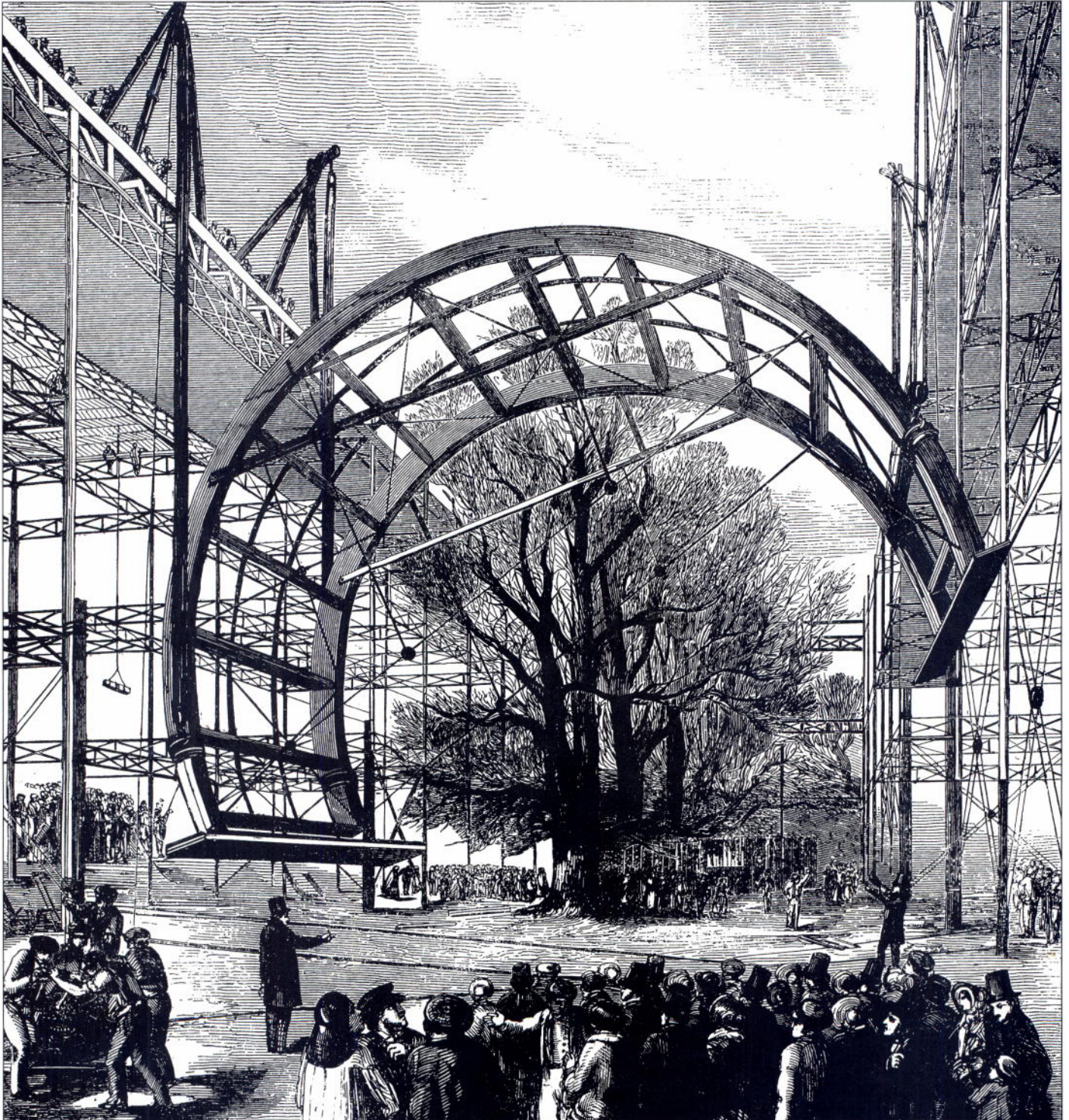


INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS

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THE BULLETIN OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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COVER PICTURE

Raising the ribs of the transept roof for the Crystal Palace, December 1850. A major conference is being held to mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Crystal Palace (see page 13)

Illustration: The Victorian Society

Achievements of Industrial Archaeology in the twentieth century: the Ironbridge Weekend, April 2001

This year's AIA Ironbridge gathering for affiliated societies took place over the weekend of 7-8 April and was held as usual at the Long Warehouse, Coalbrookdale. Contributions to the theme of the weekend included reviews of achievements and failings, for IA as a whole as well as the Association, the role of IA in museums and education, the professional expertise now established in the restoration sector, and the work of two contrasting groups of enthusiasts engaged in mill restoration and underground recording.

Mary Yoward

As usual, the weekend began with an informal gathering and meal at The Meadow, one of the local restaurants, where old friends and newcomers met and chatted on the Friday evening. Then the next morning, all met at the Long Warehouse in Coalbrookdale to start the formal proceedings.

The first lecture was given by Angus Buchanan, President Elect of the AIA, who looked back over the achievements of the last 40 years of Industrial Archaeology. The failure to retain the Euston Arch and the bridge at Sharpness was the spur to the preservation and conservation of much else. Adaptive re-use has saved many mills and other buildings, and interest in canals and railways has led to an increase in tourist sites. Re-creation of such places as Styal Mill shows the processes of industry and it is not only in this country that items such as steam cranes have been restored. The growth of ICOHTEC has resulted in international interest in the conservation of industrial remains, while in this country, places such as New Lanark and Saltaire help the tourist to acknowledge the importance of things past to the present day. At last, the importance of industrial landscapes has been realised and several have become World Heritage Sites, comparable with the pyramids, etc. English Heritage is continuing the work of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in recording industry.

IA has always been regarded as a research subject rather than one leading to a degree, but now its importance is being recognised and a degree course has been started at Leicester, with Marilyn Palmer as its professor. The present cultural shift towards environmentalism means more sensitivity towards conservation.

John Crompton began his talk by asking how many present had ever worked, paid or as a volunteer, in an Industrial Museum and the result was less than 50%, while over 70% had visited one during the past 12 months. There was a delayed response while the audience considered whether they regarded the Science Museum as an

Industrial one, but in the end, the response became positive. Since Industrial Museums grew out of IA and were a good and valuable addition to the service, it is a pity that many are now struggling, with a shortage of both visitors and volunteers and much competition. But on the whole, IA enthusiasts preferred other places 'not open to the general public' and rather resent the professional interpretation. The origin of the Museum Service was to educate the working man, showing him manufacturing processes and the raw materials which were used and from the beginning, were to be free. These still attract people, but the definition of a present day museum is 'an institution which collects, documents and safeguards artefacts and makes them accessible to the enquirer' and they have a duty to give best value. To do this, criteria must be adopted and information must be collected, not only exhibits. Museums must co-operate with others in their area and local museums must be given support.

After a break for coffee, David de Haan, the Acting Course Director of the Ironbridge Institute, spoke of its history from the time in 1973 when several of the present doyens of IA met at the Science Museum to sort out its industrial collection. Then in 1978, one end of the Long Warehouse at Ironbridge was repaired to house the Elton Collection and lectures began, mostly orientated towards railways. These led to short courses in 1981 and later, a formal teaching programme was followed, leading to a Diploma and, later, a Masters syllabus. David showed slides of the area, contrasting the old and the present and explained how the Long Warehouse had been restored in stages as the Institute grew. One of its strengths was that there were many visiting lecturers because it was in conjunction with Birmingham University. Now full-time courses are run in a modular format to suit as many as possible; these are on Industrial Heritage rather than Archaeology, and the management thereof. The Institute is self-financing and does much consultancy work to help raise money. This autumn, a new Masters degree is to be available, consisting of four modules, the result of combining the best parts of the existing course and ideas from students and others. These will cover Heritage Marketing, and Business Management; Finance, Interpretation and Conservation as well as Industrial Archaeology.

Geoff Wallis, one of the founders and now director of Dorothea Restoration, talked of the growth of the firm, from the time when he became an enthusiast while working at Crofton Engine House during his apprenticeship until the present when the firm re-gilded the Albert Memorial and ensured the continuing operation of the sculptural fountain near St Thomas' Hospital in London. Dorothea Restoration now