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FREE TO MEMBERS OF AIA



● **CARDIFF CONFERENCE SPECIAL** ●



INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS 127 Winter 2003

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The 2003 AIA Conference: Cardiff and South East Wales

The AIA's 2003 annual conference was held at the Cyncoed Campus, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, on 5-11 September. The pre-conference seminar on the Friday was followed by the main conference, AGM, awards, the Rolt lecture and field visits, with four more days of lectures and visits for those who stayed for the whole programme.

Roger Ford

Terry Evans welcomed delegates to the conference on the Friday evening with a very amusing illustrated talk which explained how industry started with iron making in the Welsh valleys, the iron companies being mainly responsible for sinking the early coal mines. Three members' contributions followed, starting with Roger Holden on the more unusual Welsh chapels. Henry Gunston showed illustrations from the building of the Uganda Railway between 1896 and 1901, climbing from Mombasa via what is now Nairobi and incredibly heroic engineering across the Rift Valley to Lake Victoria. Robin Williams talked on the Pontypool Japanware industry created by heating linseed oil onto tinsplate, an early secret business that ceased in 1820; the pieces were for show rather than for use, being very expensive (circa 15 guineas).

The first treat on Saturday was a remarkable selection of slides showing paintings of eighteenth and early nineteenth century industrial scenes presented by Brian Davies of Pontypool Museum. Outstanding. David Jenkins,

Senior Curator of Museums and Galleries Wales, next lectured on 'shipping the coal'. In 1910 Cardiff docks despatched 10 million tons, Barry docks 11 million tons; in 1913 the total tonnage from all four Cardiff docks, including Barry, amounted to 24½ million tons; today, nothing is left. Dr Richard Bevins next spoke on the new National Waterfront Museum due to open in Swansea in 2005. This is an amazingly optimistic complex, high-tech affair. Reports from the Royal Commissions followed. Stephen Hughes recalled RCAHMW's achievements over the last 15 years, while Miles Oglethorpe of RCAHMS, who is the new TICCIH representative, talked mostly on TICCIH's recent Russian conference and plans for the future. Finally Paul Saulter spoke about the forthcoming 2004 AIA trip to Catalonia.

In the afternoon, a choice of three visits offered Rhondda Heritage Park (Lewis Merthyr) and Hetty Pit winding engine, which is partly restored; Newport docks and the restored Transporter Bridge (graphically illustrated in Falcon Hildred's award-winning book); or an expedition to the heart of Richard Crawshay's iron empire at Merthyr Tydfil, including surviving blast furnaces overlooked by Cyfarthfa Castle, now a museum.

Alan Pugh, Welsh Assembly minister for sport, culture and the languages of Wales, gave a brief speech at that evening's annual conference dinner held at the Cyncoed Campus. More members' contributions followed, with Brian Davis showing a video of the 1825 Hetty steam winder running slowly on compressed air. Robert Vogel from Washington DC showed an



AIA delegates with Tower Colliery Chairman Tyrone O'Sullivan



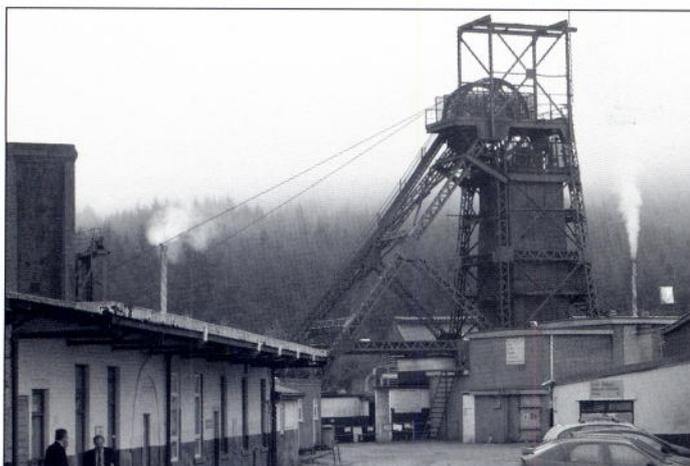
The Melingriffith water pump

Photo: M Harrison

COVER PICTURE

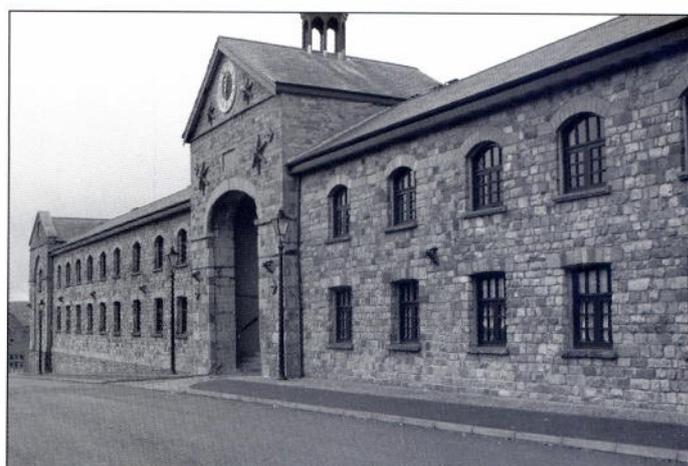
Big Pit, Blaenavon, was a popular visit on the Cardiff Conference (see report)

Photo: M. Harrison



Tower Colliery is the last deep coal mine in South Wales

Photo: M Harrison



The former stables of the Dowlais Ironworks

Photo: M Harrison



The impressive length of the derelict Treforest tinplate works

Photo: M Harrison



Hetty Pit Colliery

Photo: Steve Dewhirst



Examining the engine at Hetty Pit

Photo: Steve Dewhirst



The Llanwern Zodiac galvanising plant

Photo: Steve Dewhirst

atmospheric video of beehive coke ovens in full production at Bretz, Appalachia, during 1973, probably the last to operate in the world, to supply the Pittsburgh blast furnaces. Lastly, Tony Parkes showed slides of the rebuilding of a 16-foot backshot waterwheel near Betws y Coed for the National Trust.

Sunday morning saw the AGM, followed by the presentation of the Recording, Initiative and Student Awards and the Publications Awards (see separate reports). Then David de Haan delivered the Rolt Lecture on how research on the Iron Bridge has revealed how it was erected with its

individually tailored components. He showed a wonderful computer simulation of it coming apart and going together, with the pieces swirling about to be viewed from every angle!

There were again three choices for Sunday's field trips: underground at Big Pit, Blaenavon; Barry Island and the Vale of Glamorgan Railway; or the Melingriffith water pump, Nantgarw Pottery and the derelict Treforest tinplate works (this last outing attracted 50 takers on a 49-seater bus; standing was banned, so the last one on had to travel in the loo!). After dinner Steve Rowson spoke on the Glamorganshire Canal,

which climbed 106 feet by 16 very steep double locks and was the destination of the Penydarren tramroad on which Trevithick's 1804 locomotive was tried. The second lecturer Michael Davies spoke on the work of a conservation architect, concentrating on the dismantling and rebuilding of an unusual bottle kiln of 1840-50 at Nantgarw.

Monday marked the start of the all-day excursions, and amazingly the fine weather persisted. Two trips were on offer. The first started at the remains of Cefn Cribw charcoal-fired ironworks, followed by Tondu ironworks, a scheduled ancient monument at the centre of a