

FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N^o 20, August 2018

(Photos 1-25 will be found on page 4 onwards)



There have been 11 work parties since the last newsletter, bringing the total to date in 2018 to 27. A start has been made on the conservation of the walls of the Vertical Engine House, and the last two interpretation boards are now in place. There was a visit by some of the trustees of the Ibstock Enover Trust, who had given us a grant towards the cost of the recent conservation work by professional masons, and we had a stall at the Lyde Green Community Association fete in July.

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

Progress: May – August 2018

Drain holes have now been drilled through the walls of the New Pit tippler slots, allowing the scaffolding that has been covering much of the north-west walls of the heapstead to be finally taken down. A view of the rebuilt north-west wall of the heapstead can be seen in photo 1, taken from the cycle path. Two identifying signs, similar in style to those used in the Old Pit, have been fixed to the wall of the heapstead and the recently reconstructed tippler slots.

The plastic sheeting that had been covering the brickwork of the East Flue and the steps outside the Vertical Engine House was removed at the end of May so that the state of the brickwork could be assessed for conservation. A large (estimated at over 2 feet long) grass snake was found hiding under the sheeting, but it very quickly found itself an alternative home.

Scaffolding was erected in the winding drum pit of the Vertical Engine House to allow conservation work to start (photo right, © M Taylor). Photo 2 shows the north-eastern end of the wall between the winding drum pit and the engine bay before work started. The rough edges of the wall just to the right of the volunteer's head will be rebuilt to stop further weathering. The channel seen in the middle of photo 3 is positioned above the remains of the riser found in the winding drum pit in 2015 (photo 4). In that photo what appear to be the walls of the riser are in fact thick deposits of scale. The riser itself had probably been made of wood, which has decayed over time to leave just the scale in place. An edge view of a piece of scale (photo 5) shows that it had built up in irregular layers. The area around the window in the south-east wall has been rebuilt (photos 6-9), apart from replacing the original stone sill that had been vandalised. The majority of the outside of that wall has been repointed.



In early June the two remaining interpretation boards were placed so that they can be seen and accessed from the cycle path. One has been located outside the fence around the Old Pit (photo 11) and the other a short distance away on the New Pit side (photo 12). As can be seen from the photo of the Old Pit board on the right, the boards include plans showing the layout of the buildings. Passers-by started to look at them almost as soon as they were in position.

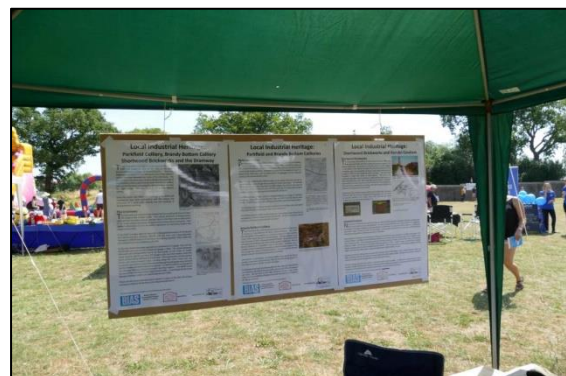


Excavation of the brick-lined shaft outside the south-east wall of the Vertical Engine House resumed. This feature had been first discovered in 2013, but at that time had only been excavated to a depth of about 3 feet and its purpose was unknown. As the water table was reached at about 12 foot, a conduit appeared on the northern side. This conduit can be seen in the middle of photo 18, and we have established that it is linked to the well in the engine bay of the Vertical Engine House. That is known to be connected to the pond lying to the north-west of the cycle path. The connection was established by the low tech method of dropping a stone into one pool of water and checking the other for the resulting disturbance. It is possible that the brick-lined shaft was part of the water supply to the boilers. The recent drop in water levels allowed more spoil to be removed from the shaft in the Old Pit alcove. This uncovered two conduits, one heading north-westwards under the heapstead and the other heading into the New Boiler area. The former can be seen towards the top left of photo 21, while the other is underwater at the base of the opposite wall. Somewhere in all this maze of conduits will be the connection with the pond.

Some of the trustees of the Ibstock Enovert Trust visited Brandy Bottom on 04 July, as part of their tour of some of their projects in this area. The visit was an opportunity for the trustees to see how their grant had been used on the conservation work completed earlier in the year. The photo on the right shows some of the party, with two of the Brandy Bottom volunteers, looking at the Old Pit heapstead alcove.



The AIBT had a stand at the Lyde Green Community Association summer fair in July. It was an opportunity to introduce ourselves and Brandy Bottom to our near-neighbours. We also had three new display boards to showcase some of the local industrial heritage (photo right). These covered the Dramway, Parkfield, Shortwood Brickworks, a brief section on Brandy Bottom and an introduction to Handel Cossham. The left hand board can be seen in photo 22, and it sets the scene with the aid of a



1946 aerial photo showing the surface buildings at Parkfield, Brandy Bottom, Shortwood and the railway line running past all three. Research into the history of Handel Cossham uncovered his long-standing membership of the Temperance Association. That, and this is conjecture at present, may explain why he changed the name from *Brandy Bottom* to *Parkfield South* when he took over the lease in 1871. We are still no closer to finding out why the name was changed from *Lord Radnor's pit* to *Brandy Bottom* at even earlier date. The question "why Brandy Bottom?" is something that many people ask.

These boards carry the logos and website addresses of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) and the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group (SGMRG) as well as those of the AIBT, so as to point readers towards other sources of information on the local industrial heritage. (Some of the volunteers at Brandy Bottom are also members of BIAS or the SGMRG, or indeed of any combination of all three organisations.)

A safety barrier has been built around the new entrance to the undercroft of the Horizontal Engine House. The photo on the right shows the completed barrier, while photo 23 was taken during the build.



There are copies of all previous FoBB newsletters on the 'Archive' page of our website (www.aibt.org), and there are around 400 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 though this cannot be guaranteed as it depends on there being sufficient volunteers present. 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 of work parties for the rest of 2018 are: 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 – North-west wall of New Pit heapstead after the removal of the scaffolding.



Photo 2 – Getting ready to rebuild the wall between the winding drum pit and the engine bay in the vertical Engine House.



Photo 3 – The wall between the winding drum pit and the engine bay after the channel between the two had been rebuilt.



Photo 4 – Photo of scale deposited around the walls of a riser in the winding drum pit, Vertical Engine House, taken in 2015 as the spoil was being removed.



Photo 5 – Close-up of the edge of a sample of the scale seen in photo 4, which has been deposited over time in irregular layers.



Photo 6 – The stonework around the window opening in the south-east wall of the Vertical Engine House before work started ...



Photo 7 – ...after the loose mortar was cleared away ready for rebuilding ...



Photo 10 – Preparing the area seen in photo 7 for repointing.



Photo 8 – ... Rebuilding in progress ...



Photo 11 – The interpretation board just outside the boundary fence of the Old Pit ...



Photo 9 – ... and the almost finished result – a stone sill has still to be fabricated and laid. The area has been repointed after the photo was taken.



Photo 12 – ... and the corresponding one for the New Pit.



Photo 13 – The Old Pit interpretation board is unwrapped ready to be mounted in front of the fence.



Photo 14 – Close-up of the New Pit interpretation board.



Photo 15 – Close-up of the interpretation board by the wheel halves.



Photo 16 – The original interpretation board, which describes how coal was formed.



Photo 17 – Excavating spoil from the bottom of the shaft outside the entrance to the Vertical Engine House ...

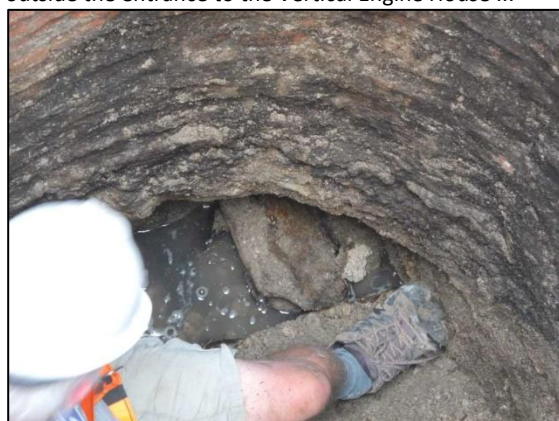


Photo 18 – ... the connection to the well in the Vertical Engine House can be seen in the middle of the photo ...



Photo 19 – ... the water-logged base of the shaft at the end of the work party ...



Photo 20 – ... A view of the same area as photo 19, taken from the bottom of the shaft at the start of the following work party. Note the clarity of the water. (© K Kemp)



Photo 21 – The recently deepened bottom of the well in the Old Pit alcove. The conduit seen towards the top left of the photo goes under the heapstead.

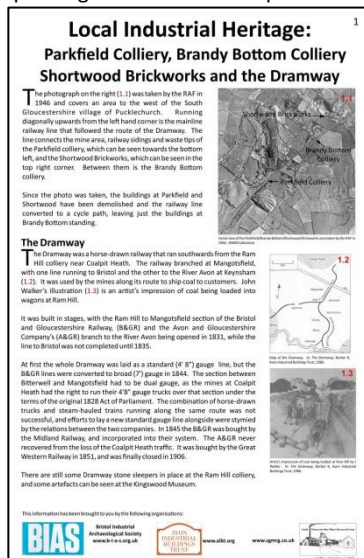


Photo 22 – One of the new 'Local Industrial Heritage' display boards. The 1946 aerial photo at the top covers the area from Shortwood in the top right to Parkfield at the bottom left.



Photo 23 – Building the safety barrier around the new entrance to the under croft of the Horizontal Engine House.



Photo 24 – As yet unidentified wildflower growing in the area between the two enclosures.



Photo 25 – A newcomer to our records of wildflowers is this creeper, thought to be a Black Bryony, growing in several places along the New Pit boundary fence.

Unless otherwise stated all photos are by R H Whitworth (© R H Whitworth, 2015, 2018)

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