

SUMMER IN SURREY

The venue for the 1990 AIA Annual Conference was the University of Surrey, a yellow brick university established in 1966 but whose roots go back to 1891 when its forerunner, the Battersea Polytechnic Institute, was founded. The site is dominated by the massive brick cathedral, begun in the 1930s using clay dug nearby but not consecrated until 1961.

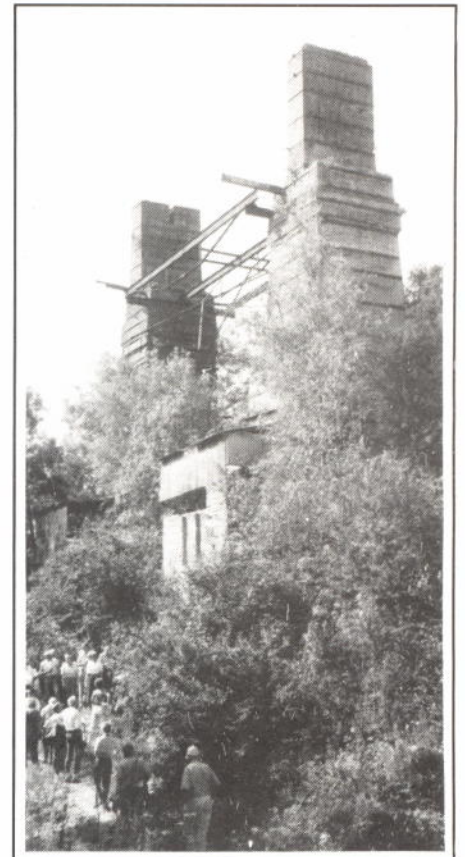
The town (still not a city, despite the cathedral) was described by William Cobbett as 'the most agreeable and happy-looking that I ever saw in my life', and still retains its attractive character despite extensive modern development. The sixteenth-century Guildhall was re-fronted in 1683 when the well-known projecting clock was added. The improvement of the River Wey in 1653 enabled barges to travel from London as far as the town wharf: in 1761 the navigation was extended to Godalming and is still used for pleasure traffic. Although considerable redevelopment has taken place along the riverside, original warehouses remain, converted into offices. Further north, the National Trust, who have owned the Wey Navigation since 1964, are in the process of restoring Dapdune Wharf (see *Bulletin* 17.3) with its timber-clad buildings and capstans for dragging boats out of the water. Guildford Town Mill can best be seen from the tea terrace of the Debenhams store, which is adorned with plastic topiary. Near the Town Bridge is the Treadwheel Crane, man-powered until 1908 for use on Guildford Wharf: the only comparable example in Britain is at Harwich. Also on the river bank is the purpose-built electricity generating station with Rodborough Buildings behind. Currently threatened with

demolition for yet another road scheme, this now derelict structure is thought to be the oldest surviving purpose-built car factory in Britain. It was erected in 1901 for Dennis Brothers, who still manufacture commercial vehicles on the outskirts.

All these local attractions were visited in the course of the conference and explained to delegates by the enthusiastic members of the Surrey Industrial History Group. Lectures over the weekend introduced the industrial archaeology of the county, and delegates had a varied choice of visits on the Saturday and Sunday afternoons. These included Brooklands Race Track and Airfield where a museum trust has now been set up to conserve and interpret this fascinating aspect of twentieth-century industrial archaeology on a 30 acres site. A second group visiting Godalming and Chilworth received a civic welcome at each site. In the grounds of Westbrook Mills in Godalming is stored the Fourneyron turbine which SIHG excavated out of the Catteshall paper mills. The components, normally submerged under water, can easily be seen in their present 'exploded' position, and it is hoped that Westbrook Mills will provide a permanent home for this important artifact. At Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, Mrs Mary Lloyd-Jones, the Mayor of Guildford, accompanied delegates around the site, complete with chain of office. A third group, some clad in boiler suits and hard hats, visited the Godstone Hearthstone Quarries and were warned to place their hands only on the nearside of the access manhole, to avoid the traffic on the A22. Since this group included both the AIA Secretary and the *Bulletin* Editor, the written output of the AIA could have been considerably reduced!

A sherry reception provided by Surrey County Council preceded a dinner graced by several important guests, including Sandy Brigstocke (Chairman of Surrey County Council), the Viscountess Hanworth (President of Surrey Archaeological Society) and Admiral Sir Jeremy Black (Commander in Chief of the Home Fleet). Admiral Black had previously opened the Chatley Heath Semaphore Tower to the public (see *Bulletin* 17.1), and SIHG presented their annual conservation award to Sandy Brigstocke in acknowledgement of the work carried out there by Surrey County Council.

On Sunday morning, the formal business of the AIA was concluded by the Rolt Memorial Lecture on 'Wind Engines', by J Kenneth Major. During the afternoon, one group visited the maltings at Farnham, which have been conver-



Dwarfing the delegates: the Dietzch limekilns at Betchworth (the girder structure was the end of an aerial ropeway)

ted into a community centre, and the private collection of agricultural paraphernalia at the Old Kiln Museum, Tilford. SIHG are restoring a gantry crane from the Thames Ditton Statue Foundry which is stored here. The rest of the delegates visited the centre of Guildford and then walked through the sylvan delights of Painshill Park, created by Charles Hamilton in the mid eighteenth century. The water supply to his lakes and fountains was drawn from the River Mole by a 35 feet waterwheel driving three piston pumps by means of beams. This, together with other monuments on the estate, have recently been restored with expert advice from Kenneth Major.

Many delegates now returned home, leaving a gradually diminishing remnant of hardened enthusiasts to enjoy several more days of excellent lectures and visits in what many of them had assumed a barren area. The weather continued to smile on them. The Sunday evening lecture session was chaired by the

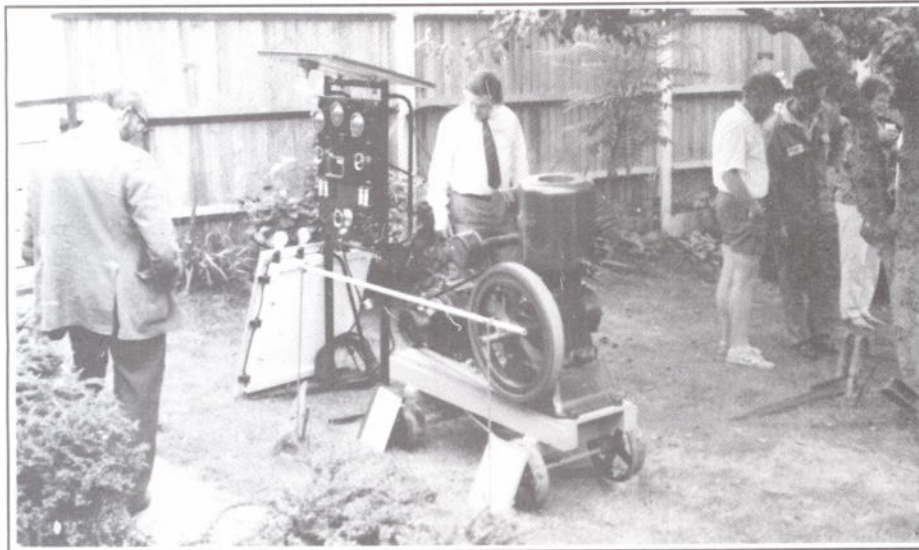


A coal duty boundary post at Godstone Road, Whyteleaf



Conference delegates at the Beehive terminal of 1936, Gatwick Airport.

Photo: Gatwick Airport PR Office



A garden of delights: conference delegates mill among Tony Harcombe's stationary engines at Westcott



Owen Ward examines an edge runner at Chilworth Gunpowder Works whilst other minds wander

Mayor of Guildford, who lived alongside the Basingstoke Canal, the restoration of which was the subject of the first lecture. The assembled body were then enlivened by Ian Wakeford's talk on the lack of 'body room' in London which led to the designation of Woking as the 'dead centre' of England. A huge cemetery at Brookwood, served by railway from Waterloo, was opened in 1854 by the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company.

2 There were two stations, to serve both Noncon-

formists and Anglicans, each with mourners' waiting and reception rooms. Obviously, more single tickets than returns were sold; and season tickets were unobtainable! The lecture showed that industrial archaeologists have finally emulated their colleagues in prehistoric archaeology in their obsession with the dead!

After pursuing cast iron grave markers across the expanses of Brookwood Cemetery, the nearby Basingstoke Canal, now resurrected, was explored exhaustively and a second

canal visit made to Dapdune Wharf. The highlight of the day was probably the semaphore tower at Chatley Heath, where **Welcome AIA** was relayed to delegates in code. Semaphore was first extensively used during the Napoleonic Wars when there was a serious threat of a French invasion. Chatley Heath is one of 15 stations set up by the Admiralty between London and Portsmouth, enabling messages to be sent between the two places in 15 minutes. The system was replaced by electric telegraph in the 1840s and the tower was inhabited until 1963. It has been restored to celebrate the centenary of Surrey County Council.

On the following day, a different system was used to welcome AIA delegates, blazoned in gas lights outside Sugg Lighting. First established as gas engineers in London in 1807, they moved to Crawley in the 1960s where they still manufacture a wide range of gas lighting fittings in traditional designs. Restoration work is also carried out on existing gas installations and AIA members will be familiar with the Sugg gas fittings in the New Inn at Blists Hill. Lowfield Heath post mill, the next site to be visited, moved from Surrey to West Sussex as a result of boundary changes in 1974. It is now back in Surrey, having been moved from its original site following the expansion of Gatwick Airport. The restored mill was officially opened by Princess Alexandra in April 1990. Two sails remain to be fitted. The final visit of the day was to look at twentieth-century industrial archaeology in the form of the early buildings at Gatwick Airport, particularly the Beehive Building, which was the original terminal of 1936.

Derek Renn's lecture on Tuesday evening illustrated the wide range of mileposts and other markers found on Surrey turnpikes. Of particular interest are the coal duty posts which marked the perimeter at which duty was charged on coal entering London. This was a device introduced to raise money for rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1666 but only lapsed in 1889. The present markers are alongside both roads and railways, since they date from the last time the boundary was defined in 1861. Alan Crocker, a founder member of the Paper Historians group, then described the important Surrey industry of paper-making, particularly the mills alongside the River Tillingbourne.

The following day's visits covered a variety of industries, beginning with a surviving hand-made tile works, Swallow's of Cranleigh. They manufacture the roofing and cladding tiles which are still a feature of vernacular building in Surrey. AIA members were invited to try their hands at the moulding process. Tony Harcombe's collection of stationary internal combustion engines provided a fascinating interlude before lunch. His first acquisition was made in 1967 and the collection has now expanded to 26 units, plus associated electrical generating plant and pumps. Betchworth Chalk Pits provided the adventurous with climbing opportunities on the variety of kilns, now disused. These included conventional draw kilns but also the free-standing Dietzch kilns and the unused Smidth kiln, both designed to pre-heat the stone. More efficient combustion was ensured by the continuous feed of fuel into a limited burning zone. The day concluded at the oldest working windmill in Britain, the Outwood post mill near Redhill, which was built in 1665. The Thomas brothers have owned the

mill since 1962 and continue their work of dedicated maintenance, keeping visitors entertained by their humorous anecdotes.

Wednesday evening's lectures introduced the visits scheduled for the following day to sites of twentieth-century interest. Martin Peters, Director of the Royal Aerospace Establishment at Farnborough, discussed its development and Colonel John Lane, Deputy Commandant at Aldershot, described the transition of a boggy moor into the first purpose-built military town in Britain since the Roman period. At Farnborough the following day, frustrated AIA photographers adorned with security badges were faced with the problem of huge but redundant twentieth-century structures like

the Concorde test facility: should it be listed? Visits were also made to the two wind tunnels, the recent pressurised one dwarfing the original installation which still remains in use. Security was also very evident at Aldershot, where a visit was made to the excellent museum housed in the last pair of bungalow-type barracks which used to cover the whole of North Camp. Some of our more senior members recalled their National Service days in these establishments! It was interesting to compare the bleak and functional army buildings of Aldershot with the elegant facades of housing provided for officers of the Senior Service at Portsmouth and Chatham.

The thanks of delegates are due to Glenys

and Alan Crocker, Peter Tarplee and the other members of SIHG who provided such a variety of entertaining and instructive lectures and visits. Surrey was not an obvious mecca for industrial archaeologists when compared with West Yorkshire in 1989, but members were agreeably surprised at the attractions offered in delightful countryside. Numerous other sites can be explored with the aid of Glenys's excellent Conference Guide, designed and produced by John Stengelhofen. Numbers were smaller than last year, but those who did not attend missed a well-organised and instructive week.

Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson

THE ROUNDHOUSE

Robert Stephenson's London and Birmingham Railway was the first main-line railway to be constructed from London, the portion from London to Boxmoor opening on 20 July 1837. The Act of 6 May 1833 had Camden as the southern terminus, but a fresh Act of 3 July 1835 allowed an extension to Euston. The line from Euston to Camden is steeply graded, the worst section being 1 in 66, and cable haulage was the method of traction at first employed. The steam locomotive engines for the working of the London and Birmingham Railway, supplied and maintained by Mr Edward Bury, of Bury, Curtis and Kennedey, were small low-powered engines, unequal to the task of hauling loads on a steep incline, and were attached to and removed from trains at Camden. Thus from the start Camden became the locomotive depot for the working of main-line trains from Euston to the North.

In the early 1840s locomotives at Camden were accommodated in a rectangular brick building with light iron roofs and a central open yard, situated on the east side of the line near the stationery engines which drew trains up the bank from Euston, conveniently close to the Regent's Canal. This loco depot had a number of turntables of 12 feet diameter, watering and workshop facilities, but could accommodate little more than ten locomotives with tenders under cover.

The Roundhouse, constructed a quarter of a mile to the north west at Chalk Farm in 1847, again on the east side of the line, was a circular railway locomotive shed for the goods engines, 160 feet in diameter with a central turntable 36 feet diameter. Twenty-three locomotives could be accommodated, all under cover on radiating tracks, and the central turntable arrangement allowed any locomotive to leave as desired. By contrast, the long-shed arrangement, where locos are stabled in rows on parallel tracks, occupies less ground but requires forethought when locomotives are put away after work. In practice a good deal of shunting dead engines about was often required at a long shed.

The Roundhouse survives today as one of the Capital's major industrial monuments and richly deserves its grade 2* listed status. Twenty four cast iron girders, support a magnificent cast and wrought iron roof structure which is surmounted by a lantern-light. Beneath the floor, to provide support for the heavy locomotives, there is massive brickwork. The locos were in fact at first floor level; the ground floor at the level of Chalk Farm Road was originally a coke store.

Before the invention of the firebox brick arch and deflector plate by Matthew Kirtley of Derby in 1858 main-line railway locomotives did not burn coal as they were not permitted to make smoke. Coke for the use of locomotives stationed at Camden was produced in the railway company's own coke ovens which were situated close to the Regent's Canal about a quarter of a mile to the south east of the Roundhouse. The coal used came by sea from the Newcastle area, being transhipped at Regent's Canal Dock, Limehouse, and thence by canal to Camden. At the beginning of the 1840s a mixture of equal quantities of Tanfield Moor and Windsor's Pontop coal was used for the coke ovens, of which there were eighteen. Cooling was carried out on a brick floor using water from the Regent's Canal.

Under Robert Stephenson, R B Dockray was the engineer of the Roundhouse and he lived only a short distance away at 160 Haverstock Hill. For passenger locomotives a loco shed was constructed on the east side of the main-line almost opposite the Roundhouse and this site continued as the Camden loco depot until the end of steam traction. It was the by now less convenient, but perhaps more economical, long shed. In British Railways' time engines allocated here carried the code '1B'.

By 1862 locomotives had become too long to fit on the central turntable of the Roundhouse and as a locomotive engine shed the building fell into disuse. From 1869 to 1964 it was used by W&A Gilbey Ltd as a bonded

spirit store and in 1967 it was licensed as a 600 seat theatre. Arnold Wesker had founded 'Centre 42' in 1960 following resolution number 42 of the TUC conference of that year that the Trades Union movement should become more involved with the arts. Centre 42 were presented with the lease of the Roundhouse in June 1964 and after some delays it became an arts centre and their headquarters. Financial problems since then have given the Roundhouse a varied artistic existence.

Recently there has been a lull in activity, plans for a black arts centre here having come to little. Commercial developers are proposing a £10 million arts scheme involving a twelve-storey hotel and 60 flats. Camden Council has reservations about the proposal, as expressed in the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* on 13 July 1990. The 'Ham & High' complained that security at the Roundhouse has been lax and the building is in a poor state of repair (17 August 1990). Along with the Interchange Warehouse of 1905 near Camden Lock, the Chalk Farm Roundhouse is a very significant feature of the area and it is to be hoped that this fine early example of a railway locomotive shed will be revered as it deserves.

R J M Carr

Below: The Roundhouse in 1847

