

AIA Restoration Grants 2021

Keith Falconer, Restoration Grants Coordinator reports:

Routinely producing this annual item on the Restoration Grants being offered can appear to be dry factual reporting but it masks some really gratifying sentiments about the difference the AIA can make. As I write this I have just received this emailed message from one of our Grant recipients: *"It is so lovely that people [the AIA] want to help in such tough times. I must admit I have to keep re reading your email as I think I have dreamt it. The Small loco group have such enthusiasm I am so pleased for them. Once I have received the electronic AIA logo are we ok to put it on our Facebook page, website etc ?. Desperate to share some good news with our wonderful volunteers."* This makes my task very worthwhile.

The last 15 months, dominated by Covid 19 have indeed been awful, especially as regards the industrial and transport heritage sectors that depend so much on volunteers and the AIA is very grateful to our Anonymous Donors in that we have been able to ease the pain slightly. Last year I noted that with the onset of the Pandemic the number of applications was somewhat lower. This year by the end of March, the projected programmed easing in Coronavirus restrictions over the next few months seems to have had a positive effect on the application processes and the number of applications we had received by 31st March deadline has risen this year to 27.

There were applications for a wide range of structures, and machinery and, once again, transport related applications dominated the crop:

- inland waterways featured three narrowboats, a canal lock, a crane and a basin;
- railways contributed a steam locomotive, two for rolling stock and a lift bridge;
- maritime accounted for three applications - a series of cranes and fittings to two vessels;
- roads sought funding for two transport shelters and two steam rollers;
- textile machinery and engines only two applications;
- while building conversions accounted for three applications. There were also applications for a blast furnace, a lead mine, a limekiln, a quarry crane and a waterworks chimney.

The AIA Council at its June meeting, guided by recommendations from its Restoration Grant Panel, agreed that seven Major Project Grants and two Small Project grants totalling some £140,000 be offered .

Major Projects:

Brymbo No 1 Blast Furnace

No 1 Blast Furnace, a nationally significant industrial monument, is an 1820 rebuild of the original 1790s blast furnace erected by John 'Iron Mad' Wilkinson on the Brymbo Estate that he had purchased in 1792. It survives, alongwith the 18th century Agents House and Cast House and mid 19th century Foundry and Machine Shop on the Brymbo Heritage Conservation Site. When

the Works, which for the last century had been producing steel, finally closed in 1990 with the loss of all jobs it left behind it a landscape rich in industrial heritage. Over time, the local community, devastated by the closure, came together to form the Brymbo Heritage Trust which is now in the final stages over confirming a 25-year lease of the heritage site.

The stack of the Blast Furnace No 1 forms an iconic feature within the site but needs stabilisation work to ensure its safety for the next 25 years, and it also needs work to allow the whole of the site to be open to visitors, trainees and school groups. Without this work, part-funded by the AIA grant, the Heritage Trust would not be able to open the site completely, nor would this important chapter in the telling of the story of iron and steel in Wales. The grant will also ensure the quality of interpretation is appropriate to such an important historic artefact and that people will not simply see it, but will go away with an understanding of its function and the lives of the men and woman who worked on the site.



Brymbo No 1 Blast Furnace

Amberley Steam Crane

The Amberley Museum & Heritage Trust has been awarded a grant to help restore a Smith Rodley Steam Crane to working order. In design it is typical of cranes used on wharfage and construction sites from the mid-Victorian era until the mid-twentieth century. The Amberley Museum crane was made by Thomas Smith & Co. Ltd., from Rodley, Leeds in 1952 and was first used by Thomas Ward Ltd., contractors plant engineers. In 1963 it moved to the Charlton Sawmills near Chichester, Sussex to handle trees and wood at the mill. Retired in 1986 it was donated to Amberley Museum and after a servicing overhaul was demonstrated there until 2014. A need to recondition the steam boiler, overhaul the mechanical parts and restore the track on which it operates was identified but restoration has awaited financial resources. The AIA grant will help the crane to be restored to a fully operational condition and to demonstrate it lifting timber around the woodyard on a

regular basis. Of many thousands built, remarkably few such cranes have survived and if restored, it is believed that the Amberley Steam Crane would be the only one of its type in the country that is fully operational and publicly accessible.

Komet Circular Sock Machine

The John Smedley Archive Trust has been awarded a grant to restore to working order, a small, circular 'Komet' knitting machine, believed to date from the 1920s. This machine is one of only a handful of its type to have survived the implosion of the British Knitwear Industry that has taken place since the 1980s. Although two examples from the 1930s have been preserved in the Science Museum's collection, neither is complete. The Smedley machine is believed to be earlier, possibly dating from the 1920s, making it unique in a museum and important in terms of the story of knitwear manufacture.

The 'Komet' is the only circular machine to have been retained at John Smedley Ltd. and the company is in the process of donating the machine to the John Smedley Archive Charitable Trust: a process that will be completed by June, 2021. As the last remaining circular machine at the factory, it represents a construction method used by John Smedley and other knitwear manufacturers until the 1980s. Just as with the 'fully fashioned machines' taking forward the story of domestic knitting, the Komet takes the story forward from the circular, hand-operated, domestic Griswold-type sock knitters on display at Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum. Having the Komet restored to working order and on display for the public, initially in the factory shop (which has a footfall of c 27,000 people annually) potentially included in an exhibition at a Regional Gallery (planned for 2024) and ultimately in the proposed Museum of Knitted Fashion at Lea Mills the Komet would provide a spectacular, working exhibit.

Nene Valley Railway 'Derek Crouch' Saddle Tank Locomotive

The Nene Valley Railway has been offered a grant to enable its team of young engineers to undertake a full mechanical overhaul of Derek Crouch, an iconic small locomotive central to the history of Nene Valley Railway (NVR) and with strong connections to the region. The aim is to bring back to life this 'Countess of Warwick' steam locomotive, one of only three survivors of the class, and with a water pump design unique in preservation. The work will be completed in time for a double celebration in 2024 - the locomotive's 100th birthday, and 50 years since Derek Crouch first ran on the NVR hauling the first train in preservation along the line.

Derek Crouch, is a 0-6-0 Saddle Tank steam locomotive built by Hudswell Clarke in 1924 in Leeds. Ordered by the McAlpine construction company for a cost of £1,800, its first working assignment was the construction of the Watford bypass (1924-1926). Before the Second World War, the locomotive worked on several high profile construction contracts, including London Tilbury Docks (1926-1929); the Southampton Docks extension (1929-1933); the Cheddar Reservoir (1933); and the reconstruction of Cardiff (East Moors Plant) and Ebbw Vale Steel Works (1933-1938). After a change of owners to the Ministry of Agriculture in the early 1940s, the locomotive went to work on the Widdington Light Railway running from the largest sugar refinery in Europe at

Downham Market to Stoke Ferry in Norfolk. In 1957 the line closed and the locomotive was purchased by Derek Crouch (Contractors) Ltd where it was given its synonymous name. Derek Crouch then worked at an open cast coal working in Widderington, Northumberland until 1970 when it was placed in storage at the company's HQ in Eye on the outskirts of Peterborough.



NVR Saddle tank Locomotive, Derek Crouch

In 1972, Derek Crouch was placed on permanent loan to the nascent Nene Valley Railway where it returned to steam the following year. In April 1974, Derek Crouch pulled the first ever train on the restored railway, and subsequently was a favourite attraction at steam days. In 1982 the locomotive was taken out of traffic and placed on static display at the entrance to the main NVR Station at Wansford where it stayed until 1994. Possibly the most important aspect of this project is the opportunity it will provide to train young volunteers of the NVR Small Loco Group in locomotive restoration, passing on skills to the younger generation and leaving a legacy of experienced railway engineers that can keep Derek Crouch and other steam locomotives running in future.

Beamish Bus Shelter



1927 Bus Shelter, Beamish Museum

The bus shelter's original manufacturer is unknown, but it was erected in 1927 and stood at the Cockerton Green 'Travellers Rest' trolleybus and bus stop on Darlington Corporation Transport's western route towards Faverdale. The shelter was collected by Beamish Museum and has remained in store, dismantled, since 1972. The AIA award

is to enable the museum to conserve the surviving components, and replicate the missing roof structure and reinstate the glazing. The bus shelter will be re-erected at Beamish and will be used as an operational bus shelter at the new central bus stop which is to be created in 2022/23. It will make a very appropriate centrepiece for these bus stops, with a good local history and providing a real benefit to the museum's visitors (which had reached over 800,000 per annum in 2019). It will also ensure its longevity as an operationally important element within the museum's transport operation, and the overall historically-recreated landscape.

Middle Loading Basin at Sealock near Bideford



Sealock Middle Basin -current state

The Rolle Canal & North Devon Waterway Society have been offered a grant to restore the Middle Loading Basin at Sealock. Sealock itself, which has largely been restored, opens onto the unrestored Middle Loading Basin, which is the subject of the grant. This had substantial stone wall on the working wharf side and the opposite bank which would have been the towpath was constructed of rubble and rammed earth. This section is in a very poor state having been abandoned for well over 100 years.

The Rolle Canal started at Sealock south of the Bideford on the west side of a prominent bend of the tidal River Torridge and ran up the valley of the river for 7½ miles to a terminus basin beyond Great Torrington. Construction work began in 1823 under the supervision of James Green, a noted Civil Engineer who was also Engineer on the nearby Bude Canal in Cornwall, and became Surveyor of Bridges for the County of Devon. The canal had a short operational life, 1827 to 1874, when it was taken over by the London & S.W. Railway Company which was built over much of the route, so large parts have been obliterated. Therefore it is important that any remaining features are preserved. It is somewhat unusual amongst British canals in that it was a tub boat canal where cargo was carried in horse-drawn trains of small wooden tub boats fitted with wheels. There were no locks but a water powered inclined plane was used to lift the boats 66 feet from river level to a single long pound.

The whole site known as Sealock extends from the Sealock through the middle and upper basins for some 625m southwards to the lime kilns at Annery. This short stretch of canal was a highly industrialised area during, and for some years after, the lifetime of the canal with a ship yard, pottery, brick and lime kilns. Sealock itself (technically a tidal lock) allowed large river barges coming up the tidal river to tie up in middle and upper loading

basins which held water at all states of the tide; effectively a floating harbour like Bristol albeit on a smaller scale. Trans-shipment to/from the small tub-boats used on the canal then took place.



Sealock Middle Basin – Projected appearance

Waterworks Museum Hereford, Chimney

The condition of the brick chimney of Victorian water pumping station has been monitored closely for several years and, following visual signs of deterioration in recent months, an inspection of the chimney was undertaken in February 2021 and a programme of urgent repairs recommended.



Hereford Waterworks Chimney

The Victorian chimney is in the oldest part of the pumping station dating from the mid 1850s. It was extended six times in 50 years, the last being in 1906. If allowed to fall into disrepair, the safety hazard would preclude the museum from operating on this site hence the AIA grant. The Waterworks Museum is a landmark building in the City of Hereford and is one of Herefordshire's leading visitor attractions.

Small Project Grants

SS Freshspring Wheelhouse, Bideford

The Steamship Freshspring Trust has been awarded a Small Project grant to cover the costs remaking the wheelhouse fittings and furniture to aid interpretation

and give greater relevance to the surrounding artefacts. SS Freshspring is a 126 ft (38.5m) long steam powered ex Royal Fleet Auxiliary water carrying vessel, completed in 1947 by the Lytham Shipbuilding and Engineering Co as the last of 14 and only remaining example of her class. The ship is registered with National Historic Ships. Reg no: 28, is wholly owned by the Trust, and has a secure, publicly accessible permanent berth in the Port of

Bideford. The Trust's proposal to maintain and conserve the vessel's original form and configuration, whilst opening her to the public, serves to enhance her significance.



Wheelhouse and SS Freshspring, current condition



SS Freshspring's form reflects absolutely her role as a seagoing RN water carrier, but perhaps of even greater significance is the fact that with her pre-Second World War configuration, she is an extremely rare survivor of the type of general cargo vessel that was the work-horse of the British mercantile fleet from the early 1900s to the 1960s. The only other vessel of similar appearance and scale in the UK is SS Robin of 1890, a ship that will never become operational or float again.

The Trust has been restoring the ship's timber wheelhouse, supported by Heritage Lottery and local grant giving trusts and has sourced and refitted much of what was originally installed, such as ship's wheels, compass and radio set. The aim is to complete the restoration of this area with the AIA grant by fitting out with an original style chart table, a bench cupboard, drop-window fittings and period enclosure to hide the electronics controlling our photovoltaic system, which provides all power on the ship enhancing our green credentials. Although the major work will be carried out by a professional cabinet maker, volunteers will contribute significantly by preparing areas for the contractors and assisting where possible to learn new transferable skills. Local people have a passion for the estuary and its heritage. They have embraced the ship, with large numbers volunteering in some capacity, from painters to cake makers to Administrators and Trustees.

Gradbach Limekiln, South West Peak

The South West Peak Landscape Partnership have been offered a Small Project Grant to consolidate an 18th/19th century limekiln in Gradbach in the South West Peak area of the Peak District National Park, as the first stage of a wider Peak District Limekiln Project. This limekiln is important to industrial heritage and history as it is a

comparatively intact and highly accessible example of a limekiln, of which less than 100 remain in the South West Peak. The Gradbach limekiln has a strong amenity and landscape value, which is currently at risk due to its deteriorating condition. The limekiln lies to the side of a road in a place where visitors come in large numbers. People are keen to know more about what they see as they visit the National Park. Volunteers, local residents, visitors and National Park rangers have all highlighted the plight of this particular kiln. The grant will be used to conserve this limekiln through: reconstructing a small number of courses above existing levels; rebuilding the arched draw hole; removing vegetation that is damaging the dry-stone wall structures; localised rebuilding of the walls where they are starting to become unsafe around the draw hole; replacing stones at the front section of the kiln; and clearing the area in front of the kiln at the roadside.