

FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N^o 19, May 2018

(Photos 1-27 will be found on page 4 onwards)

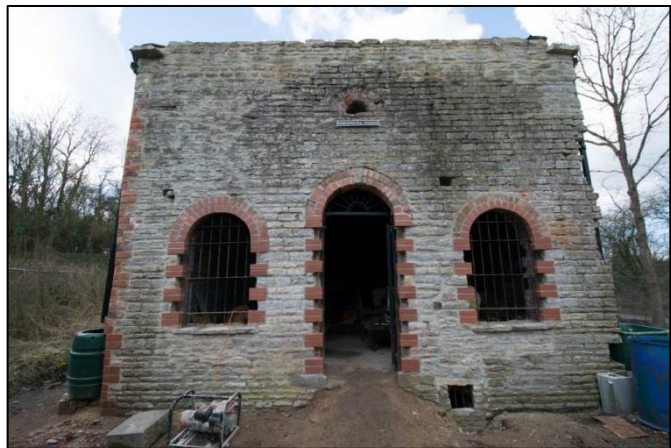


There have been 13 work parties since the last newsletter, bringing the total to date in 2018 to 16. The masons have completed working on the Horizontal Engine House and the New Pit heapstead, the interpretation boards have arrived and are in the process of being installed, exploration resumed outside the Old Boiler House, a start was made on the conservation of the area around the East Flue, as we have received some aerial photos of the site.

Brandy Bottom will be open again on the Heritage Open Days weekend of 15-16 September,

Progress: February – May 2018

The current conservation programme on the New Pit was completed in February, leaving just a few finishing touches on the tipplers. This has been partly funded by a £20 000 grant from the Ibstock Enovert Trust, as the Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust is now called, with the balance coming from our own resources. The AIBT would like to thank the trust for their financial assistance, and also Ibstock, the landowners, for delivering some more special bricks for use in the rebuilding. The brickwork around all of the windows and the door of the Horizontal Engine House has been rebuilt, and the photograph on the right shows the completed entrance to the building. The eastern corner, on the left hand side of photo, has been rebuilt with bull-nosed bricks that were recovered from the undercroft. For some reason this is the only corner to be finished with these bricks. It is possible that they had been used on the northern corner but had been removed when the lean-to along the north-western side was built. Photo 1 shows the state of the brickwork on the entrance before work started. Rainwater draining off the roof is now directed into the water butts by downpipes. On top of the New Pit heapstead, old bricks were laid as drainage (photo 2) in the bottom of the area behind the tippler slots before backfilling and levelling the ground.

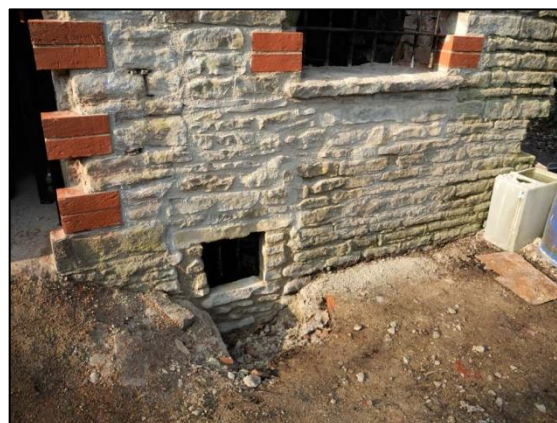


The site clear-ups continued, and vegetation has been cleared from a strip of ground between the base of the north-west wall of the Old Pit heapstead and the boundary fence (photos 3-4). It is hoped that this area will be reseeded naturally by wildflowers, but they will face stiff competition from the returning hawthorn, ivy and brambles. The section by the base of the heapstead ramp turned up some more artefacts of a domestic nature, and three can be seen in photos 5-7. The

bottle for Sloan's Liniment is intact, unlike the broken fragment found in 2014 in the northern corner of the New Pit heapstead. The metal plate in photo 7 may be, and this is conjecture, a cover plate for a hand pump, with the rising main passing through the central hole and the operating rods through the outer ends of the slot.

Work has started on repointing areas of masonry and brickwork in both the Old and New Pits. There is a large backlog of repointing that needs to be done, especially in the areas around the steps outside the Vertical Engine House and the East Flue. A number of volunteers were given training in repointing during an in-house course at the end of February (photos 8-9).

The old entrance to the under croft of the Horizontal Engine House, to the right of the entrance on the north-east wall, has been closed off with a grille (photo right). A new entrance was constructed by punching a hole through the cast concrete floor in the eastern corner of the building. Photo 10 was taken after the concrete had been removed from the first section of the hole. Some of the corrugated iron sheeting used as a former when casting the floor can be seen at the top of the hole. (A view of the underside of the sheeting can be seen in photo 26 of Newsletter N^o 18)



When the site clear-up was completed, work restarted on uncovering what appeared to be a drain outside the Old Boiler House in April (photos 13-14). It looked as if it might be connected to one of the two found in the bottom of the winding drum pit of the Vertical Engine House. However rodding from the latter location (photo 15) suggests that any intersection lies outside the boundary fence by the Old Boiler House. As this is under the batch, further excavation has been stopped on safety grounds.

Historic England gave us a grant to produce four interpretation boards for the site. This has paid for both the artwork, by Synergie Marketing and Design, and the fabrication of the boards. These have been delivered and are in the process of being erected. One board has been placed beside the eastern half mine wheel (photo right). It has brief descriptions of some of the mining practises of the 1800s. A second, covering the AIBT and its current and past projects, has been fixed to the outside of the storage container (photo 20), together with a board from the Ibstock Enover Trust (photo 21). The other two boards will be placed against the boundary fences of the Old and New Pits and will describe their layouts. The existing board has been left in place as it describes how coal seams



were formed. Its comment on the origin of the mining wheel is wrong, as we have discovered that it came from South Wales. It was placed there by Sustrans in the 1990s to mark the spot where the Dramway crosses the line of an old Roman road.

We are also trialling a handbook for use when guiding tours. This contains a number of photos that show how overgrown, or how dilapidated, parts of the site were before work started. There are also photos of some of the major artefacts, and of features that have been found and then covered up again to protect them.

We have to say a thank you to the drone enthusiast who took some photos of the site at the beginning of April. He has very kindly given us copies, and they help to put the site in perspective. One of them can be seen on the next page, with the Old Pit on the right and the New Pit on the left. The egg-ended boiler is the object at the centre of the bottom edge. The meandering grey of the cycle path can be seen above the New Pit. The line of the old railway tracks can be seen at the top of the photo, marking the limit of the Lyde Green development. Between the two are the pond area, and the location of two cottages that appear on the Ordnance Survey maps from 1881. The 1911 census records one of the inhabitants as a general smith and another as a coal miner. There are more of these aerial views of the site in photos 22-25.



Planning has already started on opening Brandy Bottom during the 'Heritage Doors Open' weekend of 15-16 September 2018. We also plan to have a stall at the Lyde Green Community Association summer event, but have decided not to have a stall at the South Gloucestershire show.

There are copies of all previous FoBB newsletters on the 'Archive' page of our website (www.aibt.org), and there are over 370 photographs of the buildings, work in progress, and artefacts found, on the Brandy Bottom project pages.

Visitor Access and Future Work Parties

At present visitor access to the site is limited to days when there is a work party in progress. It is usually possible to give small groups a guided tour during the work parties on a 'turn-up on the day' basis. Special arrangements can be made for parties of 10 or more people by making contact through our email address of info@aibt.org.

The dates for 2018 are: Saturday 26 May; Saturday 09, Wednesday 20, Saturday 30 June; Saturday 07, Wednesday 18, Saturday 28 July; Saturday 04, Wednesday 15, Saturday 25 August; Saturday 08, Saturday 15 and Sun 16 (Heritage Open Days), Saturday 29 September; Saturday 06, Wednesday 17, Saturday 27 October; Saturday 03, Wednesday 14, Saturday 24 November; Saturday 01, Wednesday 12 December.

Please note that work parties, and their starting and finishing times, may be altered at short notice. The nominal opening times are between 10.30 am and 3 pm, but these timings are not hard and fast so we may start later and/or finish earlier. Because of this, newcomers who would like to join a work party are advised to first make contact via the AIBT's email address of info@aibt.org. Youngsters must be accompanied at all times by a responsible adult.

There is a location map on a dedicated page of the website www.aibt.org, together with directions on how to reach the site. This page can be found by a link on the main Brandy Bottom project page.

Photographs



Photo 1 – The north-eastern wall of the Horizontal Engine House in June 2017.



Photo 2 – Old bricks laid as drainage at the bottom of the trench along the back of the southern New Pit tippler slot. The trench has now been backfilled.



Photo 3 – Cleared area on the inside of the Old Pit boundary fence in February.



Photo 4 – The area inside the Old Pit fence being cleared. The volunteers are working in the area where the artefacts seen in photos 5 to 7 were found.



Photo 5 – Intact 5½" high Sloan's Liniment bottle found close to Old Pit boundary fence. (½ cm markings on background)



Photo 6 – Metal cigarette case found close to Old Pit boundary fence. (½ cm markings on background)



Photo 7 – 10½" dia metal plate found close to Old Pit boundary fence. (30 cm scale)



Photo 8 – Intense concentration as a group of trainees learn how to mix mortar for the repointing course ... (© K Kemp, 2018)



Photo 9 – ... and the class watches as they are shown how to repoint masonry. (© M Taylor, 2018)



Photo 10 – The hole in the process of being punched through the concrete floor of the Horizontal Engine House to create a new entrance to the undercroft.



Photo 11 – The edges of the hole are smoothed out.



Photo 12 – Three volunteers take a break from clearing vegetation at the southern end of the New Pit heapstead.



Photo 13 – An early stage in uncovering the drain outside the entrance to the Old Boiler House.



Photo 14 – A view from inside the Old Boiler House after more of the drain had been uncovered.



Photo 15 – Rodding the drains at the bottom of the winding pit in the Vertical Engine House, in an attempt to find out where they go.



Photo 16 – Building the foundation for the interpretation board by the wheel ...



Photo 17 – ... laying the brick path that connects the board to the hard surface of the cycle path ...



Photo 18 – ... grouting the gaps in the path ...



Photo 19 – ... and the final touches are made to the area around the board.



Photo 20 – The AIBT interpretation board in place on the outside of the storage container, together with the board from the Ibstock Enovert Trust on its right (see next photo).

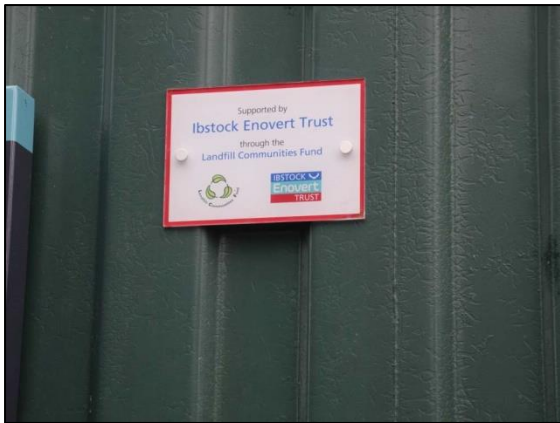


Photo 21 – The Ibstock Enovert Trust board on the container wall.



Photo 22 – The Old Pit from the south. (© P Hodson)



Photo 23 – Aerial view of the Cornish Engine House, with the south-eastern wall of the Old Pit heapstead at the bottom of the photo. (© P Hodson)



Photo 24 – The chimney from the south. (© P Hodson)



Photo 25 – The New Pit from the north-east, with the egg-ended boiler at the bottom left. (© P Hodson)



Photo 26 – Glass bottle, with 'table spoon'-sized markings, found in the Pond area.



Photo 27 – The chimney seen from the western side of the pond area, framed by spring blossom.

Unless otherwise stated all photos are by R H Whitworth (© R H Whitworth, 2018)

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