

THE BUS BUSINESS

In its recent policy review the AIA decided to interpret industrial archaeology as a period study which can encompass subjects of all types from the industrial era. In this article John Powell shows for one subject—bus transport—that unless we open our minds beyond the narrow definition of 'industry', there is a danger that important evidence will fall through the net of recording and preservation, and be lost forever.

Most bus services in England and Wales, outside London, were deregulated on 26 October, 1986. The near-chaos which ensued in many places, as operators competed for passengers, is well documented.

It was not just companies, services and vehicles which came under threat. In order to cut costs and raise money, many concerns began to cash in on property, in the way that British Rail and British Waterways have also done. Now is an appropriate time to consider the structures associated with the bus industry, in the hope that some systematic appraisal may be undertaken before too much disappears.

Bus garages have been closing in considerable numbers since 1986, yet there seems to

be no information revealing how many are listed nationwide, nor how many might be worthy of recording or preserving. A number survive as bus museums in various parts of the country, and others which went out of use before the property boom of the eighties have found other uses, to which they are often well-suited; yet survival appears to be random.

Significant examples have certainly been lost. The former East Surrey Traction Company garage in Bell Street, Reigate, for example, was demolished in the late 1980s despite a last-ditch attempt to get it spot-listed. It was a purpose-built garage (as opposed to a converted tram depot, which many early garages were) built in 1912, and of some architectural and historic interest. As recently as 1992, a corrugated iron bus garage adjacent to Bridgnorth Station on the Severn Valley Railway was demolished, even though it was on a site where one might have thought it to be safe. It dated from c1905, and was erected by the Great Western Railway when Milnes-Daimler motor buses took over from Clarkson steam buses on the Bridgnorth-Wolverhampton route. A similar, yet larger, structure survives in Stroud Station yard, and was commendably featured in this year's AIA conference booklet. How many others remain unnoticed?

Deregulation comes to London in 1996, and will undoubtedly pose a major threat to the garages there. The architecturally impressive but untypical garage at Stockwell, with its famous concrete roof dating from 1952, is one of our few post-War listed buildings, but what else in the capital is protected? Current Government pressure forcing local authorities which still operate bus fleets to dispose of them will further reduce the stock of buildings in provincial towns. Operators such as Maidstone, who have been running services since the days of the tram, have already gone to the wall.

If the bus garage seems an unattractive subject for listing or recording, what chance has the even more unloved bus station? Again, no information seems to exist on what survives or may be worthy of consideration. What was believed to be the country's oldest purpose-built bus station, at Heswall in the Wirral, dated from 1924, but went some years ago. The once prestigious coach station at Cheltenham, interchange point for millions of travellers over a period of 50 years, was demolished without detailed recording. The fine bus station from

The cast iron bus station from Durham, dismantled and taken to store at Beamish Open Air Museum

Photo: Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust



Durham, with its ironwork from the Lion Foundry at Kirkintilloch, was dismantled some years ago and taken to Beamish Museum, so conceivably this may reappear in whole or in part in due course.

The premises of bus manufacturers could also warrant some attention. There were reputedly 26 of them in 1945, a figure which had been reduced to 12 by 1965 and must now be a mere handful (excluding body-builders). Even Leyland's recent purpose-built bus factory at Workington, in production for only two decades or so, has been closed. Many large operators ran their own engineering and repair depots, but these are being closed and the work put out to tender. Who would have foreseen the

closure of London's Chiswick Works (established in 1921-2, to allow the complete overhaul of a London bus in 4 days instead of the previous 16) or their massive body-plant at Aldenham, opened in 1956?

What of the humble bus shelter? Reputedly, listed examples do exist, and may be no less significant than a listed pillar box or telephone kiosk: such structures certainly contributed to village life over several generations, and some should survive. Worthwhile examples in urban settings (outside London) are less easy to find, though Worcester has a number of attractive cast iron shelters which may be re-used tram shelters.

Literature on the subject does exist. There is

a book on London's bus garages, and fleet histories such as the excellent two-volume history of Midland Red often give details of garages. On the whole, however, bus enthusiasts tend to concentrate on the vehicles themselves, and recording or preservation of structures does not seem to be high on their list of priorities. Industrial archaeologists have ignored them almost completely, with very few featuring in published gazetteers, especially compared with railway stations, or even other structures associated with road transport, such as toll houses.

It would be a pity if the subject were to fall between two stools, with everyone assuming that someone else was keeping a watching brief. Bus transport can be seen as something exclusive to the twentieth century, something currently undergoing radical change, even something that may disappear altogether in favour of other forms of transport. Structures associated with it should be evaluated now, while they still survive, not when they have all gone.

Other vital subjects, like medicine or administration, may similarly be all too easily forgotten. The Editor would welcome further short contributions which introduce little-studied subjects within the archaeology of the industrial era.

left: East Surrey Traction Co bus garage dating from 1912 (left), with associated offices (right), in Bell Street, Reigate, Surrey. Demolished in the 1980s

Photo: John Powell



OBE FOR ANGUS BUCHANAN

The New Year Honours List brought the excellent news that AIA Honorary Vice-President, Angus Buchanan, has been awarded the OBE. A profile of Professor Buchanan appeared in Bulletin 19.2. This personal appreciation by Keith Falconer marks both the award and the end of his 14 years of service as a Royal Commissioner on the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

Angus took up his appointment as Royal Commissioner with responsibility for industrial archaeology in January 1979, but the circumstances that led to that appointment had their origins many years before. In the mid 1960s, he had assumed responsibility for the National Record of Industrial Monuments, the formalisation of the Council for British Archaeology survey cards first introduced in 1963. When Rex Wailes, as Survey Officer, retired in 1971 (with the first OBE in IA!), the University of Bath, through Angus, generously offered the CBA a base for a full-time Survey Officer. Thus, when as Rex's successor, I took up my post later that year, I was able to benefit from the experience of the Centre's advisors such as Tom Rolt, Sir Arthur Elton, and Neil Cossons, and was in daily contact with Angus, George Watkins, Owen Ward and Eric Deloney, the visiting Fulbright Scholar who is now head of the Historic American Engineering Record.

In the late 1970s the Royal Commission itself had been edging, albeit warily, towards greater involvement with industrial recording and it was recognised that it suited both the DoE and RCHME to transfer the Survey to the latter. To facilitate this, and to strengthen the industrial archaeological interest in the Commission, it was decided to appoint a Royal Commissioner with specific responsibility for industrial archaeology, and Angus was approached as

the obvious choice.

One of his first tasks was to comment on the draft manuscript of a publication on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—the Commission's first essay on an industrial topic. The role of reading and approving texts of books on a variety of industrial subjects was to be a staple chore over the next 14 years. However his work went far beyond passive commenting on texts. He was involved in the advisory, planning and monitoring stages of the Commission's industrial projects. It is particularly gratifying that projects such as Liverpool Docks, Stoke-on-Trent Potworks, Greater Manchester Cotton Mills and East Cheshire Textile Mills should all now have come to successful fruition with the publication of volumes.

It has, however, been the quiet, behind the scenes, support, encouragement and, when necessary, lobbying on behalf of industrial archaeology, that in my opinion has been Angus' most significant contribution. The increase in the number of staff within the Commission with industrial archaeological experience and responsibilities bears witness to his advocacy. In 1981, when the Survey was finally absorbed into the Commission, I was a lone voice for industrial archaeology; now there are at least ten. Furthermore, all the local archaeological field offices routinely undertake survey of industrial sites.

Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of the Commission's interest in industrial archaeology has been the decision to relocate the headquarters and archive to the former Great Western Railway General Office at Swindon. Whenever AIA members travel by train on the London to Bristol line they will pass the RCHME office with its prominent bas-reliefs of GWR engines and perhaps be reminded of the contribution their Honorary Vice-President made during his term as Royal Commissioner.

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

Plans for the 1993 Ironbridge Weekend, on 24-5 April, are now complete, and Secretaries of Affiliated Societies have received details and booking forms. Individual members of the Association are most welcome at these weekends, and a set of forms is enclosed with this mailing. As you will see, we are offering a varied programme. There will be sessions on Saturday on such topics as 'being a museum volunteer' and on the preparation and publication of research; and on Sunday a half day devoted to various aspects of the AIA's Sites and Monuments initiative. We are also inviting participants' contributions—this is in response to comments made last year, and will be a useful addition to the programme.

The domestic arrangements will be similar to last year. Sessions will be held in the Long Warehouse, Coalbrookdale, with the Saturday evening dinner at The New Inn, Blists Hill. On Saturday afternoon, delegates will be able to join John Powell on a walk on 'the other side of the River', in the parish of Broseley.

At a cost of £29, which includes attendance at all sessions, morning coffees, lunches on Saturday and Sunday, and dinner on Saturday, the weekend is excellent value. I hope we shall see many of you there.

Despite my appeals in the *Bulletin*, I have received no more 'profiles' of societies. Surely some groups would welcome free publicity? Please send profiles, or any comments or suggestions about what the AIA does, or might do, for Affiliated Societies, to me at 20 Stourvale Gardens, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire SO5 3NE.

Pam Moore

THE CIRENCESTER CONFERENCE

Over 130 delegates attended the 1992 AIA Annual Conference at Cirencester, which was arranged by the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology (GSIA) with AIA Secretary Amber Patrick. This report has been compiled by Roger Ford, Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson.

The 1992 conference venue was changed from Cheltenham to Cirencester at short notice, but everybody agreed that a better centre could not have been found than the Royal Agricultural College, a splendid late nineteenth-century building of mellowed Cotswold stone, and the first college of its kind in Britain. Among the fine buildings was a re-used tithe barn which provided a social centre for delegates with an excellent bar and roaring log fire.

The conference was opened by the creator of Thomas the Tank Engine and President of the GSIA, the Reverend Awdry, and by an introductory tour of Gloucestershire in slides by David Viner, Curator of the Corinium Museum. Saturday's lectures included David Evans on Listers of Dursley, the manufacturers of small stationary steam engines; Ian Standing on the industrial archaeology of the Forest; and Hugh Conway-Jones on Gloucester Docks. These were followed on a rather damp afternoon by three excursions, to Gloucester Docks; with David Bick to the tramways and quarries of Leckhampton; and a walk around Cheltenham with Amina Chatwin to see the elegant wrought ironwork dating from its spa days.

David Viner hosted a reception at the Cotswold Countryside Collection Museum in the former house of correction at Northleach, where delegates not only inspected agricultural machinery but also the cells and courtroom. This was followed by the Conference Dinner back at Cirencester, at which the annual AIA Fieldwork Awards were presented (as reported in *Bulletin* 19.4). Members's contributions were given in two periods during Saturday. A highlight was the presentation by John Watts, which featured an audio tape to accompany his slides of Lister engines.

After its AGM on Sunday morning (reported in *Bulletin* 19.4) the Association welcomed Dr Barrie Trinder of the Ironbridge Institute to deliver the 1992 Rolt Memorial Lecture. His topic was 'the archaeology of the food industry in Britain, 1660-1960', and the full text will appear in the Spring 1993 *Industrial Archaeology Review*. This concluded the main conference, and thanks were extended to the organiser, Amber Patrick, and the committee of the GSIA for their work on this and the preparation of the Regional Gazetteer.

The additional programme was more popular than ever, necessitating two coaches on all but the last day. On Sunday two afternoon tours were arranged, to Cirencester and district and to Stroud. David Viner conducted members through Cirencester and to Kemble, once a tri-junct station with lines to Cirencester, Swindon and Tetbury. Still a busy commuter station, it is beautifully maintained. Remains of the Thames and Severn Canal were then visited, notably the fine eastern portal of Sapperton Tunnel and the lengthsmen's round-house at Coates. The other group went with Lionel Walrond to Stroud: beginning at Brunel's Great Western Railway station of 1845 with its broad gauge goods shed, and ending at Kimmins Mill, a five-storey stone-built former flour mill,

with a collection of redundant textile machinery. On Sunday evening, delegates were entertained by Tony Langford with a procession in slides of steam boats built at Brimscombe Port. Monday saw the first of two excursions to the Forest of Dean led by Stan Coates. The first stop was at Guns Mills, a fascinating combination of seventeenth-century charcoal blast furnace and eighteenth-century timber-framed paper mill built on top. Dark Hill ironworks was operated by David Mushet, but its remains are difficult to interpret: it is a pity that, after all the excavation and consolidation carried out, no report has yet been published. Delegates then walked from Coleford to the well-preserved Whitecliff furnace, an early coke-fired blast furnace dating from the Mushet era, conserved by the Historical Metallurgy Society and owned by Dean Heritage Museum. The final visit was to another restored furnace at Tintern which supplied the wireworks of the Angiddy Valley.

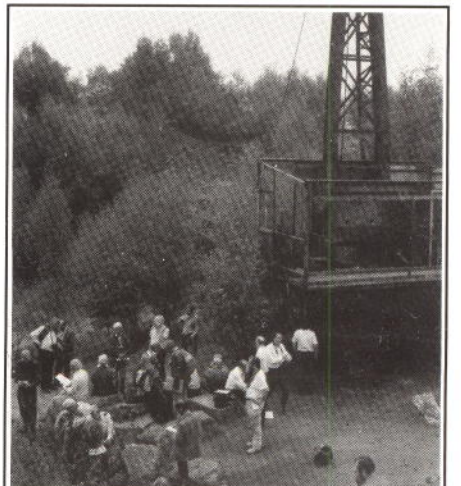
On Tuesday an extended visit, again with Lionel Walrond, was made to the textile mills of the Stroud area, a subject introduced in his lecture the previous evening. Delegates were able to visit two 'flagship' mills: the stone-built Ebley Mill which has been restored as the offices of Stroud District Council, and the brick Stanley Mill at Stonehouse, built 1813-15, with its magnificent interior ironwork. As on many of the coach tours, the return was made via Chalford along the Frome Valley, which carries the turnpike road, the Thames and Severn Canal and the Great Western Railway. A fine group of railway and canal structures remains at St Mary's Mill, Chalford, with its recently listed level crossing gates, keeper's cabin and cottage. Prominent along this route are the spoil mounds created when the canal and railway tunnels were constructed—a feature our coach drivers will draw to the attention of all future visitors!

Wednesday's visits centred on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, once intended to go to Berkeley, our first port of call. Here the world's first commercial nuclear power station was commissioned in 1957: this Magnox station ceased generation in 1989. The site resembled a scene from Dr Who or James Bond. The fuel rods had long been removed but delegates were able to see the rest of the plant. The fate of the buildings is still uncertain: the whole site might have to be buried beneath a mound of earth unless some adaptive re-use can be found! Hugh Conway-Jones then conducted delegates around Sharpness Docks, and the remains of the former Severn railway bridge which was wrecked by a tanker in 1960. The day ended in the civilised surroundings of Gloucester Docks, a most successful example of re-use with its fascinating National Waterways Museum in the former Llanthony Warehouse. That evening a local farmer, Arthur Price, described his hair-raising efforts to record a complex system of stone mines in the Cotswolds.

The conference ended with a second visit to the Forest of Dean, beginning at Bullo Pill dock where Ian Standing had kindly arranged for a small demonstration of the Severn bore! We then followed the line of the Forest of Dean Railway to Soudley to visit the Dean Heritage Museum, housed in buildings which have been used for a variety of water-powered industries. The Museum explains the unique nature of the Royal Forest, with its free miners and many

charcoal ironworks. Lunch was taken near the Speech House, built c1675 as a forest keeper's lodge, then enlarged to contain the Verderers' Court for Forest administration, and now a hotel. The final conference climb was up the Bixslade Tramway to the working stone quarries above, which still retain some massive derrick cranes. We were also able to observe the continuity of coal mining in the Forest at a two-man drift bringing up Yorkley coal from 300 yards into the hillside.

Thanks are due to Amber Patrick for her efficient re-organisation of the programme owing to the change of venue, and to the excellent group of tour leaders and lecturers. Members will be able to compare the industries of Dean with those of the Lake District in September 1993.



from the top: One's home for a week: the Royal Agricultural College; The generator hall at the de-commissioned Berkeley nuclear power station; A working coal drift in the Bixslade Valley; One of the derricks (and other members of the AIA) at Bixslade stone quarry

All photos: Marilyn Palmer