

FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N^o 8, August 2015



Reconstruction of the walls of the buildings continued over June, Jul and August. A section of the Old Pit heapstead wall was patched, and the rebuild of a major part of the north-east wall of the Old Boiler House is almost complete. The entire length of the winding drum pit in the Vertical Engine House has been cleared of spoil down to a working surface, uncovering a set of what appear to be drains. The AIBT had a stand at the South Gloucestershire Show at the beginning of August, adjacent to that of the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group (SGMRG).

Will Harris

Sadly Will Harris, the founding chairman of the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust, passed away in July. Seen in the photo to the right, he was one of the driving forces behind the scheduling of Brandy Bottom as an Ancient Monument, and in obtaining finance for its conservation. He was also a regular at the working parties.



Progress: June-August 2015

(Photos 1-24 will be found in the last section of the newsletter)

A section of the Old Pit heapstead wall above the Pumping Shaft, where the unsupported brickwork was in danger of collapsing, was patched using recovered bricks. Two old railway sleepers were used to form a support for the re-laid bricks, and the sleepers were inserted into existing sockets in the walls on either side (photo 1). Photo 2 shows both the sleepers in place before the work started and also shows the area that had to be patched. Photo 3 was taken during patching, while the photo to the right shows the finished section of the wall. Two of the existing courses of bricks had to be removed and re-laid, as they had become partially detached by ivy roots.



Rebuilding of a major part of the north-east wall of the Old Boiler House is almost finished. This work has two aims: firstly to make a strong area for bracing the wall against the pressure from material in the batch; and secondly to prevent an unsupported part of the wall from collapsing. The

rebuild used stones and bricks recovered when clearing the spoil from the floor of the building. During June and July a stone skin was built up around the batch end of the bracing beam (photos 5 and 6). This was then filled with concrete to provide a strong pad for transmitting the thrust from the material in the batch through the beam to the wall of the heapstead opposite. (The installation of the beam was described in Newsletter N° 7). Photo 4 shows the wall in early July, and the area of unsupported brickwork can be seen at the top of the wall. The wall has now been built up to support this area, which should help to prevent any further collapse. Photo 7 shows the rebuild in progress. The photo on the right shows the wall in mid-August, with just a few finishing touches still to be made to the joint between the masonry and brick sections.



More spoil was removed from the winding drum pit in the Vertical Engine House, clearing the bottom down to a working surface. The bottom layer of spoil was soaked in grease or oil. This has uncovered some stone structures at the bottom that may be drains (see photos 8 and 9). Probing indicated that one of them continued northwards towards the batch, to the left of the photos. On the other side of the pit were the remains of a wooden-framed channel. Scale had been deposited on the inside of the wood, which has rotted away over time (photo 10). The side view of one slab of scale (photo 11) shows how it has been laid down in distinct layers. Among the items found in the spoil were the sole and heel of a hobnailed boot (photo 12) and a piece of ridge tile with the maker's name "Browne & Co Bridgewater" indented into it (photo 13).

Work continued in the Fan Engine House, where more of the concrete floor was uncovered (photo 14).

Ivy and other vegetation growing around the top of the Old Pit heapstead were given a severe haircut in August. This will help to reduce stresses on the brick top of the heapstead, and has also revealed what may be the original top edge of the structure near the top of the heapstead ramp. A comparison between photos 15 and 16 gives an idea of the amount of ivy and other shrubs that were removed. Both the photos show south-east wall of the heapstead, with the entrance to the alcove appearing on the left hand edge of 15 and the centre of 16.

A photograph in the recent SGMRG publication on the steam engines of the Coalpit Heath Colliery Company¹ showed that the chimney at the nearby New Engine Pit was very similar in appearance to that at Brandy Bottom. This is being followed up, as it could lead to information on both the identity of the chimney builder and the maker of the engine(s) at Brandy Bottom.

Further confirmation that the mining sheave wheel near Brandy Bottom was made by Thompson & Southwick came when a SGMRG member visited the Thoresby pit in Nottinghamshire. (See

¹*The History & Industrial Archaeology of the Steam Engines of the Coalpit Heath Colliery Company*, Grudgings 5, SGMRG, 2015

comments and photo in Newsletter N° 7) He noticed that one of the half sheaves mounted at the colliery entrance bore the legend 'Thompson & Southwick Ltd Makers Tamworth England' (photo 17) while the other had the intertwined TS logo (photo 18).

There is more information about the fragment of pottery shown in photo 22 of the last newsletter. A reader has some pottery with the same colour and glaze and with a similar mark. Her research indicates that the "mark was used between about 1945-1957 by Pountney & Co Ltd (1889-1969), possibly at their Fishponds Factory." She added that the mark on her pottery does not have "the 'B' above or the 'Vitrified' below, which suggests it may be from a different date but it is more than likely the same factory." Thank you for this information.

The AIBT had a stand at the South Gloucestershire Show on 01 and 02 August, seen on the left in the adjacent photo with the SGMRG stand on the right. The stand can also be seen in photos 19 and 20. The display generated a fair amount of interest from passers-by, one of whom turned out to be a distant relative of Handel Cossham. It is too early to say whether the interest at the show will translate into help at the work parties. We in the AIBT would like to thank our colleagues in the SGMRG for their help over the weekend.



An account of progress at Brandy Bottom, with photographs, can be found on the AIBT's website, www.aibt.org, together with copies of all previous newsletters.

Future Work Parties

Dates of proposed work parties for the rest of 2015 are:

Sat 29 Aug; Wed 09, Sat 26 Sep; Wed 07, Sat 17 Oct; Wed 04, Sat 14 Nov; Sat 05 Dec.

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.

Photographs



Photo 1 – Manhandling an old railway sleeper into place above the Pumping Shaft capping, where it will form part of the base for the patching of the heapstead wall.



Photo 2 – The supporting beam, made from two old railway sleepers, in place above the Pumping Shaft capping.



Photo 3 – Partially patched wall above the Pumping Shaft capping on 01 July.



Photo 4 – The extent of unsupported brickwork in the north-east wall of the Old Boiler House can be seen at the middle top of the photo, which was taken in July.



Photo 5 – An early stage in the rebuild of the north-east wall of the Old Boiler House. The bracing beam is in place, and the wire mesh reinforcement for the concrete pad can be seen around its end.



Photo 6 – The stone skin around the end of the bracing beam has been completed, and is ready to be filled with concrete.



Photo 7 – Repointing some of the partly rebuilt north-east wall of the Old Boiler House.



Photo 10 – Close-up of the scale deposited inside the channel in the winding drum pit. Fragments of the wood that formed the channel can be seen on the outside of the slab on the right. (30 cm scale)



Photo 8 – View of the bottom of the winding drum pit in the Vertical Engine House on 03 June. The spike sticking out of the right hand margin of the photo may have held the wooden sides of the vertical channel in place.



Photo 11 – View of the edge of a slab of scale recovered from the winding drum pit in the Vertical Engine House. This shows that it has been deposited in distinct layers. (30 cm scale)



Photo 9 – View of the bottom of the winding drum pit on 01 July after the second channel was uncovered.



Photo 12 – Sole of hobnailed boot found in spoil in the winding drum pit, Vertical Engine House. (30 cm scale)



Photo 13 – This 7" long fragment of ridge tile, found in the spoil in the winding drum pit of the Vertical Engine House, has the maker's name "Browne & Co Bridgewater" indented into it. (15 cm scale)



Photo 16 – ... and the same wall in August 2015 after it had been cut back.



Photo 14 – Concrete floor of Fan Engine House partially cleared of spoil.



Photo 17 – Half winding wheel at entrance to Thorseby colliery, Nottinghamshire, showing the maker's name. (©T Rendall, July 2015)



Photo 15 – The South-east wall of the Old Pit heapstead in May 2015, showing the vegetation growing along the top of the heapstead wall ...

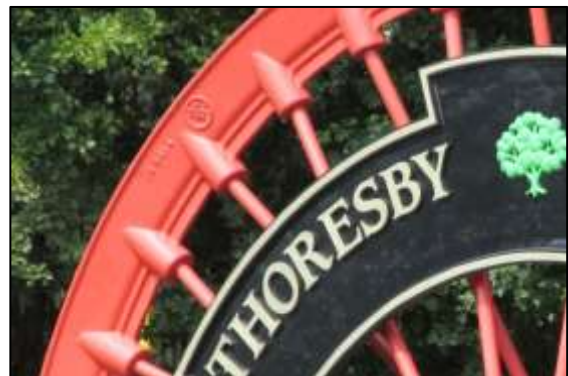


Photo 18 – Half winding wheel at entrance to Thorseby colliery, Nottinghamshire, showing the maker's logo. (©T Rendall, July 2015)



Photo 19 – Brandy Bottom display boards in the AIBT stand at the South Gloucestershire Show.



Photo 20 – Visitors are shown around the AIBT stand at the South Gloucestershire Show.



Photo 21 – Red Campion growing near base of Old Pit heapstead ramp (May 2015).



Photo 22 – Bittersweet, one of the Deadly Nightshade family, growing on the fence behind the storage container.



Photo 23 – Purple form of Field Cricket, seen in the picnic area.



Photo 24 – This Poplar Hawk-moth, with an impressive wingspan of around 3", landed on a volunteer as he walked past.

Unless otherwise stated all photos are by Robin Whitworth (© 2015).