



The website of the Black Country Society



Established in 1967 to Support, Record, Preserve and Celebrate the distinct

Character and Nature of the West Midlands area known since the mid nineteenth century as 'The Black Country'



BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

The Black Country Society has members with specialist interest in the area. Our Industrial Archaeology Group have a particular interest in the buildings and sites of historical interest. The IAG plan a programme of Talks and activities annually and members of BCS are welcome to attend and take part. Please note the new venue this year; the Olde Swan, (Mrs Pardoe's), Halesowen Road, Netherton.

Access to the room is by a staircase at the back of the pub lounge. The Olde Swan has its own car park off Northfield Road at the rear the pub, from which the lounge can be entered directly. Please note there is no lift to the first floor, so stairs are the only option.

Industrial Archaeology Group Programme

2021 MEETINGS & TALKS:

Wednesday 1st September. 7.30pm.

A BLACK COUNTRY FAMILY OF IRONMAKERS by Keith Robinson.

Keith's ancestors, the Rose family, owned ironworks in Moxley in the 19th century. The talk traces the development of the works through alternating periods of growth and recession, together with an examination of the working conditions and social lives of the employees.

Wednesday 6th October. 7.30pm.

THE BLACK COUNTRY LANDSCAPE THROUGH ARTISTS' EYES by Keith Hodgkins.

From JMW Turner in the 1830s to Wolverhampton-born Edwin Butler Bayliss in the 1930s, Keith will look at how the Black Country landscape has been portrayed by artists down the years. The depictions are sometimes surprisingly rural, but more usually show a land ravaged and blackened by generations of mining and ironworking.

Wednesday 3rd November. 7.30pm.

THE SOHO FOUNDRY by Alan Hill

Alan will tell the story of this famous Smethwick foundry, which was opened in 1796 by Matthew Boulton to build the steam engines designed by his partner James Watt. It was the first factory in the world built for the complete manufacture of steam engines, a status now recognised by the grade II* listing of the buildings and the

Industrial Archaeology e-News Bulletin April 2020

Like all voluntary and charitable organisations the AIA's activities have been severely affected by the current COVID-19 crisis. In the short term we have had to cancel our Ironbridge weekend looking at the slate industry in Wales, which was due to take place at the end of April. We hope to run this again once the current crisis has eased. However, we are still hoping to deliver our annual conference at Liverpool in August and preparations for this are continuing. At this stage the only change we have made is the waiving of the late booking fee. We are following the Government's health guidelines and are in contact with Liverpool John Moores University; we will act accordingly nearer the time should the health restrictions remain in force.

The wider Industrial Heritage and Industrial Archaeology sector has been severely hit by the health crisis. All museums are closed, all local society meetings cancelled, educational charities such as the Workers' Educational Association are now only functioning online, and professional archaeology fieldwork is mostly suspended. These are worrying times and the financial viability of many museums and archaeology units is in danger of being undermined. Both the Arts Council and the National Heritage Lottery Fund have launched emergency grant funds to support museums and heritage visitor attractions. However, that leaves the local voluntary sector, and in particular industrial heritage and archaeology groups and societies who rely on membership income, in suspension, with no prospect of external support. It is very likely that some of these groups, who look after local industrial heritage sites, but are not part of the registered museums sector, will be forced to close as a result of loss of income and members.

The AIA is looking to see what it can do to support these groups over coming months, including lobbying for support from Government and working with

scheduling of the whole site as an Ancient Monument.

For details contact iagroup@blackcountryociety.co.uk.

The Black Country Society Industrial Archaeological Group is a member of the Association of Industrial Archaeology.

Please see the latest information by clicking on the button below.

[Click to see the latest information](#)

other heritage organisations to make sure that industrial archaeology is not forgotten in the wider picture. If you have any particular concerns that you'd like to share with us, or thoughts on how the AIA can help, please get in touch.

Mike Nevell, AIA Chair

Several industrial heritage sites in the UK are counting the cost of the severe flooding which occurred in February. In the Ironbridge Gorge, the River Severn rose to its highest level for many years and, whilst the recently-restored Iron Bridge survived these relatively unscathed (as it has done all the other floods in its 240 year life), the Museum of the Gorge, housed in the 1796 Severn Warehouse, and the Coalport China Museum suffered significant damage, the cost of which has been estimated at £250,000. A fund-raising initiative and a publicity campaign to attract visitors back to the Gorge have been launched but were swiftly overtaken by the impact of coronavirus.

New life for historic Leeds textile mill

One of the most remarkable monuments to the power once exerted by Britain's textile industry is Temple Mill in Leeds. It was built in the Egyptian style by John Marshall around 1840 and intended as an integrated flax spinning and weaving mill. Amongst its unique features were domed glass skylights and a flat roof covered with grass, on which sheep grazed. After Marshalls sold the site in 1886 it has had a number of uses, including home to the Kays catalogue mail order business. The Grade 1-listed buildings have been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register for many years, as various plans to find a sustainable future for them have stumbled. In February 2020 it was announced that the site was to become home to a new British Library of the North, as part of the Government's Northern Powerhouse initiative.

Stockport Hat Works restoration underway

The Stockport Hat Works Museum, which celebrates the town's important felt hat industry, is embarking on some exciting changes to create a more sustainable future. The redevelopment is restoring 30 hatting machines and their associated line shafting, create a vibrant space for visitors, with better interpretation, new learning facilities, and will put more of its collection on display. This work was funded in part by a grant of over £16,000 from the AIA Restoration Grants scheme. The museum is closed whilst this work takes place but is due to reopen in Spring 2021. Since its launch in 2009, the AIA's Restoration Grants scheme has helped almost 50 different organisations, with grants totaling over £600,000. [Visit our website](#) for more information.

There is more good news concerning the future of the Chance Brothers glassworks in Smethwick, described as 'one of the most important industrial sites in the West Midlands'. The works opened in 1824 and produced glass for many prominent 19th-century structures, including many lighthouses, the Palace of Westminster and the Crystal Palace. In later years it produced laboratory glassware. It closed in the early 1980s and the site has been used recently by a skip hire company. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, with eight Grade 2 listed buildings and has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register for several years. In February this year, plans were announced to redevelop the site as an urban village, with a mix of residential and commercial uses. The plans include a Heritage Centre and a 30m tall lighthouse to commemorate the site's past. There is a video describing the history of the site, with a splendid 3-D depiction of the redevelopment plans on the West Midlands History website. Archaeologists working on the HS2 rail line have unearthed what is thought to be the world's oldest railway roundhouse, on the site of the proposed new Birmingham Curzon Street station. The roundhouse was situated adjacent to the old Curzon Street station, which was the northern end of the

London and Birmingham Railway. This opened to passengers in 1838 and was Birmingham's main station until New Street was opened in 1854. Built to a design by Robert Stephenson, the roundhouse was opened on 12 November 1837, which predates the previous oldest example, in Derby, by almost two years. The L&BR terminus and was fronted by the grand 'Principal Building'. This Grade I listed building is the world's oldest surviving piece of railway architecture, and has stood, surrounded by waste land, neglected and forlorn, for many years but is to be incorporated into the new HS2 terminus. Read more about it on the [Birmingham Updates](#) website.

AIA's Planning Casework Officer, Amber Patrick, continues to review and advise on planning applications affecting significant industrial heritage sites, although the number of these has fallen in recent weeks due to the coronavirus. One notable recent example concerns the Grade II listed Marshall's Mill in Halifax, part of the historic complex of textile mills at Dean Clough, including the Dean Clough dyeworks. An application to convert the mill to apartments was supported by the AIA, even though the current plans include the addition of balconies and some new windows, as the project will safeguard this otherwise-endangered building. You can read more about the AIA's planning casework on our website [here](#).

New research published into South Yorkshire early model industrial village Photograph: Miners Lodging House in Elsecar, built c.1853 to house unmarried miners coming to the village to work for the Earl Fitzwilliam (courtesy Barnsley Museums)

Historic England have published some interesting new research on Elsecar, an early planned industrial village in South Yorkshire, built by the Earls Fitzwilliam in the 18th and 19th centuries. The research has been carried out as part of the Elsecar Heritage Action Zone, a 3-year partnership between Historic England and Barnsley Museums. The new research shows that Elsecar was a precursor to later model villages like Saltaire and was built as a showpiece – designed to impress royals and aristocrats, who were regular visitors throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Read more about it (and download a free copy of the report) on the Historic England website [here](#).

Waverley Paddle Steamer starts £2.3million boiler refit

Photograph: Waverley Paddle Steamer in Glasgow (courtesy of the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society)

The historic paddle steamer Waverley left Glasgow in January, under tow to Greenock, for the start of her £2.3 million boiler refit. The funds were raised in around seven months, with donations from more than 8,000 members of the public and £1m from the Scottish Government. The work is expected to take around 4 months. For more photographs please visit the [Paddle Steamer Preservation Society website](#).



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