

# FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N<sup>o</sup> 4, August 2014



Conservation work has restarted, as methods of working have been agreed with English Heritage. The masons have still to finish the top of the chimney, and only then will they start on the Horizontal Engine House roof. The walls in the northern section of the Vertical Engine House have been uncovered, together with some of the winding drum pit.

## Progress: May – August 2014

There was a site visit by representatives of English Heritage and South Gloucestershire Council on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Proposals for future works were discussed, and the modified proposals were subsequently approved. During the visit it was noticed that there was the remains of roof flashing on the north-west wall of the Horizontal Engine House (see photo on the right). The shape appeared to match that of the remains of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century



tile found nearby, suggesting that the lean-to on this side, erected after the removal of the railway lines, was tiled. We will have to wait until there is scaffolding in the area to check on this.

The last loads of building stone were collected from the site in Pucklechurch in June. We now have a stock of local stone for use in rebuilding walls, and would like to thank the landowners for their generosity in allowing us to take the stone. We also would like to thank their neighbour for providing the transport to move it to Brandy Bottom.

Work continued in the northern part of the Vertical Engine House. The tops of the north-west and north-east walls have been uncovered, and the bottom established at the southern end of the winding drum pit. This end of the pit has been cleared as far as a set of holding down bolts, and there was a thick layer of grease beside one of them (just to the left of the kneeling figure in photo 1). The photo to the right shows the north-western wall and photo 2 the north-eastern one. The indications are that we have uncovered the



original tops of the walls. The slots in the walls in photo 2 may have held the floor joists.

There was a general clear up of vegetation around the site in July and August, both to clear an area for a storage container and also as part of a general tidy-up. An area between the two enclosures was cleared and roughly levelled for the container, and brick pillars built to support it (photo 5). Clearing the bushes from the slope above the entrance to the Pumping Shaft passage uncovered the remains of some steps, or rather the remains of the inside supports for some steps (photo above right). The outside supports must have crumbled away over time, taking away the treads. The close up seen in photo 6 gives an idea of the size of these supports.



The AIBT and South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group (SGMRG) had a joint stand at the South Gloucestershire show on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> August. The photo on the right shows the finishing touches being made on the Sunday, before the general public were admitted. Photo 7 shows setting up the stand on the Friday before, and 8 our display boards showcasing the work at Brandy Bottom.



The masons have finished working on the inside on the chimney, so there will now be a pause while the state of the outside is assessed and a proposed method of working approved.

There was an organised tour for members of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society on 14<sup>th</sup> August. Despite the rainy evening, there were over 20 people on site. One visitor identified the parallel motion bearing found in 2011 as being of the Boulton & Watt design - another little piece of the jigsaw falls into place. A 2-page hand-out has been developed, and copies will be given to interested passers-by.



The storage container arrived on 20<sup>th</sup> August. Photo 9 shows it being craned into place and 10 shows it in its new location. There was also an unusual visitor – a Harris hawk (photo right, and photo 11). It was being flown by the Cory falconer to scare off the seagulls from the nearby tip. While the falconer was talking to us, the seagulls had spotted that the hawk was not flying and could be seen sneaking back at low level. The hawk





was clearly fed up with being held by the falconer as it really wanted to have a go at some seagulls.

## Future Projects

The masons should complete casting the reinforcing ring at the top of the chimney shortly, and then move on to laying the waterproof membrane on the top of the Horizontal Engine House. There they will have rebuild the top of the walls to provide a level edge, before laying the membrane.

Our revised proposal for rebuilding the base of the chimney in the Old Boiler House has been approved by English Heritage, as has the method for bracing the bulging north-east wall. Both of these tasks will be done by volunteers, and EH have approved a generic method for patching walls. We will be kept busy for the rest of the year, as there is also still plenty to be done in the Vertical Engine House.

Dates of work parties for the rest of 2014 are:

Sat 30 August; Wed 10, Sat 27 September; Sat 11, Wed 22 October; Sat 08, Wed 19 November; Sat 06 December. Please note that these dates may be altered at short notice. Newcomers are advised to first make contact via the AIBT's email address of [info@aibt.org](mailto:info@aibt.org).



Photo 1 - Clearing the southern end of the winding drum trench in the Vertical Engine House.



Photo 2 – North-eastern wall of Vertical Engine House.



Photo 3 - Brick with the impression of a hob-nailed boot, found in the Vertical Engine House. (5 cm scale)



Photo 4 – Starting to clear a passage between the two enclosures for the arrival of the container.



Photo 5 - Building the support pillars for the container.



Photo 6 - Close-up of the remains of the step supports above the entrance to the Pumping Shaft passage.



Photo 7 - Setting up the AIBT/SGMRG stand at the South Gloucestershire show on the Friday.



Photo 8 –THE AIBT display boards can be seen in the centre of the photo, and sale copies of the Brandy Bottom historical report on the extreme left.



Photo 9 - Craning the storage container into position.



Photo 10 – The storage container in place.





Photo 11 - Harris hawk with the falconer.



Photo 15 - A damselfly on the top of the New Pit heapstead.



Photo 12 - Strimming in progress.



Photo 13 – The top of the New Pit heapstead at the height of summer.



Photo 14 - Wildflowers growing beside a path.

All photos are by Robin Whitworth (© 2014). Size is indicated by either a yellow/black 30 cm scale or a blue/white 5 cm scale.