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THE BULLETIN OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS 119 Winter 2001

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COVER PICTURE

Denver Windmill, near Downham Market, Norfolk.
This impressive tower mill of c1835 was restored by
the Norfolk Windmills Trust, and was visited by a
party from this year's AIA Conference

Photo: Mike Harrison

Cambridge Conference 2001

This year's annual conference had a water and fenland flavour. It was based at Fitzwilliam College, and the organisers would have been hard put to better the venue. The standard of the accommodation and services were absolutely first-rate.

Roger Ford

Seminar day started with Paul Sowan giving one of his usual erudite discourses on underground Surrey, with special emphasis on providing the stone for prominent London buildings such as the Tower, etc. Ray Riley followed, using illustrations of a gasworks and a water-powered corn mill to develop his topic of context versus artefacts, or mix-and-match. John Crompton spoke of research carried out on repairs and rebuilds to the Elsecar engine – the oldest known stationary engine still occupying its original house.

Last to speak before lunch was Miles Oglethorpe on Scottish coalmining – with the help of outstandingly good slides we were shown a synopsis covering the 'golden period' of the industry from nationalisation to the sixties, making the point that recorders are much more concerned with the disappeared than the disappearing.

The afternoon session began with Mike Nevell on the distribution of early eighteenth century textile mills around Greater Manchester; next up, Henry Gunston gave the first introductory talk on fen drainage north of Cambridge – this complex subject was the main theme of the conference.

Penultimate speaker was Jim Arnold, showing the restoration of New Lanark Mills, which has come on by leaps and bounds since it was visited during the Glasgow Conference in 1985. It has now been put forward to become a World Heritage Site, and of course is lined up for a visit in next year's Edinburgh Conference. Finally,

David Brumhead spoke on the excellent New Mills and millennium walkway, which last year's conference delegates were able to inspect and enjoy.

To give delegates some exercise there followed either a short walking tour of Cambridge, guided by Alan Brigham, or punting along the Cam to inspect the bridges. Both activities were very well supported in the sunshine.

After dinner came the welcome to Cambridge, then Don Unwin delivered an introduction to the IA of Cambridge, profusely illustrated with slides covering every aspect of the county. A quick burst of members' contributions followed. Paul Sowan described a fascinating week that Subterranea Britannica spent inspecting some of the 650 secret Cold War underground bunkers of the former East Germany – these included former Russian nuclear warhead stores, STASI and army bunkers, and also a nerve-gas factory! Ian Mitchell described the Midland Railway tarpaulin sheet stores at Long Eaton and, to finish, John Watt gave us another of his acoustic treats, showing a video that concentrated on the exhaust 'music' from slow-speed diesel pumping engines on the Somerset levels.

The first Saturday morning lecture was on the topic of 'Draining the Great level between 1630 and 1830' by Nicholas James. He pointed out that fen drainage was the biggest engineering project of the second millennium AD, and for sheer scale (11,000 labourers were at one time employed digging the straight cuts to get the water away) was surpassed only by Hadrian's Wall on the British mainland. Next speaker Keith Hinde carried this theme on into more recent times by concentrating on pumping stations.

To round off the morning we enjoyed a talk by Mike Petty, who specialises in writing historical articles for the regional newspapers. His topic



This narrow boat has badly timed its passage through Salters Lock to coincide with a visit by the AIA delegates, who were no doubt lending many helpful gems of advice!

Photo: Mike Harrison



West Fen engine house

Photo: R J M Carr

was early photographers and their 'end results'. Research has resulted in the discovery of a collection of 100,000 glass negatives that were stored in boxes in an outhouse down an alleyway beside Cambridge Post Office!

Several trips were on offer for the afternoon. Number one was fen drainage, starting at Wicken Fen with its small smock windpump of 1908, moved, restored and re-erected there in 1955 to

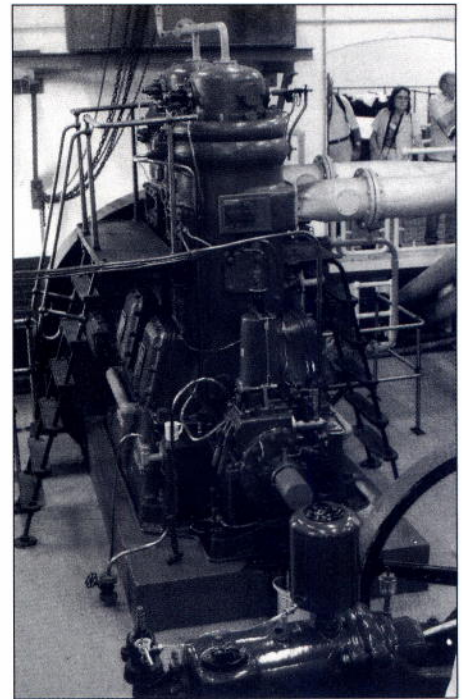
pump water INTO the fen. Next to Stretham to see the steam pumping machinery of 1831, which last worked in 1941. The boilers are still *in situ*, as is the scoopwheel that did the work. On to Earith to see the sluices, then to Willingham where a Ruston & Hornsby diesel replaced a small steam engine of 1848 (this scoopwheel drained only 1000 acres) and last worked in 1978.

Trip 2 went to Ely, taking in the station area and the waterside, then concentrating on the cathedral. Here one party visited the recently established stained glass museum, whilst the rest marvelled at the timber engineering of the Octagon, completed in 1334.

The Saturday evening's excellent conference dinner was followed by an entertaining hour with Bernard Ambrose, who had brought along a selection of models that he had made, based on inventions by Leonardo Da Vinci.

Sunday's proceedings opened with the AIA Awards presentations, the results of which are reported in detail on page 10. Another award, the bi-annual AIA Ironbridge Award from the CBA, which was given in 2000 to New Lanark (see *IA News 116, 3*), will become known as the AIA Award when it is next presented in 2002.

At the AGM, Angus Buchanan formally took over the Presidency of the Association, whilst Mike Harrison handed over the Chairmanship to Mike Bone. Council gained Mary Mills as a new member, and Peter Neaverson came back on again. Otherwise, things carry on as much before, except that Michael Messenger, after 20 years' stalwart service as Treasurer, is resigning at the end of this year. A successor to this vital post has not yet been found.



Vickers Petter diesel engine at Prickwillow Pumping Station
Photo: Mike Harrison

After morning coffee, Stuart Smith delivered the Rolt Memorial Lecture on 'The development of Industrial Museums in the Landscape', concentrating on his work for the Trevithick Trust in Cornwall. Here ended the main conference. There were afternoon visits to the Prickwillow museum of fen pumping engines, following a quick look at Isleham limekiln, or to the Duxford aircraft museum (an enormous site which would



ASSOCIATION FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

ANNOUNCING THE THREE FIELDWORK AND RECORDING AWARDS FOR 2002

The AIA Fieldwork Award scheme exists to encourage recording of the physical remains of the industrial period to high archaeological standards. The awards are open to both amateur and professional field workers, and have been operating successfully for many years.

Work submitted may already have been published or, if not, may be encouraged to publish.

As well as the main award there is also the Initiative Award for innovative projects, e.g. those from local societies; and to encourage the future industrial archaeologists, a Student Category.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS 1ST MAY 2002

Successful Entries will be notified in July

The successful authors will be invited to attend the AIA annual conference in Edinburgh to collect their awards in September 2002

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