



GLIAS

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NEWSLETTER

163

APRIL 1996

GREATER LONDON INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY SOCIETY

ISSN 0264-2395

Hon. Secretary : Bill Firth, 49 Woodstock Avenue, London NW11.

Hon. Newsletter Editor : Charlie Thurston, 1 Ely Gardens, Cranbrook,
Ilford, Essex, IG1 3NQ.

DIARY DATES

GLIAS EVENTS

WHEN

WHAT

- Apr. 27 **GLIAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.** at 2.30 pm at the Royal Entomological Society, 41
Sat. Queen's Gate, London SW7 See enclosed leaflet.
- May 25 **VISIT TO HOUSE MILL, BROMLEY BY BOW.** Entrance to the mill is £2. This visit is now
Sat. fully booked.

GLIAS WALKS

See enclosed leaflet

- May 4 **GLIAS WALK - THE LAST MAIN LINE, BAKER ST. & MARYLEBONE,** led by Bill Firth.
Sat. Meet at 2.30 pm outside Baker Street Station, Marylebone Road.
- June 1 **GLIAS WALK - BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM,** led by Mary Mills. Walk of about 3 hours,
Sat. round the perimeter of the Greenwich Millenium site. Meet at 2.30 pm at Maze Hill BR station.

OTHER EVENTS

- Apr. 7 **BUS RALLY AT BARKING, ESSEX.** At the rear of Barking Town Hall. There will be a flea
Sun. market and vintage RT/RF vehicles. Admission free.
- Apr. 10 **TECHNOLOGY AND AIR DEFENCE 1914-1940.** A lecture by Professor R.W.Burns at 5.45 pm
Wed. at the Science Museum, London SW7. Admission free. (Newcomen Society)
- Apr. 12 **THE ROMANCE OF RAILWAY BRIDGES.** A talk by John Boyes at 6.45 pm at the 'Prince
Fri. Regent', 71 Marylebone High St, corner of Nottingham Street. (The Railway Club)
- Apr **THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MINING.** Conference at Seale/Hayne College, Newton Abbot, Devon.
12/14 For details contact P. Newman, c/o RCHME, Rose Duryard, Lower Argyll Rd, Exeter, Devon,
Fri/Sun. EX4 4PB.
- Apr. 13 **SERIAC 1996.** The conference will be held at Dover Town Hall, from 10.00am At 5.45 pm There
Sat. will be an evening visit to Crabble Corn Mill. Course fee £7. Lunch £9.
- Apr. 17 **THE GREATER LONDON ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE.** A talk by Sue Cole at
Thurs. 'The George', 57 Liverpool Rd, N1. (corner of Tolpuddle St.) at 8.00 pm. (IAHS)

- Apr.20 Sat. CHATHAM'S HISTORIC DOCKYARD. An all-day event, tours in the morning £1.75 and lectures in the afternoon £3.50, or £5.00 all day. SAE to CKA, 5 Harvest Bank Rd, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9DL.
- Apr.20 Sat. SWIAC.S.Wales and West of England IA Conference at Southampton University. Details from Dr. Edwin Course, 20 Stourvale Gardens, Chandlers Ford, Hants. SO5 3NE.
- Apr. 20 Sat. CROSSNESS EVENT. Garden scale model railway show at Crossness Engines, Erith. Kent. For details tel : 0181 303 6723.
- Apr.21 Sun. REGENT'S CANAL WALK. Mile End to Limehouse. Meet at 2.30 pm at Mile End tube station. Fee £4. (IWA).
- Apr. 23 Tues. THE ROMAN PORT OF LONDON. A talk by Bruce Watson at Hawkstone Hall, (Lambeth North end of Kennington Rd.) at 7.30 pm (SLAS)
- Apr. 24 Wed. CAMBERWELL AND PECKHAM. An illustrated talk by Diana Rimel at 7.00 pm Goldsmith's College, New Cross, SE14. For details tel : 0171 231 7845.
- Apr. 25 Thurs. CHIPPENDALE TO CURTAIN ROAD : A talk on the East End furniture industry. By David Dewing, at 7.30 pm at Latimer Church Hall, Ernest St, EI. (ELHS)
- Apr. 25 Thurs. ANGLO-NORSE SHIPPING RELATIONS IN WORLD WAR II. A lecture by A.Thowsen at King's College, Room G01, Norfolk Building, Surrey St, WC1, at 5.15 pm. (International Commission for Maritime History). Free admission.
- May 4 Sat. REIGATE CAVES AND SANDMINES VISIT. Admission 75p. Meet at south end of tunnel in Tunnel Road, Reigate, at 2.00 pm. (Croydon Nat. Hist. Soc.)
- May 5 Sun. REGENT'S CANAL WALK. CAMDEN TO PADDINGTON. Meet at 2.30 pm at Camden Town tube station. Fee £4. (IWA)
- May 8 Wed. THE LINEAR INDUCTION MOTOR. A lecture to be given by Professor Eric Laithwaite at the Science Museum, London SW7, at 5.45 pm. Admission free. (Buffet Supper afterwards £16.00 Newcomen Society)
- May 9 Thurs. HERITAGE OF THE CANALS. A lecture by Nigel Crowe at 7.30 pm at the London Canal Museum, New Wharf Rd, London N1. Details tel: 0171 713 0836.
- May 11 Sat. EMIAC. East Midlands IA Conference, at Weedon Village Hall, West St, Weedon, Northants. For details write to R.Grimes, 27 Winchester Road, Delapre, Northants. NN4 8AZ.
- May 12 Sun. SHIRLEY WINDMILL OPEN DAY Open from 12.00pm - 5.00pm as part of National Mills Day. Tel Clive Higgins - 0181 656 6037
- May 15 Wed. RICHARD MORELAND & SON, OLD STREET. A lecture by Dr Denis Smith (Chairman of GLIAS) at 8.00 pm at 'The George', 57 Liverpool Rd./Tolpuddle St, N1. (IAHS)
- May 16 Thurs. RUSSIAN NAVAL STRATEGY. A lecture by Capt. G. Wilson at King's College, Room G01, Norfolk Building, Surrey St. at 5.15 pm. Admission free. (ICMH)
- May 16 Thurs. EAST END HOUSING: MEMORIES AND RESEARCH. A talk to be given at 7.30 pm at Latimer Church Hall, Ernest St, EI. (ELHS)
- May 19 Sun. THE UNCOMPLETED NORTHERN LINE EXTENSION. A walking study tour from Finsbury Park Bus station., 10.30 am return from Bushey Heath 7.00 pm. Fee £5. Concessions £3. Cheques to North London Transport Society with SAE to NLTS, 8 The Rowans, Palmers Green, N13 5AD.
- May 22 Wed. BELLS AND BELLES. Bell founding and film making at Croydon. A talk by Dr. R. Cox. At 7.45 pm at E. Croydon United Reformed church, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon.
- May 22 Wed. LIGHTHOUSE ELECTRIFICATION. A lecture, to be given at the IEE, Savoy Place, London WC2, at 5.30 pm. Tea 5.00 pm Admission free. (IEE)
- May 28 Tues. CINEMA HISTORY IN SOUTHWARK. A talk by Tony Fletcher at Hawkstone Hall, Lambeth North end of Kennington Rd. At 7.30 pm. (SLAS)

- June 1/2 Sat/Sun. IWA BOAT RALLY. At Three Mills Wharf, Bromley-by-Bow. Tidemills open days and conducted tours. Details from Alan Russell, tel: 0181 529 0689. (IWA)
- June 7 Fri. THE LIGHT RAILWAY ACT 1896. A talk by J. Scott-Morgan at 6.45 pm at 'The Prince Regent', 71 Marylebone High St, corner of Nottingham St. (The Railway Club)
- June 13 Thurs. THE NEW RIVER. A talk by Mary Cosh at 7.30 pm at the London Canal Museum, New Wharf Rd, London N1. Tel : 0171 713 0836.
- June 13/16 VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS. Further information from Paul Saulter, Aubrey House, 10 Coach Lane, Redruth, Cornwall. TR15 2TP. See enclosed notice.
- June 15 Sat. EERIAC. Eastern England Regional IA Conference, 'Tourism and Fishing', at Great Yarmouth. SAE to Mrs Brenda Taylor, Crown House, Horsham St. Faiths, Norwich. Tel : 01603 897912.
- June 18 Tues. DORKING GREYSTONE LIME COMPANY LTS. 1865-1960. A talk by Paul Sowan. At 7.45 pm at E.Croydon United Reformed church, Addiscombe Grove.
- June 19 Wed. TECHNOLOGY ON FILM British Transport Archive Films at the Museum of London - see enclosed booking form. (Newcomen Society)
- July 5/7 Fri/Sun. THE HISTORY OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING. At York University. Further details. from Elizabeth Hartree, tel : 0171 344 5439. (IEE)
- July 6 Sat. CROSSNESS OPEN DAY. From 10.30 am. A donation is requested for the Restoration Fund. For further information tel : 0181 303 6723.
- July 7 Sun. THE UNCOMPLETED NORTHERN LINE EXTENSION. Details as for May 19th.
- July 11 Thurs. LONDON'S SURREY COMMERCIAL DOCKS. A lecture by A.F.Radley OBE. at the London Canal Museum, New Wharf Rd, N1 at 7.30 pm
- July 14/26. POLAND AIA VISIT. Dates not as advertised in Newsletter No. 162. Further details from David Alderton, 48 Quay Street, Halesworth, Suffolk. IP19 8EY. with SAE please.
- Sept.6/12 AIA CONFERENCE 1996. At Bangor, North Wales. Further details from David Alderton, address as above. SAE please.

EXHIBITIONS

EELS, PIE AND MASH. This exhibition has been extended until 25th April, at the Ragged School Museum, Copperfield Rd, Bow, E.3.

THE LONDON CANAL MUSEUM at New Wharf Road, London N1 is staging various exhibitions throughout the year, including The Heritage of the Canals, The New River, London's Docklands, The River Thames, Ice Cream and Canal Art. Further details tel : 0171 713 0836.

COURSES

EAST LONDON IA. On Wednesday afternoons from April to August, at North Woolwich Old Station Museum. Further information from F.Bishop, 39 Freshfield Drive, London N14 4QW, with SAE please.

IA TRAIN RIDES AND WALKS IN GREATER LONDON on 9 Thursday evenings from 6.30 pm starting on April 25th at City University. Fee £54. Details Sylvia Tyler, City University, ECIV OHB, tel : 0171 477 8268.

TRANSPORT IN LONDON. A WEA summer evening walking course. Further information Sue Hayton, 31, The High Street, Farnborough Village, Orpington, Kent, BR6 7BQ; (01689) 852186; Sue@newcomen.demon.co.uk

IA EVENING WALKS IN GREATER LONDON. A WEA summer course. For further information send SAE to the Branch Secretary, Flat 8, Wyburn Court, Ewell Rd, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 6HX, or tel : 0181 390 2998.

IA AFTERNOON WALKS IN GREATER LONDON. A WEA course. For further information send SAE to the Branch Secretary, details as above.

SLATE TRANSPORT IN SNOWDONIA. July 13-20. A course at Tan y Bwlch, Snowdonia. Details from the Director, Plas Tan y Blwch, Mauntrog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, LL41 3YU.

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN DARTMOOR. From 30th August to 2nd September. Fee £170. At Tiverton, Devon. Tutor : Dr. Edwin Course. Information from University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton. SO17 1BJ. or tel : 01703 594066.

THE STEAM ENGINE. From 20th to 22nd September. Fee £125. At the University of Nottingham, 14 Shakespeare St, Nottingham. NG1 4FQ. The tutor will be Peter Naylor.

CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL BILL AND ST PANCRAS GASHOLDERS

The Bill for the Channel Tunnel Rail link (CTRL), terminating at St Pancras Station, has passed through the House of Commons and early this summer it will be considered by a committee of the House of Lords. The Royal Assent is expected early in 1997. The Commons committee called for various modifications to alleviate noise and intrusion, but it did not address in depth the listed building and conservation area issues, which particularly affect the St Pancras end, and various petitions on this by the Victorian Society, English Heritage and others have been reserved for the Lords.

Charles Norrie told GLIAS at last year's AGM about the Bill's replacement of normal listed building consent procedures so as to give powers of demolition and alteration within the broad guidelines of a contentious "Heritage Agreement", with local authority approval of the detail of alterations to be granted by negotiation within strict time limits (See GLIAS Newsletter 158, June 1995). The possible treatment of the Grade I listed trainshed and securing a suitable use for the Midland Grand Hotel are major concerns. Worse, from our point of view, will be the effect on the townscape in the King's Cross Conservation Area - devastating the enclave of vigorously industrial side streets around the former German Gymnasium and Stanley Buildings and the magnificent forest of gasholders to the north.

There are many who consider that the high speed Kent commuter service, which will help to finance the CTRL, should be syphoned off at Stratford into Crossrail rather than add to the intense congestion at King's Cross-St Pancras. Since the first Crossrail bill was thrown out and it has not been resubmitted to parliament, there is no procedure whereby such a diversion can be achieved in the present bill. The proposed commuter platforms are to be sited on the east side, between the German Gymnasium and the gasholders, with the road traffic to the stations diverted along Cheney Road (presently narrow and paved with setts). Alternative locations have been considered and rejected. Even if there were no commuter platforms, however, the continental platforms, which are to be twice as long as the present trainshed, would clip the gasholders because it is decreed for reasons of safety that the platforms must be straight and the present S-curve of the tracks must be straightened out. The human propensity to accidents must have deteriorated since Waterloo International was approved!

Three listed and two unlisted gasholders are proposed to be demolished to leave just two (one listed) out of the seven. The promoters' environmental assessment of the visual landscape is a weak document, antipathetic to the substance of industrial landscape, and it fails to identify as "visual receptors" the many users of the Regent's Canal and its towpath for whom the gasholder frames are such a memorable feature, nor the numerous film enthusiasts who, I am told, come in homage to this prime filming location. Such is its importance to the cinema world that recording the area in virtual reality would seem to be called for before its Victorian texture is desecrated.

The guide frames of the three listed gasholders are united in a unique "Siamese triplet". These cast- and wrought-iron frames and the two-lift telescopic bells were constructed in 1880-81 reusing the tanks (the parts below ground) of three single-lift holders of 1860-67. A report by Dorothea Restorations Ltd has demonstrated the practicality of dismantling, restoration and reerection of these three holders on another site for under £3 million, excluding land costs, substructure and overheads. The tanks would not be recreated. Omitting the bells would reduce the cost to £1.2 million, approximately - tiny compared with the cost of the railway. Although the promoters, Union Railways, said they would "consider" the re-erection of these gasholders, there is no provision for this in the Bill or associated document, and the concessionaires appointed in February, London & Continental Railways, have no such obligation. One of the difficulties is land. Re-erection on unused land at the top of King's Cross Goods Yard has been suggested, but this misses the landscape impact and historical context. The only satisfactory visual location (other than in situ) is next to the remaining listed holder, on the site of the original gasworks. It is understood that English Heritage is pursuing this scheme in earnest, with new buildings inside the frames to justify the land cost. GLIAS members may like to debate the ethics of such surgery, given the difficulties of diverting the railway.

MALCOM TUCKER

NOTES FROM BOB CARR

FILTER BEDS ALMOST GONE (NL155p5)

Work has already commenced to clear away the former New River Company filter beds in Green Lanes, London N4, and by the time you read this, few traces of these early water purification structures are likely to remain. Across the road to the east the Castle pumping station is already a climbing centre. It is open from 2.00 pm to 10.00 pm in the week and from 10.00 am to 7.00 pm at weekends.

Being open in the evening there are now lights inside the pumping station and the tower at the southwest corner has all its windows illuminated. The view in the evening northwards from the junction of Brownswood Road and Green Lanes, looking through the bare winter trees, is to say the least exceedingly gothic -redolent of a Hammer film production. So far the present writer has not yet seen Count Dracula on the battlements.

If one can pluck up courage, it is possible to visit the interior of Stoke Newington pumping station as a spectator. The climbing centre is in the beam engine house itself with the former boiler house behind being used in part for a Snow and Rock shop. The Buckeye diesel alternators have gone from the boiler house but five Lancashire boilers converted for oil storage remain.

If you would like to take part in the rock climbing activities you should contact High Performance Sports Ltd. telephone : 0181 211 7000. Rock climbing has been growing rapidly in popularity and apparently there is now quite a shortage of facilities for people to practise.

Stoke Newington pumping station and the filter beds date from the mid 1850s and were built to supply the local area with drinking water. This part of London was rapidly built up in the following half century and it is now difficult to appreciate that when the Castle was first built it was surrounded by green countryside.

The filter beds at Stoke Newington were originally installed for water purification by slow sand filtration. Despite subsequent modification of the filtration process structurally the filter beds were very much as built and of considerable industrial archaeological significance. Unfortunately it is rather difficult to generate public enthusiasm for the retention of historic engineering structures. Bram Stoker is much more marketable.

THE CITY OF LONDON CLUB

The masterpiece of the architect Philip Hardwick (1792-1870) is generally considered to be the Euston Arch, demolished during the building of the present Euston railway station. As readers will probably know there is now a real chance that this famous Doric Arch will be rebuilt close to its original site. Members will also be familiar with Hardwick's hollow cast-iron Tuscan columns of 1827-8 for the warehouses around the St. Katharine Docks. Hardwick's work here was in collaboration with the great engineer Thomas Telford, then towards the end of his life.

However, the preceding two examples of Hardwick's work are now very much archaeological and readers may be interested in seeing a building still in use. Philip Hardwick was responsible also for the City of London Club which was built in 1833-4 in the Palladian style. This club is very much exclusive to top City people (the membership fees are the highest in London) but you may admire the exterior.

This is floodlit and the building can be seen to very good effect at dusk. It is close to the base of the six hundred feet tall National Westminster Tower now being refurbished for further office use after the Bishopsgate bomb of April 1993 and due to reopen in 1997. In the early 1970s the building of the Nat West Tower was about to sweep away Hardwick's club and it was listed only just in time.

Philip Hardwick gave up architectural practice during the 1840s and his son and grandson were also architects. Paddington station hotel, opened in 1854, is by Philip Hardwick's son Philip Hardwick (initials P.C.) so take care over the dates. The son (P.C.) had helped his father in the design of the original Euston Station. At the other end of the London and Birmingham railway you can of course still see Philip Hardwick the father's splendid entrance for Curzon Street railway station, the northern counterpart of the Euston Arch. The Ionic columned facade and office building are almost complete.

RED LEICESTER

Red Leicester cheese was made in the East Midlands in parallel with the more famous Stilton to use up surplus milk and shared the marketing channels of Stilton, being introduced to London before World War II although in the 1930s it was not that common. Red Leicester is coloured a deep red by the addition of the dye annatto and its colour is stronger than that of any other English cheese. Annatto (E160) is a vegetable dye obtained from the seed pods of the tropical Annatto tree (*Bixa orellana*). As a food colourant it is not known to produce

any adverse effects. It may also be found in butter, margarine, coleslaw and sponge pudding.

With the advent of pre-wrapped and refrigerated supermarket cheese, traditional British farmhouse cheeses were in decline, but following the success of the Real Ale movement and the subsequent coming of a Real Bread campaign it seems now that a Real Cheese movement is starting. Readers may be interested to know that traditional Red Leicester cheese is still made in Leicestershire at Melton Mowbray by Tuxford and Tebbutt. During working hours it is sometimes possible for parties to visit the factory for cheese tasting. For further information telephone : 01664 500 555.

GREAT EASTERN HOTEL

For their new City terminus at Liverpool Street the Great Eastern Railway built a hotel for the use of travellers. The architects were Charles Barry and Charles Edward Barry, father and son respectively, and the hotel first opened in May 1884.

Furniture was by Maple and Company and the manager was Thomas Bolton from the GE hotel at Harwich. One of the unusual features of the hotel is that it contains two Masonic temples to which the public is not usually admitted. There is an Egyptian temple in the sub basement and a more imposing Grecian temple added in 1912.

The hotel is on the north west corner of Liverpool Street and Bishopsgate and at least the exterior is probably well known to most readers. Its facade, a staircase and dining room, are listed grade two. There are now plans to completely rebuild the whole hotel, retaining almost nothing beyond the listed features and at a cost of thirty million pounds to create something very different from what is there now. The present relatively moderate charges for accommodation are likely to be greatly increased. Work is due to start towards the end of this year, with completion planned for late 1998.

BOB CARR

WIMBLEDON COLUMNS

The question of the main drainage ventilation pipes known as 'Wimbledon pipes' or 'Wimbledon columns' first appeared in the GLIAS Newsletter no. 159, August 1995, in which a member asked for the origin of the name and wrote that there were references to them in 1892 in a local newspaper when the Dorking Local Board installed them in response to complaints about evil odours. Five of these pipes apparently still survive.

There are also five surviving in Wimbledon; two are on the Common - one at the junction with Murray Road, and one near the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club; there is one in Lambton Road, and one in Worple Road at the junction with Thornton Hill; the fifth is in Southey Road.

These were probably installed by William Santo Crimp who was Engineer to the Wimbledon Local Board from the end of 1881 to February 1890. Crimp was born in 1853 in Ringmore, Devon, and showed early signs of his talent for engineering, for when only a youth he designed a water supply system for the neighbouring village of Modbury. His early professional life was closely connected with Baldwin Latham who was making hydro-geological surveys in Surrey and the Wandle Valley for the Croydon Sanitary Authority. In 1878 Crimp was resident engineer in the Wandle Valley under Latham. 1878 was also the year the Wimbledon Sewage Farm was laid out. In October of that year too, Charles Hamlet Cooper was appointed Assistant Surveyor to the Wimbledon Local Board.

Towards the end of 1881 Crimp was appointed Engineer and Surveyor to the Wimbledon Local Board. At this time the Wimbledon Sewage Farm was in a bad state, and the Local Board had been taken to court. Measures taken by Crimp to remedy this are described by him in a paper 'The Wimbledon Main Drainage and Sewage Disposal Works' read to the Society of Engineers on the 9th April 1888. He was evidently an outstanding experimental engineer; papers were read to the Institution of Civil Engineers on the treatment of sewage, on the disposal of sludge, and on the movement of air in sewers. This is where the ventilation pipes come in.

There had previously been grids at ground level which Mr. G. Chatterton, a member of the Wimbledon Local Board, said 'were well known all over the parish, and nurses were not allowed to take children within a hundred yards of them. Mr Crimp had now got rid of these places'. In this paper Crimp, referring to ventilation said '...this object may best be accomplished by means of pipes, carried up trees, houses or other convenient objects, or by specially constructed lamp-posts, where the escaping vapours can neither give offence, nor prove dangerous. This remedy has been in course of application at Wimbledon during the last five years, and the author hopes that before long there will not be a single sewer ventilator at the street level in the district.' He made it clear, however, that the problem of foul air only arose because a number of older houses were not

properly drained.

References : OBITUARY OF WILLIAM SANTO CRIMP (1853-1901). Inst. of Civil Engineers. Proceedings Vol.CXLV 1900-1901. Pt.III.

The Wimbledon Main Drainage and Sewage Disposal Works: a paper read to the Society of Engineers. 9th April 1888. (Copy at Wimbledon Library)

RITA ENSING

HELP!

Does anyone know anything about a strange structure at the Devil's Dyke (Brighton)? It is said to be military in origin and may have a relationship with a structure known as the Magazine at the west end of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, although the dates of the two buildings are disparate.

Ron Martin of the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society would be pleased to hear from anyone with information about either building. Ron's address is : 42 Falmer Avenue, Saltdean, Brighton, BN2 8FG.

BILL FIRTH

NUDGE, NUDGE, WINK, WINK

An acquaintance sidled up to me the other day, nudged me in the ribs with his elbow, tapped the side of his nose with his forefinger, winked, and in conspiratorial tones said, 'Member of GLIAS eh! Into all that are we?' 'Yes' I replied, 'I am a member of that august society'. 'Say no more chief. Green waders and swimming caps, eh!' he went on. 'Sorry,' I said, 'I am not sure I understand your drift'. 'GLIAS, I heard that GLIAS was mentioned in the Plastics and Rubber Weekly.' He winked again and I just managed to dodge another dig in the ribs. Had the poor dolt the wit, he would know that 'PRW' is a serious weekly publication for the dissemination of information among members of the plastics and rubber industry, not a grubby magazine off the top shelf. Unfortunately, I had missed the GLIAS lecture presented by Percy Reboul, titled 'The Early History of Plastics'. (Girlfriends do not consider lectures about IA as a suitable birthday treat.)

As I walked away from the still grinning fool, I pondered which 'Top Shelf' magazine GLIAS might find itself in, should we ever have lecture titles like 'Respirators and their use', 'Chains are strong' or, Heaven forbid, 'Leather dressing'.

DISGUSTED OF ERITH.

THE CITY OF LONDON GAS COMPANY

I was sitting at a meeting a couple of months ago listening to a City of London planner explaining that they could not let any old, scruffy boat moor along the Victoria Embankment because they had to 'preserve the original integrity of Bazalgette's design'. I was forced to point out that when Bazalgette built the Embankment he had to accommodate a gasworks in his design and so included a tunnel underneath for coal transfer purposes - nevertheless scruffy colliers must have continued to deliver coal alongside.

This was the City of London Gas Company, whose holders can be seen in early photographs of the Embankment. Its Blackfriars works was slightly west of the mouth of the Fleet on a site almost overburdened with historic interest. In the 17th century it was the site of a theatre, later Savery's workshop, later still headquarters and wharf of the New River Company.

It was, perhaps, the second gas company to be set up in London and started by merchants and shopkeepers rather than the sort of grandees who often financed early gas companies. One of the instigators was probably James Grant, who had also been behind the Chartered Gas Company. Its first works was at the bottom end of Fetter Lane but by 1815 it was relocated to Dorset Street, or 'Water Lane' as it was also known. In 1819 it was rebuilt again and it is from this date that the proper company records start. Everard (Sterling Everard History of the Gas Light and Coke. Co.) wrote a detailed history of their first years, describing them as 'money making, grasping and litigious'. By the 1820s the Company was in the hands of the New Cross based, Stansfield family.

An early engineer was John Perks, who designed the Blackfriars works. He was associated with Congreve, who acted as a consultant to the company. Perks and Congreve were to go off with George Landmann, to tour Europe building gasworks. In 1822 his successor, John Morgan, was thrown over a gas holder by an explosion and killed.

In 1815, the proprietors were in court for polluting the atmosphere and the City of London never let the company off the pollution hook again. It became increasingly clear that the works would not be allowed to remain on this congested inner city site. The story of the City improvements is a long and complicated one

which Don Clow has outlined. Gas supply played a major role in this and City activists - Charles Pearson aided and abetted by Angus Croll - promoted the Great Central Company out at Bow Common to supply the City. Political pressure to make gas companies more efficient led in the end to amalgamation of the City Company with the Chartered co. and subsequent closure of the Blackfriars works in 1873.

In the early 1880s the City of London School was built on the site. At the back, in Tudor Street, part of a governor house survived into the mid 1980s, with art nouveau motifs from the Gas Light and Coke Co. (why did I never photograph it?) In the 1980s the school was converted into the Morgan Bank HQ and the Museum of London undertook a dig on the site. Some of us went down to see it but it was clear what the archaeologists were really into was the medieval remains down underneath the interesting bits. A report was published into the dig (BOY86 - ring the Museum of London Archaeological Service, Archivist, for details.) Today, although the frontage of the school remains, the sheer walls of the bank make it difficult to imagine what used to be there. This is one of the key sites in the City of London and the siting of such an early gas works on it demonstrates the importance of gas in the economy of the City.

MARY MILLS

MORE GAS WORKS

Adding to the last article in Mary Mills' ongoing smoke opera concerning London's obscure gas works, the following may be of interest. Mary's 'gents' in the business of building gas works, Gostling and Hedley, could be considered as two of the first generation of gas engineers and contractors. Unfortunately biographical details of these pioneers are scant. John Gostling of Castle Street, Long Acre, London, was associated with Samuel Clegg in construction of a gas works in Bristol in 1816. Clegg is regarded by the gas industry as the first true gas engineer who commissioned in 1813 the world's first gas works in Westminster. Gostling was also associated with gas works in Birmingham in 1818, Canterbury in 1819, and Maidstone during 1821. The Ravensbourne Gas Company in Greenwich is as yet his last known venture. Joseph Hedley of Poultry, London, was active in the period from 1820 to 1840 and besides Greenwich was associated with the Isle of Thanet Gas Company, building works in Margate and Ramsgate. He was also involved with works at Richmond and Gravesend among others. At Gravesend he was assisted by his son Tom Abercrombie Hedley who by the 1850's was a consulting engineer based in Banbury.

Returning to Greenwich, the site Mary referred to as the Roan Street holders, was the Norman Road Depot of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, although the main entrance appeared to be in Roan Street. This was a fairly large area of land, but only a part was used for storage by the Phoenix Company, with two holders on site.

The site was, at that time, large enough to build a reasonable sized gas works, and although the Phoenix were often on the lookout for alternative sites, there is no evidence to suggest this was intended. Unfortunately, thanks to rationalisation of archives by British Gas, any surviving documents on purchase of the site are now unreachable at the Howard Greenfield Archive in Partington, Manchester. The South Metropolitan took over the site with its gas holders from the Phoenix in 1880, and either added or inherited a small distribution depot, a backwater of their empire.

The holders survived at least until the 1930s, making a rare appearance as the background of a photograph of one of the Company's social events, children's sports day in 1929. About 1935 the South Metropolitan built a small factory on the site for production of gas mantles, Gas Efficiencies Limited. This factory was last used for the manufacture of lime magnesite catalyst for the 'Segas Process' in the 1950s. The Norman Road site was finally sold off by South Eastern Gas Board around 1960.

BRIAN STURT

LOTTERY WIN FOR KEW BRIDGE STEAM MUSEUM

The new year has got off to a flying start for the Kew Bridge Steam Museum with news of a £400,000 award from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the first major gallery devoted to the history of the nation's water supplies. To be called 'Water for Life' the new £755,000 gallery at the popular museum in the old water pumping station at Brentford, Middlesex, will be opened officially in March 1997 in the Museum's 21st anniversary year.

Full information is available on the sponsorship programme to match the Lottery money, and other activities, at the Museum in Green Dragon Lane, Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 OEN, or telephone 0181 568 4757.

WHAT I DID ON MY HOLIDAYS

Generally I let my husband make all the arrangements, so when I said I fancied going to Lyme Regis, he booked up a hotel on some cheap deal. It was when we got there that we found the house had been built by a

family called Coade. Now I know that Coade stone is found all over London, and that it is supposed to have been very mysterious, made by Eleanor Coade on the Festival Hall site, and that no-one knows how it was made. I also remember some dismissive remarks on that score by Jon Wallsgrove in a GLIAS lecture some years ago - 'just terracotta' - he said. The landlord of our hotel told me a lot of nonsense about the Coade family - so I went to the library and looked around. People who saw 'Persuasion' on TV will remember Miss Musgrove jumping off the wall in Lyme. She may well have jumped into a line of trucks from a cement works to the wharf from where it was shipped. The line is marked with setts in the pavement (but does anyone know the date?)

No-one in Lyme seemed to think Coade stone was mysterious, just another manufacture. There are several links between industry in London and Lyme Regis - keep your eyes open. Just because it looks pretty on TV doesn't mean it was!

What else did I do? Well, we went to Swanage and saw the Great Globe. I had been taken there as a little girl (on a paddle steamer!) but what I hadn't remembered was that it is surrounded by other bits and pieces - carved seats with compass points and like information on them, plaques with maps showing all sorts of projections and information. Up above it is a folly castle - does anyone know who built it and why? It looks as though it was built to be more than just a tea room. Why I mention all this is that in Barbara Ludlow's very excellent 'Greenwich in Old Photographs' is a picture of the Globe Being carved in Greenwich - now, why would anyone bring several tons of stone all the way from Portland to Greenwich, to be carved, and then take it all the way back to Swanage? My husband thinks it looks as if it was carved in sections and then put back together again but neither the written information nor the 1887 photograph indicate that. Help, please.

MARY MILLS

GEORGE PARKER BIDDER

For four weeks in November/December 1995 visitors to Merton Civic Centre and then Mitcham Library, were able to see an exhibition about the life and career of George Parker Bidder. This great man of the 19th century had a special connection with the Wandle.

Born in 1806 in Moretonhampstead in Devon as the son of a stonemason, Bidder as a young child showed evidence of extraordinary mathematical ability. His father began to exhibit the boy as a prodigy who could perform in his head any calculation he was challenged with, and as 'The Calculating Boy' he became known throughout the country.

Unlike some exceptionally gifted children Bidder's abilities did not burn out, and he was fortunate in finding friends and patrons who enabled him to receive formal education. He went on to become one of the great engineers of his day, ranking with Rennie, Brunel and the Stephensons. In fact, Robert Stephenson and he were close friends and professional partners.

Bidder built railways and docks throughout Britain, and was involved in the construction of London's sewers. His skill and experience also led to much work abroad, especially Scandinavia, and he was consulting engineer for projects in India. In 1860 he was elected 10th President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and it was in January of the following year that he took the chair to listen to Frederick Braithwaite's paper 'On the Rise and Fall of the River Wandle; its Springs, Tributaries, and Pollution'. This famous account of the river had a special interest for Bidder for, as he commented at the time, he lived nearby, and owned the lease of the Ravensbury Mill.

His home from 1846-64 was Mitcham Hall, which used to stand near Mitcham Station. He then had Ravensbury Park House built, in Morden, off Bishopsford Road. This became the home of his eldest son, G.P. Bidder Q.C. when Bidder Senior retired to Dartmouth in Devon, where in 1878 he died in a house he had re-named Ravensbury.

Mr E.F. Clark, a great-great grandson of Bidder and an engineer himself, helped two members of Moretonhampstead Historical Society to assemble the exhibition to mark the 75th anniversary of the Newcomen Society. It was displayed at Moretonhampstead and Dartmouth (Newcomen's birthplace) before being shown here.

Fortunately the family has kept many of Bidder's letters, documents and photographs, and together with newspaper cuttings and pictures from the Illustrated London News, most of his life and much of his work was covered. There was a portrait and a poster from his years as 'the Calculating Boy', letters from the young engineer determined to improve his handwriting and cut down his swearing (!) travel documents and technical notes from the middle years, and later glimpses of Bidder as president and family patriarch.

Mr Clark's 1983 biography of his ancestor, 'The Calculating Boy' is in the local Wandsworth library and is still in print. The book can be purchased from KSL Publications, Ballards, Knotting Green, Bedford, MK44 1AA. It is in hardback 544 pages, price £21, including postage and packing.

JUDITH GOODMAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Regular readers of GLIAS Newsletter will know that for several years I have reviewed a new guide to a part of south London by GLIAS member, Darrell Spurgeon. I am very sorry to be unable to do so this year because Darrell has not produced anything...but what I am going to do is to plug the revision and re-issue of his 'Discover Woolwich and its Environs' originally produced six years ago. When it first came out, the Arsenal site in particular, was a mysterious place only to be seen by the lucky few from the inside of locked coaches. A steering committee on its future was set up, and we miserably failed to get an industrial archaeologist on it. Since then GLIAS has had a couple of trips inside, and last summer there was an open day. Even so, entry to this most interesting and important industrial site has not been easy and Darrell has been particularly privileged in being able to collect material which, he says, means 'I have included descriptions and information on all the older buildings on the site and this is not available to the public in any other accessible form'.

The book is available from Darrell Spurgeon, £5.50, which includes packing and postage, at 72 Kidbrooke Grove, SE3 OLG. (Tel : 0181 858 5831). Buy it, read it.

MARY MILLS

A GUIDE TO THE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF THE MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT. By Peter Tarplee.

£8.95. from Peter Tarplee, Donard, East Street, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT23 4QX.

This is the latest in the excellent series of guides to the industrial history of Surrey, published by the Surrey Industrial History Group.

MANAGING THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE. A collection of papers originally presented to a seminar at Leicester University in July 1994. Edited by Marilyn Palmer & Peter Neaverson. £14.00. Orders to Dr Alan McWhirr, School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH.

SWINDON; THE LEGACY OF A RAILWAY TOWN. By John Cattell & Keith Falconer of the RCHME. This richly illustrated book is the definitive work on the architecture of Swindon's railway heritage. £19.95 from HMSO.

GUNPOWDER TO GUIDED MISSILES - IRELAND'S WAR INDUSTRIES. By George D.Kelleher.

The first definitive account of the explosives and armament industries in Ireland. £25.00 sterling from John D. Kelleher, 1 Kellehers Villas, Bunacummer, Inniscarra, Co. Cork, Ireland. BILL FIRTH

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From GLIAS member Desmond Croome :

The report of the GLAS visit to Welwyn Garden City in the February Newsletter prompts two memories of the Shredded Wheat Factory.

The first is in the 1950s. There was a private railway siding in the factory grounds, complete with buffer stops at the end. A small wooden hut had been built right across the siding, about 20-30 yards before the buffers, so that if, by mischance, a wagon had been shunted too energetically in this direction, it would have demolished the hut before stopping at the buffers. Perhaps this was an early form of retardation control, as introduced at some London underground termini after the Moorgate accident.

The other memory is from childhood in that, in the 1930s, the Shredded Wheat packets had a jolly picture of the factory and a steam-hauled express on the LNER main line in the background. This was later deleted from the design. I may have read, or perhaps assumed, that this was because the manufacturers did not wish to give even a hint that smoke from the railway could enter the factory.

Michael Bussell has written expressing concern about the possible closure of North Woolwich Railway station Museum, which houses artefacts belonging to the Marylebone Railway Club. The Passmore Edwards Museum in Stratford, London E.15, has already been closed, but the North Woolwich part of the Museum will remain open but with restricted hours of opening, at present.

JUNE NEWSLETTER

Items intended for inclusion in the June issue of this Newsletter should reach the Editor by 8th May.