anecdotes and provides fascinating reading.

Preserved Steam Traction, *Eric Sawford*, *Patrick Stephens Ltd.*, Dennington Est, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 2QD, 1985, £6.99, pb. Two and a half thousand traction engines are now restored in this country and many are to be seen at the multitudes of traction engine rallies. The author has assembled over 200 photographs, largely from such rallies, and the text is divided according to manufacturers and includes Aveling, Burrell, Foden, John Fowler, Sentinel and minor builders. There are 160 pages, profuse illustrations with good captions and this book is not only of interest to the enthusiast but also to the student of transport history.