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AIA

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS 99 Winter 1996

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COVER PICTURE

Dorothea Quarry's impressive engine house with its Cornish pumping engine which worked from 1906 until the 1950s. Visited by the AIA Conference in 1996.

Poland 1996

Roger Ford

This year's highly successful AIA visit to Poland, on 14-26 July, attracted a full entry with every coach seat taken.

After embussing in London, overnight was spent on the Harwich-Hamburg ferry – this was superb, with outstandingly good food and accommodation. This was followed by six glorious sunny hours on Monday morning sailing up the Elbe between Cuxhaven and Hamburg docks. Along the banks were numerous navigation aids, such as lighthouses and towers, particularly around the entry to the Kiel Canal, while modern industries included a nuclear power station and aluminium works.

From Hamburg, where more participants joined the coach, we diverted from the drive to Berlin to see our first IA sites at Lauenburg on the Elbe. There was the opportunity to visit the museum of river shipping, containing excellent models and steam-ship engines in the basement. We then took refreshments beside the oldest canal lock in Europe which, in its present rebuilt form, dates from 1724 but was originally a flash lock. The canal was cut in the 1390s to carry salt between the Elbe and Lübeck. Chief guide Ray Riley reinforced the party at our Berlin hotel. As a much-appreciated bonus, the coach took us on a two-hour after-dinner tour around the city.

On Tuesday morning we walked across the bridge over the Oder into Poland, between Frankfurt and Slubice, where we could buy Polish slotys. Next stop was at Trzciel on the River Obra, the pre-war Polish border where we savoured our first packed lunches (we had them every day) of the tour. The sight of three preserved windmills at the roadside prompted a stop. These were 19th-century post mills on trestles, fully enclosed by long skirts, and had been moved to this site at **Dzieskanowice** to form part of a folk park. On to **Ciechocinek** where the party was completed by the Malaws family and principal interpreter Anna Niznik. This is where the three salt graduation towers, slides of which were shown at last year's conference, are located. These were massive timber structures 15m high and varying in

length from 724m to 366m, the brine originally being pumped up to them by windmills. Unusually, an industrial monument had become the centre of a spa development, since breathing the iodine-rich fumes from the graduation towers had medicinal value. The saltworks itself – to which the brine is pumped after concentration in the brushwood towers – adjoined the hotel, enabling guests to glimpse the black smoke emitted from the coal-fired furnaces which heated the evaporation tanks.

After a tour of the towers and the works, on to **Bydgoszcz** to admire the station and visit three roundhouses (the other side of the tracks!) where a number of decrepit locos, many of them steam, are parked. We soon discovered that there are 'steamers' parked all over the Polish railway system, as the companies don't ever seem to scrap anything – just shunt them onto 'dead' sidings and forget about them. A metre-gauge former tram depot also received a visit. After lunch we went to a narrow-gauge railway depot at **Znin**, part of the state system, but now run as a preserved line. Over 1,000 km of narrow-gauge lines are still in use in Poland out of the original network of over 4,000 km, which was constructed to link towns and industrial enterprises to the strategic main line system. In **Znin**, the narrow gauge system served a sugar beet mill which still contained its own roundhouse. There were extensive marshalling yards beside the standard-gauge main line, for transhipment purposes. The preserved line runs from **Znin** to **Wenecja**, and after the last train returned they kindly dragged out, by diesel, a steam loco that is still usable. Oily rags were lit in the firebox for photographic effect. The terminus at **Wenecja** is a narrow-gauge railway museum, with a wide selection of locos, early diesels, waggons, mail coaches etc. The museum also had refreshment stalls outside – we found this to be unusual in Poland. Our final railway stop of the day was at **Inowroclaw**, with a fine station, roundhouse and more preserved locos as well as a massive soda works.

After a second night in the Ciechocinek hotel, it was time to pay the bills – this might have been easy, except that the hotel possesses a computer – this is capable of producing the bill for a single meal in 7-10 minutes! Every item (bread, butter, jam, coffee etc)



Anna Niznik interpreting for the AIA; Ray Riley (L) listens in

Photo: Marilyn Palmer



Workers shovelling salt from steaming supersaturated brine at Ciechocinek

Photo: Anne Alderton



How to carry standard gauge wagons on narrow gauge ones – it's all explained at the Rogow railway depot

Photo: Anne Alderton

must be listed and costed separately, as apparently there are widely different rates of VAT on, say tea, and bread. It took about 5 hours to collect the cash from all the party on the evening before departure, whilst negotiations for paying for the rooms and the packed lunches caused Thursday's departure to be three-quarters of an hour late.

Our first destination was an enormous derelict twelve-kiln pottery at **Wloclawek** which closed in 1990. Part of the site is being turned into a museum but many of the structures have been vandalised since closure.

Next stop was **Wyszogrod** Bridge over the Vistula, a remarkable survival which at two kilometres is the longest wooden bridge in Europe and was visually striking because of the sheet metal cladding over the wooden cut-waters. It was also interesting to see the continued use of the old techniques of laying reed matting to prevent scouring of the river bed by the piers on the downstream side. From there we drove to **Warsaw** and our first visit was the gasworks museum, housed in one of the buildings on a vast site which features two enormous Prussian-designed brick-built gasholder houses, necessary to prevent the water-seals inside from freezing in the extreme winter temperatures. The works date from 1882, but had been substantially rebuilt after the last war and closed since 1972. The museum contained rotary purifiers and steam-driven exhausters as well as various other equipment. So into Warsaw itself, where an interesting incident occurred. The coach pulled off the road on to the river bank so that we could look at a bridge across the Vistula. Immediately two police appeared from a patrol launch on the river to admonish the driver for parking on a cycle track! We passed the night in a hotel thoughtfully located above the busiest tram crossing in Europe, thereby ensuring that sleep was almost impossible!

Morning saw the coach visiting the English-designed Warsaw water pumping station and works of 1886, then on to the Railway Museum at the former terminus of the line from Vienna. Those not wishing to avail themselves of these delights toured the old city (faithfully rebuilt after being completely razed by the Nazis, and now designated as a World Heritage Site), using the very cheap (25p for two hours' travel) and comprehensive tram network. After the various factions were reunited, visits were made to other stations on the Warsaw-Vienna main line (1845), en

route to **Rogow** narrow-gauge freight depot. Here was seen the curious custom of loading standard gauge freight trucks onto narrow-gauge flat wagons for onward transmission, this being possible because the narrow gauge line has no overbridges. We managed to see a Hoffman kiln being coal fed at **Stryków** brickworks on our way to Łódź, where we enjoyed the best hotel of the tour.

Having endured two days of more-or-less heavy rain, it was nice to have some dry weather to look at textile mills and industrial housing in **Łódź**, formerly in the Russian sector of Poland and selected by the Russian government as a textile centre. By the late 19th century, the textile industry dominated the town which became known as the Polish Manchester. Ray and Anna, who teach at the university in Łódź, have made a special study of these mills and we were shown their special characteristics such as stuccoed brick, decorative lift towers and clerestory windows. Many were financed by Prussian capital and the owners did not stint themselves with their palatial residences, which contrasted with the rather grim workers' housing adjacent.

In the afternoon the first venue was **Chocianowice** tram-shed on the outskirts of the city where a line of old four-wheel cars are parked on a siding. Our next stop was at **Srock** to visit a rather



Derelict post mill of 1892 at Srock

Photo: Mark Watson

derelict post mill, which we were able to scramble around. From **Piotrków Trybunalski** on the Warsaw-Vienna line, we passed the station with another huge water tower which supplied the town as well, and then followed a narrow gauge railway to **Sulejow**. Here there were two remarkable conical limekilns with connected concrete lift shafts, abandoned in the mid-1980s. From there we went to look at a modern, working limekiln with a skip elevator charging system similar to that used in a blast-furnace.

Saturday night was spent at an hotel adapted from a monastery at Sulejow, with the merit of being in a peaceful situation. Sunday morning saw us at **Maleniec** Forge, the Polish equivalent of Abbeydale or Wortley (featured in last year's conference). The forge dates from 1784 and has two huge waterwheels, on different axes. It worked until 1967, and is now maintained by staff and students of the Silesian Polytechnic.

Lunchbreak passed at **Rudniki**, where there was another collection of seven derelict limekilns of various designs beside a main line railway. Two conical kilns survived and the base of a third had been re-used as a support for an aerial ropeway terminal for charging a more modern kiln. There were also four hexagonal kilns with forced draught. These kilns resembled those used for chalk burning seen at the Surrey conference in 1990, and the site would merit further investigation, and add to the existing typologies of limekilns. After this, we went to **Czestochowa**, a place of pilgrimage for Catholics, who come to the ornate cathedral to view the portrait of the Black Madonna, credited with miraculous healing powers. We were able to join a huge congregation for the closing stages of a very fervent Sunday service.

Back to IA at **Poreba** to see a surviving blast furnace charging tower, dating from 1798 and in the process of becoming a small museum. At the **Tarnowskie Gory** mine museum we inspected a varied collection of steam-driven artefacts parked around the grounds, ranging from mine-winders to a vertical-boilered crane. In the main building, a wedding reception was in progress, and when we left the bride and groom ceremoniously presented us with a bottle of special wedding vodka!

So to **Katowice**, the heart of the Silesian mining district. Monday morning was devoted to coal mines and industrial housing, starting at the Michal and Siemanowice complex of five shafts. This is on a care-