

(Photos 1-53 are on page 4 onwards. This photo of the entrance to the Horizontal Engine House was taken in June 2014, with the afternoon sunshine filtering through the leaves of the willow tree that used to stand just outside the boundary fence. The view has changed, as the trees that used to hide the building from passers-by were trimmed back in 2016 by Ibstock's foresters and the brick surrounds to the windows and door were rebuilt by contractors in 2017)

There have been 7 work parties since the last newsletter, bringing the total to date in 2020 to 16. A further 7 had to be cancelled under the Government's Corona virus restrictions. The masons worked throughout the period on the conservation programme, completing many of the items on the contract.

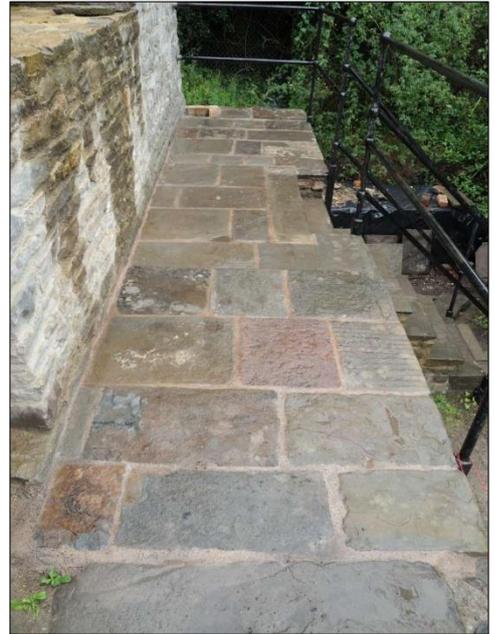
Work parties resumed in June with a safety protocol in place to keep the volunteers spaced apart. Part of this protocol is the exclusion of visitors from work parties until further notice, as this will help with volunteer safety. We have decided against opening Brandy Bottom in September as part of the national Heritage Open Doors scheme.

Progress: May – August 2020

The masons have made progress with the conservation works paid for by the grants from the Ibstock Enover Trust and the Enover Community Trust. So far they have rebuilt the top of the brick extension at the south-west end of the Old Pit heapstead, which had been one of the areas targeted by the vandals (photo 6 in newsletter N° 27). That rebuild includes the restoration of a flight of steps that now connect the platform outside the south-west wall of the Cornish Engine House with the top of the heapstead (photo right). Jeff is making a set of railings for the steps. Both the north-east and south-west walls of the Vertical Engine House have been raised and are now at a height that would have supported the engine beams that spanned the building along a north-east/south-west axis. This height was based on the length of the holding down bolts at the south-west end of the building. Photo 4 shows the completed north-east wall and photo 6 the south-west wall. Photo 8 is a close-up of the rebuilt western corner of the Old Pit heapstead. Not all of the face of the south-west wall has been rebuilt, as the intention has always been to restore



only what is necessary for the long-term conservation of the structures. After the builders finished Hamish connected the two parts of the stone facing on the south-west wall of the Old Pit heapstead with a stone arch and filled in the area above it with bricks (photo [9](#)). This will give support to the brick facing at the top of this wall. The arch at the entrance to the East Flue has been rebuilt (photo [14](#)), as has the retaining wall that runs outside the south-west wall of the Vertical Engine House. The top of the bob wall of the Cornish Engine House is being rebuilt (photo [17](#)) so that the stone pivot slabs could be reinstalled. The platform outside the south-west wall of the Cornish Engine House now has a paved top (photo right), using flagstones bought with a grant from the South Gloucestershire Council. A stone with a hole drilled up from the underneath had sat for many years on the platform outside the south-west wall of the Cornish Engine House (photo [18](#)). It was not possible to incorporate it into the new layout so had to be removed. A second hole was discovered when it was examined after removal (photo [19](#)), and the measurements taken suggest that the block was a section of a Dramway sleeper that had been put to a new use. The concrete roof over the fan ducts now extends as far as the wall of the New Pit shaft (photo [20](#)) and the vandal-damaged section of the existing roof has been repaired. The area above the New Pit passage has been waterproofed to stop rain soaking through to the arched brick roof of the New Pit passage and causing spalling in frosty weather. A waterproof liner has been laid at the base of the winding ramp and two surrounding areas and then covered with concrete (photo [22](#)). Rain now drains from all three areas to the base of the winding ramp (photo [23](#)) and from there to the floor of the passage. We have still to devise a way of directing the water away from the passage. The original layout to the top of the Horizontal Engine House walls had weathered since the work was completed in 2014, so a course of coping bricks has now been laid around the perimeter. Photo [24](#) was taken at an early stage, when a stone bridge had been laid across the drainage gap at the northern corner to act as a support, while photo [25](#) shows the completed brickwork laid across the bridge. At the time of writing the masons were laying the coping bricks along the top of the south-east wall of the New Pit heapstead, replacing the ones vandalised earlier in the year. And talking of vandals, work should start shortly on the new boundary fences.



One of the first tasks for the volunteers in June was recovering the objects that vandals had thrown down the shaft outside the Vertical Engine House and the condenser pit in the Cornish Engine House. Photo [26](#) shows the mess at the bottom of the latter. As well as trashing parts of the site, we discovered that the vandals had removed the nameplates from the Old Boiler House, the Pumping Shaft, and the Vertical Engine House. The bricks that had been dislodged by the vandals have been cleaned for reuse at some time in the future, and some of the north-west wall of the New Pit heapstead ramp has been repointed.

The vandals had enlarged an existing hole by the engine bed in the Cornish Engine House, making it easier to put a camera down the hole to see what lies under the floor on the south-east side of the building. One of the resulting photos can be seen on the right. The stonework at the back forms part of the north-eastern wall of the building, while the 'roof' in the picture is the underside of the floor at engine bed level. Some of the other photos can be seen in photos [27](#) to [29](#). The chamber does not appear to connect with the outside world, nor does it appear to give access to the space under the engine bed so that the engine holding down bolts on the north-east and south-west sides could be tightened. The access point for that area has still to be discovered. The holding down bolt on the north-west side would appear to have been mounted in the condenser pit while the masonry slot seen in photo could be associated with the bolt on the south-east side. If there is no access to the underneath of 3 of the 4 bolts, then how are they tightened? As is always the case at Brandy Bottom, every answer comes with a new set of questions attached.

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Clearance work has not resumed in the condenser pit of the Cornish Engine House as it was felt that it was too cramped for keeping a safe spacing between volunteers. Attention turned instead to the top of the Old Pit heapstead. In June this uncovered a single layer of bricks (photo [30](#)) at the south-west end. During the following work parties the excavated area was extended to the east (photo [32](#)), uncovering the almost 4 feet deep metal-rimmed hole seen in photo [33](#). Also found were the row of metal fastenings seen in photo [34](#). The latter are loose, so may have been attached to a length of wood that has rotted away. Work in this area is still underway, so the significance of the finds has not yet been fully assessed. At the same time another group started working at the batch end of the heapstead, where earlier work had uncovered the remains of a building. There are the footings of a wall with what looks like a doorway at the south-eastern end of the area (photo [36](#)). Running at right angles to those footings towards the batch are the footings of another wall (photo [37](#)). A small salt-glazed jar was found toward the batch end (photo [38](#)). Exploration around what appeared at first glance to be a fallen wall revealed what could be a door with some associated pieces of wood (photo [40](#)), and a stretch of brick flooring (photo [41](#)). Work here is also still in progress, but hopefully there will be more information about both these discoveries in the next newsletter.

The scaffolding around the bob wall of the Cornish Engine House presented an opportunity to see if there were any unusual views of the site, and also to take some reference photos of the inside of that building and the tops of its walls. Photo [15](#) is one of these photos, while some of the others are photos [45](#) to [48](#).

The brick in the photo on the right (cm scale) was found when sorting through a stockpile of reclaimed firebricks. Heat has affected one end, so that the full name of the maker is no longer visible. Research established that it was Hickman & Co, who was one of several firebrick makers in Stourbridge near Birmingham. What is interesting about this brick is that the 'N' in Hickman is a mirror image of a normal N. There are several photos of bricks from this maker on the internet, some of which have a normal N and others the 'mirror image' N so the typo is not unique. The error would have been corrected the next time the mould box was replaced.



Heritage Open Days 2020

We have decided AGAINST opening Brandy Bottom in September as part of the *Heritage Open Days* scheme. This decision was taken after an assessment of the risks from Covid-19 to both the volunteers and the visiting public, the precautions that would have to be taken to minimise them, and the availability of volunteers. It is our intention to open again in 2021, but that depends on many factors outside our control.

More information on other sites in the South Gloucester area can be found on the South Gloucestershire Council webpage: <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/heritage-open-days-2020/>. It still included Brandy Bottom at the time of writing this newsletter. A copy of the SGC leaflet can also be downloaded from the AIBT website by using this [link](#). The leaflet had to be finalised in June, so may also have out of date information on other events. Readers should therefore first check the individual organisation's website before visiting a site. The national HOD website is <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>.

Visitor Access, Future Work Parties, and Joining In

There is no visitor access to Brandy Bottom until further notice. This exclusion is part of our Covid-19 working protocol to keep the volunteers safe and as a result the dates of work parties are not being published. Anyone who is thinking about joining us as a volunteer should first make contact through the AIBT email address of info@aibt.org.

Information on Website

There are copies of all earlier newsletters on the Archive page of the website www.aibt.org. The Brandy Bottom section has pages covering a brief history of the pit and reports on work parties, as well as over 500 photographs of the buildings, work parties, artefacts and structures discovered, and the wildflowers and insects.

Photographs (May - August 2020)



Photo 1 – View of the rebuilt brickwork at the south-west end of the Old Pit heapstead. Photos 5 and 6 in the previous newsletter (Nº 27) show the original layout and the vandalised state respectively from the same viewpoint.



Photo 2 – A view of the same area as the previous photo, but this time taken from the top of the heapstead. This view makes it easier to see the layout of the reinstated steps ...



Photo 3 – ... and with the wooden treads in place.



Photo 4 – The north-east wall of the Vertical Engine House, seen here from the top of the Old Pit heapstead, is now at its final height ...



Photo 5 – ... and the same wall in August 2019.



Photo 6 – The south-west wall of the Vertical Engine House has been raised to its final height, seen from the outside of the building.



Photo 7 – The rebuilt walls of the Vertical Engine House, seen from the scaffolding around the bob wall of the Cornish Engine House.



Photo 8 – The masons completed the rebuild of the western corner of the Old Pit heapstead. Photo 13 in the previous newsletter, N° 27, shows the same area during the rebuild.



Photo 9 – Hamish built a masonry arch that connected the two parts of the stone facing. He also rebuilt some of the brickwork immediately above it, improving the stability of the rest of the wall.



Photo 10 – The original state of the corner in October 2019.



Photo 11 – The rebuilt wall outside the exit of the East Flue in June 2020 ...



Photo 12 – ... and the same area in 2015.



Photo 13 – The brick arch at the end of the East Flue during the rebuild ...



Photo 14 – ... and when completed.



Photo 15 – This view of the brick arch was taken from the scaffolding around the bob wall. It clearly shows the join between the original and new brickwork, and how the bricks of the arch now extend beyond the face of the heapstead wall.



Photo 16 – The top of the bob wall of the Cornish Engine House from the north-east in early July ...



Photo 17 – ... and mid-July.



Photo 18 – The platform outside the south-west wall of the Cornish Engine House in July 2017. The arrow points to a stone that had a hole drilled upwards – see comments on p.2.



Photo 19 – The stone seen in the previous photo after its removal in July 2020 (5 cm x 5 cm scale).



Photo 20 – The newly cast roof of the fan ducts, seen here from the top of the New Pit heapstead, now extends from the fan housing, situated at the top of the photo, to the wall of the shaft. The camera angle gives the impression that there is a considerable difference in height between the top and bottom sections, though photo 21 shows that this is not the case.



Photo 21 – View of the new roof from the fan end of the ducts with the shuttering still in place. This angle shows that the roof is at almost the same level throughout.



Photo 22 – The winding ramp of the New Pit heapstead after a waterproof membrane covered by concrete was laid in July 2020. (See comments on p.2)

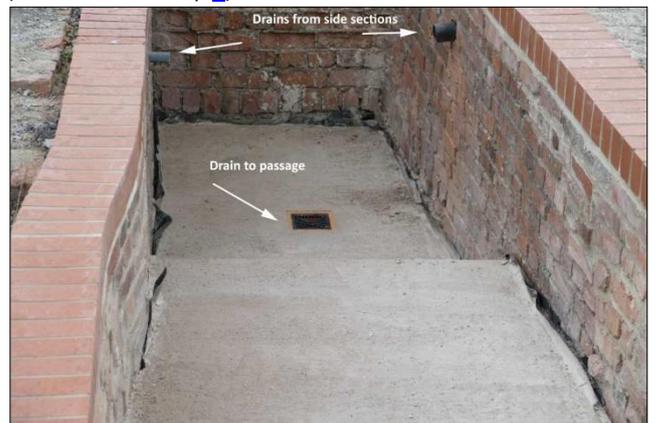


Photo 23 – View of the Horizontal Engine House end of the winding ramp, showing the arrangement of the drains.



Photo 24 – A stone bridge has been laid as a support for the coping brick course over the drainage channel in the northern corner of the Horizontal Engine House roof ...



Photo 25 – ... and the same corner after the bricks have been laid.



Photo 26 – Debris thrown into the condenser pit in the Cornish Engine House by vandals during lockdown. The dry weather had lowered the water table, making it easier to recover the items.



Photo 27 – View of the south-eastern wall of the chamber at the south-eastern end of the Cornish Engine House. The vertical break in the stone courses does not run the full height of the wall.



Photo 28 – Another view of the south-eastern wall of the chamber, looking downwards to the water level. This photo was taken during dry weather, and the dark area on the wall shows the range of water levels. The bright area at the bottom of the photo is the reflection of the flash.



Photo 29 – Looking down the masonry slot on the north-west side of the chamber. The engine bed itself is located above the top of the photo. The bright area at the bottom is the reflection from the flash.



Photo 30 – Brick “path” found on the top of the Old Pit heapstead in June 2020 ... (30 cm scale on bricks)



Photo 31 – ... By July the area had been expanded ... (30 cm scales front and rear, 40 cm scale middle)



Photo 32 –... and again by early August.



Photo 33 – Close-up of the metal lined hole seen in the centre foreground of photo [32](#) in front of the kneeling figure on the left. The hole is over 4 feet deep. (15 cm scale)



Photo 34 – Close-up of the row of metal fittings. The trowel can be used to locate their position in photo [32](#).



Photo 35 – Mark clears spoil from the brick structure at the south-west end of the Old Pit heapstead.



Photo 36 – Foundations for a building uncovered at the batch end of the Old Pit heapstead. There appears to be a door at the left-hand end of the footings.



Photo 37 – The footings of another wall were uncovered running at right angles to the first. This trench was enlarged to discover the end near where Ken is working.



Photo 38 – The top of a salt-glazed jar uncovered near where the figure is in the previous photo. The credit card-sized white space gives an indication of scale. There is a maker's mark: Price, Bristol.



Photo 39 – This confused mass of bricks is located between the wall footings seen in photo [37](#) and the wall above the Old Boiler House (top left of photo).



Photo 40 – The remains of what may be a door to the building, opening out onto a walkway running between the building and the Old Boiler House. (The left-hand figure in photo [43](#) is working on this area) (15 cm scale)



Photo 41 – A section of brick flooring was uncovered in the north of the area, where the figure at the rear of photo [43](#) is working.



Photo 42 – Tony works on the foundations of the building at the batch end of the Old Pit heapstead ...



Photo 43 – ... while Pete, Mick and Ken clear the spoil from the collapsed walls at a later work party.



Photo 44 – Mark and Mick watch Neil and Ken working at the batch end of the Old Pit heapstead.



Photo 45 – Top of the south-east wall of the Cornish Engine House, seen from the scaffolding around the bob wall of the Cornish Engine House ...



Photo 46 – ... and a close-up of the area around the remains of the wooden beams. There are smaller sockets for subsidiary beams on either side of the main sockets.



Photo 47 – The Horizontal Engine House and New Pit heapstead seen from the scaffolding.



Photo 48 – The western end of the egg-ended boiler is on the left of this view of the site from the scaffolding.



Photo 49 – Hamish and Jeff having a discussion on the technical aspects of measuring at a distance.



Photo 50 – Steve tidies up the hedge along the New Pit boundary.



Photo 51 – Jeff mows the grassy area between the two enclosures.



Photo 52 – Nature is always trying to reclaim the site, as these last two photos show. The poppies were growing in a bag of sorted spoil that had been excavated from the condenser pit last year. Unfortunately for the poppies the spoil was needed for the building works, so they are now ex-poppies.



Photo 53 – Wildflowers growing along the top of the New Pit heapstead ramp. They have grown since March, when the area to the left of the path was strimmed to give the masons room to work on capping the top of the ramp wall. (One of the bricks in the wall can be just seen towards the left-hand side of the photo)