

THE WEST YORKSHIRE CONFERENCE

Huddersfield Polytechnic, the location for this year's annual conference of the **AIA**, is situated in the heart of an industrial town. The campus includes both purpose-built and re-used buildings and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal passes through it, involving delegates in a walk across a canal bridge to the lecture theatre: surely a first for **AIA** conferences! The exhibition area overlooked the 1870 warehouse in Aspley Basin, which was in the process of a controversial conversion to residential use.

The richness of the surviving industrial heritage of West Yorkshire, despite considerable demolition in the major towns, was presented to delegates not only in a comprehensive set of tour notes but in Bill Thompson's Conference Guide, making reference to over 300 sites. He persuaded contributor from the five areas of Calderdale, Kirklees, Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield, to detail the most outstanding sites and thereby produces an illustrated guide that will have a value well beyond the conference itself.

The pre-conference programme opened with an evening visit to Bradford Industrial Museum, itself located in and 1875 worsted spinning mill, where delegates were initiated into the mysteries of worsted combing and ring spinning. On the second day, a select band visited Harrison's Lathe Works in Heckmondwyke, whilst the rest braved the elements of Yorkshire's changeable weather studying shoddy and mungo in nearby Dewsbury. The whole group then visited Thwaite Mills in Leeds, a water-powered flint and chalk grinding mill on the River Aire. A great deal of restoration and interpretation work has taken place here in recent years ready for opening to the public, and the standard of this is so high that the President intends to present this year's Conference Award to Thwaite Mills. After a short visit to the Middleton Railway, the afternoon was concluded with an all-too-brief visit to Armley Mills, the Leeds Industrial Museum, which demands a whole day to do it justice. Some members were privileged to be guided by Ron Fitzgerald through the nearly completed galleries on underground mine transport. That evening, Ron delivered a masterly account of the use of structural cast iron in mill buildings. Bill Slatcher made good use of the many excellent slides he possesses on Pennine roads and trackways, most of which he has travelled in the course of his fell-running career.



Ashes to ashes: dearly beloved conference delegates, gathered on top of the Hoffman kiln at Normanton Brickworks
Photo: Marilyn Palmer



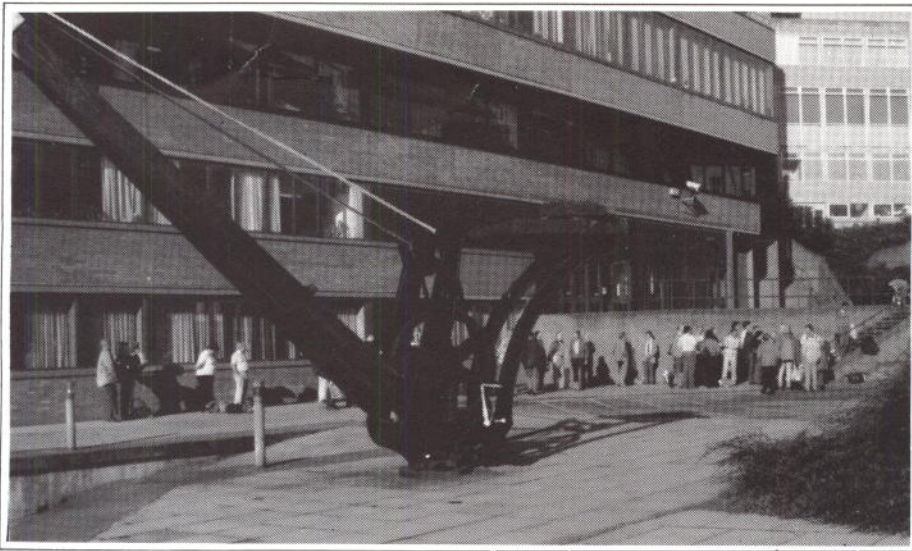
Old relics in the undergrowth: exploring the storage area at Leeds Industrial Museum

Photo: Marilyn Palmer

The Colne Valley was the venue for Wednesday's visit, including two working mills at Low Westwood, beside the restored Huddersfield Narrow Canal, and Heath House. The weaving town of Golcar stands on the hillside above the valley, and delegates visited its excellent small museum housed in a nineteenth-century loomshop. Following lunch at the Great Western Hotel, an intrepid band set off with Bill Slatcher for a moorland hike looking at the remains of the various transport systems across Standedge Moor. The rest of the party followed the Marsden Town Trail and walked along the towpath to Tunnel End, where both railway and

canal penetrate the Pennine watershed in four tunnels. In the evening, Ivor Brown provided an introduction to West Yorkshire quarrying and gave an amusing account of the effects of mining subsidence near Leeds, which caused the rivers Aire and Calder to forsake their natural channels. Peter Kelley, Curator of Armley Mills, enlightened delegates about the Leeds origins of the famous firms who sold ready-made men's clothing, such as Montague Burton, Hepworths and John Collier.

On Thursday, delegates were 'forced' to consider the 'rhubarb triangle' south of Leeds, and industry not previously regarded as industrial



Huddersfield Polytechnic canal wharf adaptively re-used as a passenger terminal for conference coaches



Britannia York Stone Quarry

Photo: Marilyn Palmer

archaeology, but **AIA** members will find that a rhubarb shed figures in our Conference Guide. The first visit of the day was to Pawson's Britannia Quarry, where production of York stone has recently greatly expanded. Well-tried hand and modern machine methods were both seen in the extraction of stone and in the workshops, producing a wide variety of plain slabs and shaped masonry. Delegates also viewed the shoddy warehouses in Batley, with plain backs and 'purl' fronts! After fish and chips at 'The Mermaid', the party saw the newly repainted Stanley Ferry Aqueduct which carries the Calder collateral canal over the line of the original navigation. A fascinating visit to a very dusty brickworks followed, where nineteenth-century machinery was still in use for brick moulding and the bricks fired in a Hoffman-type kiln. The day ended with two canal visits: to the Wakefield Basin on the Calder and Hebble Navigation and the Saville Town Basin in Dewsbury, where there is a small private museum of canal artifacts. In the evening, Bill Slatcher talked about water resources in the Pennines and David Perrett about the industrial settlements in West Yorkshire, where Saltaire, Ackroyden and Copley rival New Lanark.

2 The pre-conference programme concluded on Friday with a morning visit to Halifax, including the Piece Hall, the outstanding Calderdale Industrial Museum and the newly opened

Museum of the Working Horse. In the afternoon, non-Council members visited the 'Last of the Summer Wine' country in Holmfirth, taking in a working steam engine at Washpits Mill and Bamforth's Postcard Museum. Others had a busy afternoon setting up a wide range of displays and bookstalls before the conference began with a lecture from Robin Thornes of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in

England on the industries of West Yorkshire. He also spoke about the latest work of the Commission, together with Stephen Hughes and Hilary Malaws of the Welsh and Miles Oglethorpe of the Scottish Royal Commissions. Miles induced a feeling of vertigo among the audience with his slides from a recent photographic survey of the Forth Bridge, many taken from a great height.

The Saturday morning lectures were mainly concerned with Leeds, looking at the mechanisation of the woollen industry and the beginnings of engineering. John Goodchild appropriately traced the evolution of the West Yorkshire coal industry through the archives of Henry Briggs, whose collieries eventually produced the lion's share of West Yorkshire coal. Three coaches set out in the afternoon for visits in different directions. The Saltaire contingent enjoyed a trip on the Shipley Glen tramway as well as visiting Bingley Five Rise locks on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Another group revisited the Colne Valley, surely one of the most outstanding industrial landscapes in Western Europe. Helmets were donned by the third party to go on an underground tour of Caphouse Colliery and Mining Museum after seeing a working steam engine at Providence Mill near Dewsbury. Modern technology was also on show in the production by Skopos of screen-printed furnishing fabrics.

Our guests at the conference dinner were the Pro-Rector of the Polytechnic, Mr T J Gaskell, and his wife, together with our Rolt Memorial Lecturer, Kenneth Powell. An excellent series of members' contributions followed dinner, encouraging delegates to vote later that these should in future figure more prominently in the programme. On Sunday morning, an open forum and the AGM were followed by a feast of slides in Kenneth Powell's lecture on 'The Creative Re-use of Industrial Buildings'. As Architectural Correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, Kenneth Powell enlightened delegates concerning the modern re-use of functional space, taking both British and foreign examples. This concluded a highly enjoyable and friendly conference, and thanks are due to the main Conference Organiser, Bill Thompson, as well as to the Conference Secretary, David Alderton and the Booking Secretary for this year, John Fletcher. Now that our conferences are large and complex affairs, they demand a great deal of hard work from our voluntary organisers and our gratitude is due to them.

Marilyn Palmer
Peter Neaverson



Where is this port? See extract no. 6