Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

# Focus

on Industrial Archaeology

**No. 101** **July 2024**

## Campaign to save the D-Day Whale

*(condensed from article by Chris Yandell, Southern Daily Echo, April 29th 2024)*

The Grade II listed 'Whale', of the type which linked the floating Mulberry harbours to the Normandy shoreline, is alongside the Red Funnel terminal on Southampton's waterfront, partly submerged and is said to be in a poor state of repair near the spot where troops embarked in 1944. Makeshift banners have been unveiled highlighting the importance of D-Day. In a separate development Southampton historian Kingsley Miller has written a letter to the commanding officer of the Marchwood-based 17 Port and Maritime Regiment claiming the regiment is involved in a secret project to 'remove' the whale, adding that the structure should be placed in Mayflower Park. But an army spokesman said the regiment was not linked to any plan to remove the structure.

Mr Miller sought the support of Royston Smith, Southampton Itchen MP, who said: "We are fortunate to retain the Whale section of a Mulberry harbour in the city as a reminder of this incredible feat of engineering and as a link to the millions of troops who passed through Southampton to liberate Europe. I hope the City Council and other interested parties are able to secure a future for the Whale and bring greater awareness to the city's role in D-Day".

The council does not own the Whale but confirmed it was a Grade II listed structure. Council leader Lorna Fielker said: "Any proposals around its long-term preservation that would affect its special architectural and historic interest would require Listed Building Consent and would be discussed with Historic England".

**Listing information from Historic England's website**

The historic interest is as a tangible reminder of the part played by the Mulberry Harbour in the success of Operation Overlord. There are three points defining Historic Interest in the Whale and pontoon:-

- *For their rarity as one of only four known surviving examples of a Whale section in Britain and possibly the only surviving example of a buffer pontoon.*
- *As a reminder of the prominent role of the City of Southampton in the preparation and launching of Overlord.*
- *Group value: For the association with the Grade II listed Royal Pier and entrance building.*

The artificial harbours were made up of three structures: outer breakwaters, pier heads and floating roadways that connected to the shoreline. Each component was given a codeword to maintain secrecy for the operation. A total of 10 miles of floating roadways or bridges (Whales), supported on floating pontoons (Beetles), connected the pier heads to the shore.

Orders were placed for the construction of the Whales in June 1943 and components were farmed out to about 200 companies throughout Britain. For reasons of secrecy the Whales were only assembled at two Royal Engineer depots, principally at Marchwood, Hampshire. The Whales were towed across the English Channel in 500ft sections, when 40% were lost.

Each bridge span consisted of two 80ft (24m) long steel box trusses with a 10ft (3m) wide steel plate roadway bolted to cross girders. Each section weighed 30 tons.

After Mulberry was dismantled in late 1944, some Whale sections were subsequently used as bridges in Normandy or else towed back to Marchwood for dismantling and storage. The Whale and buffer pontoon at the Royal Pier, Southampton, were installed in 1950 and originally comprised two sections of Whale. It was used as a roadway linking the landing stage for the Isle of Wight ferry. It is unclear whether it comprised spare sections or those brought back from Normandy and stored at Marchwood. The only other Whale section known to survive in England (apart from two sunken sections identified off Selsey Bill in West Sussex), is at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford where a restored example was returned from France in 2016 where it had been used as a bridge at Pont-Farcy in Normandy.

The reused Whale is located immediately to the east of the Royal Pier. The south end rests on the buffer pontoon. It provided a road linked to a landing stage for the Isle of Wight ferry and originally comprised two sections, one of which has been removed. The decking of wooden planking is not original. A number of other later structures are attached to the Whale.

**HAMPSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY**
(formerly Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group)

**Meetings –** August to December 2024

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| August 5 | **Whitchurch Silk Mill** – *Deborah Wheeler* |
| September 2 | **Members Evening** |
| October 7 | **Victorian Southampton in the Age of Steam, Ships and Slums** – *Andy Skinner* |
| November 4 | **Annual General Meeting** |
| December 2 | **Pirelli General Cable Works** – *Jim Beckett* |

Meetings are held monthly on Mondays in the Underhill Centre, St John the Evangelist Church, St John's Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4AF, commencing at 7.45pm

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## SERIAC 2024

The delayed South East Regional Industrial Archaeology Conference hosted by the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society is being held on Saturday 12th October at Chichester College, Westgate Fields, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1SB. All bookings and payments to be made online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/seriac2024 .

Conference place @ £22.00 per person including morning coffee and afternoon tea.

Conference place with Buffet Lunch @ £32 per person including morning coffee and afternoon tea.

[Note: there are no outlets for the purchase of refreshments within easy walking distance. There is space to eat your own lunch]

If you are unable to make a booking and payment online, you may send a cheque (Payable to SIAS) to:

**SERIAC Bookings, 52 Barons Down Road, Lewes, BN7 1ET**

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope or email address so we can confirm your booking

**Closing date for bookings: 27th September 2024**

The venue is within walking distance from Chichester railway and bus stations. Further details including maps are available on the website: www.sussexias.co.uk/seriac2024

*(Note from Focus editor: You may need to type in the website: I failed to access it by the Ctrl/Click advised. The details above and Meeting information is on the website)*

## Historical sea forts each sell for more than £1m

*(adapted from BBC News, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, 19th June 2024, with additional information)*

Two sea forts that were built to deter a possible French invasion under Louis Napoleon III in the 19th century have each been sold at auction for more than £1 million. The pair, both previously converted into luxury hotels, are among the four so-called Palmerston's Follies – artificial island fortifications in the Solent between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Construction work on the Solent forts began in 1865 under the then prime minister, Lord Palmerston but, by the time they had all been completed in 1880, the invasion threat had passed. During WW2, gun emplacements on the forts formed part of Portsmouth's coastal artillery defences.

No Man's Fort sold for £1,120,000 while Spitbank Fort fetched £1,010,000 at the Savills sale on June 18th, the guide price of both having been £1 million. The identity of the buyer was not given. The seller, businessman Mike Clare, who founded the Dreams bed company, had previously marketed the pair for a combined price of £8.25m. In 2021 he sold the derelict Horse Sand Fort for £715,000. Savills said the landmarks offered a "one-of-a-kind living experience ... panoramic views and exclusive privacy".

No Man's Fort has four floors with 23 en-suite rooms, multiple bars and restaurants, a number of multi-purpose rooms, a helipad and a lighthouse, while the smaller Spitbank Fort boasts nine guest suites over three floors, staff accommodation, a restaurant with 60 covers, a roof terrace and event spaces. It also has a hot pool, sauna, fire pit and sun decks plus a self-contained well and its own sewage treatment plant. No Man's Fort appeared in a 1972 episode of Doctor Who, as Jon Pertwee's Doctor fought aquatic menaces the Sea Devils. It was eventually sold by the Ministry of Defence in the 1980s.

As a matter of interest, the fourth fort is never mentioned so your editor carried out a bit of research. This is St Helen's Fort which is just off the Isle of Wight coast near Bembridge. It is in private hands and not open to the public, and is the smallest of the four. It has an artesian well. One fascinating fact is that on the lowest tide each year, usually in August, it is possible to walk (splash?) out to the fort from St Helen's and Bembridge. A mass walk is often organised from the beach at St Helen's when a causeway appears from the sea upon which the original materials were carried out from the shore at St Helen's Old Church, where there was formerly a quarry. It is traditional to hold a barbecue on the beach afterwards. Access is also possible from a spit at Bembridge.

# *Reports on Meetings, December 2023 to June 2024*

*Carol Burdekin*

At the beginning of our **December** meeting, the Chairman thanked Angela [Smith] for producing the 100th edition of *Focus on Industrial Archaeology*, the first being in 1973, and a round of applause followed from an appreciative audience. Then Keith [Andrews] reminded us that on January 1st 2024, Friends of King Alfred Buses will be running a limited amount of heritage buses from the Broadway in Winchester.

The Chairman then introduced our speaker for the evening, **Graham Mackenzie**, who is well known to HIAS members through the *SS Shieldhall*, and his current role is Chief Engineer and Conservation advisor. It was a trip on the *Duchess of Fife* steamship as a child with his Dad that started off Graham's interest, and the title of Graham's talk was ***SS Shieldhall: Keeping a 67 year old vessel operational – the Shieldhall Story***.

After a short introduction about his early career, first as a stoker, then joining the Royal Navy Reserve then IT, Graham said that, although *Shieldhall* is now a preserved steamship which operates out of Southampton, she is one of the "last reciprocating steam-engined ships built, using technology that dated back to the last quarter of the 19th Century" that was, in fact, obsolete at the time of her construction. Although *Shieldhall* is the largest working steamship in Britain, and a member of the National Historic Fleet, she started life on the River Clyde. After competitive tenders were received by Glasgow Corporation for building a ship to transport treated sewage sludge down the River Clyde to be disposed of at sea, the contract went to Lobnitz & Company Shipyard at Renfrew. The keel was laid down in October 1954, the ship was launched in July 1955 and entered service in October that year.

It seems that although *Shieldhall* transported treated sewage sludge, she continued a long tradition dating back to the First World War that Glasgow's sludge vessels offered wounded or disabled ex-servicemen, and women, together with disadvantaged families, free day trips down the river. Because of this, *Shieldhall* was built with a large saloon, plus facilities to accommodate up to 80 passengers. After 21 years of service, in 1976 *Shieldhall* was laid up, and purchased by Southern Water in 1977. She then carried sludge from Marchwood, Millbrook and Woolston to a designated area south of the Isle of Wight for five years and, because of rising fuel prices and the rise in operating costs, she was withdrawn from service and laid up in 1985.

It was vital that *SS Shieldhall* be preserved due to her steam propulsion system, and the many features from an earlier era, leading to an active preservation scheme. This came about by an initiative by Southampton City Museum Services, and a preservation society was formed, and *SS Shieldhall* was purchased from Southern Water for £20,000 in 1988, a figure arrived at as her "scrap value". Formed and registered as the Solent Steam Packet Limited, it later became a "Community Benefit Society" and, in 2020, a new registered charity named "Steamship Shieldhall Charity" was established to take over "responsibility for all aspects of preserving and operating the ship including fund-raising while ownership remained with Solent Packet Limited".

Much work on the *SS Shieldhall* has been carried out over the years by unpaid volunteers to maintain her sea worthiness condition, and volunteers also crew the ship for excursions, and hospitality functions. Running this ship is a costly exercise and has been helped by HLF over the years, including the restoration of the saloon, of which Graham showed us photographs before and after. Graham also showed us two short videos of *SS Shieldhall*, one of its original launch on the Clyde, and a more recent one of the engines running after Covid. There were also plenty of photos of the *SS Shieldhall* meeting the big Cunard liners coming into Southampton over the years, and it is hoped it will meet the Queen Anne next year. A lovely photo of both the *Waverley* and *Shieldhall* was also shown sailing together – two classic steamships side by side.

Now a frequent feature around the Solent, *SS Shieldhall* provides excursions for passengers to enjoy the historic steamship, and look round the ship including the navigation bridge and the machinery. *SS Shieldhall* has also been further afield including back to her home port in Glasgow, and to Holland for the Dordrecht Steam Festival, as well as attending the international Festivals of the Sea at Bristol and Portsmouth. *Shieldhall* also featured in the film *"Angela's Ashes"*.

Graham said he had last spoken to the group about ten years ago, but since then a lot more money, time and effort has been spent to keep the *SS Shieldhall* afloat. We sincerely hope that when Graham speaks to us again in another ten years, the *SS Shieldhall* will still be going strong, and people are still enjoying sailing on an ex-Glasgow steam sludge vessel, which started life transporting treated sewage down the River Clyde.

Our first speaker of the New Year in **January** was **Stephen Hoadley** who came along on a very cold, but frost free evening to talk to us in general about the ***Woolston Floating Bridge***, as HIAS member, Jim Beckett, covered "Floating Bridges of Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight" back in July 2023. Unlike most of the audience, Stephen is not a retiree, and still working as an Usher and administrator at the Crown Court in Southampton. His previous jobs included Bournemouth Museum Curator for Hampshire County Council, and Exhibition Developer at the National Railway Museum.

Stephen's last photograph of the Woolston Floating Bridge was taken in 1975 showing the last floating bridge and the very nearly completed new Itchen Bridge, which is still in living memory for a lot of people, like himself, who was 5-6 years old at the time.

Along with illustrations Stephen said that a Floating Bridge is a tried and tested way of crossing a river, and a "Floating Bridge is an affectionate description of the technology, rather than the name of the crossing".

Apparently the term, Floating Bridge, was first used by the engineer, James Rendel [1799-1856], a British Civil Engineer, who had previously implemented a similar design of chain ferries at Torpoint in Cornwall, and at Dartmouth in Devon. Stephen said he can still remember the sounds of the chains of the early Itchen foot passenger only ferry, and this same technology was applied to the Gosport Ferry in 1840. The term Floating Bridge has been commonly used in Southampton, and is still in use, even though it has been nearly fifty years since the ferry ceased operating. Stephen illustrated this use of the terminology by showing us a picture painted by L S Lowry in 1956 called "The Floating Bridge", and is remembered to this day in Floating Bridge Road, which leads to the site of Southampton Hard. Lowry's painting is now part of Southampton's Art Gallery collection.

The Woolston Floating Bridge was a cable ferry that crossed the River Itchen between Woolston and Southampton from 1836 until, as mentioned above, taken out of service in 1977 when the new Itchen Bridge was opened by Princess Alexandra. At the beginning there was one ferry, which was owned by the Floating Bridge Company, and then two operating side by side in 1881. In 1934 the company was sold to Southampton Corporation, under a compulsory purchase order for £23,013 apparently set by arbitration. The Council then stopped charging tolls for use by pedestrians and cyclists in 1946. In the 1970s there were two diesel ferries operating side by side during the day with a single ferry late in the evening.

The Woolston Floating Bridge was very popular, and initially largely reliant on long distance travellers for making a profit since, at the time, there were not many people living on the east bank of the Itchen, and those who did often qualified for toll exemptions. The Northam Bridge Company's response to the opening of the new Floating Bridge was by cutting its tolls, and this caused the Floating Bridge some financial problems. Traffic levels dropped again after 1929, when the Southampton Council purchased Northam Bridge, and made it toll free. But before this a new road was built between Hedge End and the Portsmouth Road at Sholing, which enabled those using Northam Bridge and paying a toll, to switch to the Floating Bridge. The term "Floating Bridge" is also applied to the Cowes Floating Bridge which still offers a similar service in a similar situation not that many miles away across the River Medina in Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Stephen also told us that, interestingly, as it was Vosper Thorneycroft which had built the last Floating Bridge, it was probably the only vessel to be used hardly any distance from where it had been built.

Stephen ended his talk about the history of the Woolston Floating Bridge by telling us about a folk song that was written in 1977 about the Woolston Ferry by Gutta Percha & The Balladeers which includes the following lyrics:-

*"If you are ever up in Sholing, and you want to go to town, don't go via Bitterne, that's the long way round, take a trip across the ferry, take a trip across the sea, and if you're a pedestrian you can go free. Oh, the Woolston Ferry it doesn't travel very fast, it was never built for comfort, it was built to last".*

On that rather sweet tribute, I thought, to the Woolston Floating Bridge, Stephen ended his talk on a still affectionately remembered local icon, which for many years had played a part in yet another aspect of Southampton's coastal history.

About thirty HIAS members turned up for our **February** meeting to hear **Bill Fergie** talk to us about ***The Development of Timber Framed Buildings in Hampshire***. Bill is a member of the Hampshire Field Club and, until recently, was chair of their Historic Buildings Section. He recently published an article about *Burghclere Manor* in the HFC's *Journal No 80 Autumn 2023,* and a recent article on *The Great Barn at Old Burghclere* for the *"Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust Publication 2022/2023".* He has also worked with Edward Roberts, the principal author of *Hampshire Houses 1250-1700,* initially published in 2003, which has now become the standard reference work on Hampshire's early houses. Bill contributed to many of the drawings in that book, and worked with Edward on an updated edition which was published by the Hampshire Preservation Trust in 2016. In 2020 Bill and Edward co-wrote *Traditional Houses of the Worthy Villages,* which is a detailed study of timber framed houses of the four "Worthy" villages north east of Winchester.

Bill began his talk by explaining the term "dendrochronology" which is a relatively new discovery, being a scientific method of dating tree rings to the exact year they were formed in a tree. As well as dating them, this can give data for "dendroclimatology", the study of climate and atmospheric conditions during different periods in history from the wood of old trees. Bill then referred to the book written by his late friend, Edward Roberts, titled *Hampshire Houses 1250 – 1700, Their Dating & Development,* which is an authoritative study of Hampshire's historic houses and, as mentioned above, has just been reprinted with a lavishly illustrated addendum covering a further 95 buildings studied since the book's original publication in 2003.

Bill explained how the breakthrough in the development of timber buildings occurred during the 12th Century when a timber structure was held together by a triangulated, i.e. self-supporting structure. Previously, wooden posts were put directly into the ground where they could rot, and become unstable fairly quickly. Many of the sophisticated planning and building techniques which the Romans introduced to England were abandoned after their departure, the Saxons being timber builders rather than masons. From about 1210, posts were set into stone pads, rather than directly into the ground, this was to revolutionise timber buildings.

Bill said that a Medieval Hall House consisted of a large hall in the centre of the house with a fire in the middle. This was used for heating as well as cooking if there was not a separate kitchen. The hall was hierarchical, the top

table being at the furthest end from the entrance with the family living quarters behind, and the servants quarters at the front near the entrance. To illustrate this, Bill showed us a photo of "Batchelors" at North Waltham circa 1499 which clearly shows a large open central hall, and another photo of The Old Rectory at Headbourne Worthy circa 1550 with a similar layout.

Bill divided timber framed types into *Box Frame, Post & Truss, Aisled and Cruck* construction. *Box Frame* consists of wall frames connected at bay intervals by cross tie beams etc. *Post and Truss*, the most common form of surviving timber framed buildings, the cross frame includes tie beams, as they do in Box Frames, but the principal rafters are jointed into the tie beam. *Aisled* construction provides additional internal space by dividing the structure into a central nave and two side aisles. Wall posts become internal, arcade posts and the aisles are roofed over, etc. Aisled halls are some of the earliest timber framed structures to have survived, and those that have been dated in Hampshire were built approximately between 1250 and 1350.

*Cruck* construction is cross frames made up of pairs of inclined timbers, which meet at the apex and are tied together by some form of collar. There are over a 100 Cruck houses left in Hampshire, and Bill showed us a photo of a Cruck Barn at Sherfield on Loddon circa 1392, and an earlier one at Bentley circa 1311-1312.

An example and illustration of a Grade 1 Listed Aisle barn was of one at Manor Farm, Old Burghclere. About twenty years ago, the felling of the timbers of the barn was established by dendrochronology to have taken place in the winter of 1450-1451. This building is a large eight bay barn measuring about 128 feet in length and 35 feet in width. "Aisled Halls" were very prestigious buildings, especially in Hampshire, although more modest in Kent and Sussex apparently.

Bill finished off his excellent talk by telling us briefly about *Transitional Houses*. Around the 1550s it was thought that open halls were a waste of space, and there was the problem of what to do with the smoke. A photo of a Tudor cottage built circa 1560 had a chimney installed around the 1600s, and one or two other photos of similar buildings in Martyr Worthy and Micheldever, where a lobbied entrance had been installed, and where a wooden chimney can be seen.

At the end of his talk, the Chairman said a big thank you to Bill on behalf of the members, for coming along and giving us a very interesting and in-depth talk on the *"Development of Timber Framed Houses in Hampshire".* Bill was telling me afterwards that he had worked as a planning consultant up until 2005 and, having always been interested in timber as a constructional material, once retired his interest in historic timber framed buildings developed further.

Before the **March** meeting began and, after the usual notices, Keith [Andrews] gave a short progress report plus photos of the Leyland Olympic, JAA 708, which caught fire alongside other vintage buses in the shed where they were stored a few months ago, as follows:-

*"As for the recovery last Saturday, work started about 9:30 by putting slave wheels with tyres on in place of the old wheels with burnt-out tyres. The rest of the morning was spent making all the loose bits secure and then winching the bus onto a low loader owned by one of our members. Unfortunately, the electric winch wasn't working so it had to be hauled on using a block and tackle -- very slow, not completed until after lunch. Arriving back at our yard about 4:30, the bus was unloaded with some difficulty as it wouldn't roll very easily, even down the ramp of the low loader, and getting it over a sleeping policeman was very hard. Towed into our yard by another member's AEC Matador, it was 18:30 when it was finally shunted into place in our shed".*

Then the Chairman, Rob [Fish] welcomed **Ursula Pearce** who came along to our meeting to talk to us about the ***History of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley***. Ursula is the Visitor Services Officer, and explained that her salary was originally paid out of the HLF they received, but when that ran out, HCC stepped in and continues to fund her post.

Apparently, it was Prince Albert's idea to build a new hospital for sick and wounded soldiers as, during the Crimean War [1854-1856], the dreadful conditions in military hospitals in the Crimea caused political concern in England, and "contributed to the fall of the Government in 1855". Between Queen Victoria, Florence Nightingale, and Lord Palmerston, the new Prime Minister, a new large hospital at Netley in Hampshire on the shore of Southampton Water was planned and constructed. The land was purchased from the Chamberlayne Estate in January 1856, and should have taken two years to build, but took seven years before it opened.

*The stone was laid "on the 19th day of May in the year of our Lord 1856, by her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland as the foundation stone of the Victoria Military Hospital intended for the reception of the sick and invalid soldiers of her Army".*

Also buried with the stone was a box [time capsule] containing the first Victoria Cross ever made, and never awarded, a Crimea War Medal, and coins of the realm, plus plans of the hospital.

The hospital was designed to accommodate 1000 patients, 500 medical and 500 surgical staff. Ursula went on to explain the layout of the hospital, and a photograph showed an imposing entrance with the chapel behind, which is all that remains today. The Royal Victoria Hospital was Britain's largest hospital, and cost about £350,000, which was over budget as well as late. Florence Nightingale did not approve of the hospital's design, one reason being there were not enough windows in the wards, but Ursula explained that too many windows would have made it excessively hot during the summer months. Because Florence Nightingale was still in the Crimea when the

initial plans were drawn up, it was on her return that she was able to highlight some of the flaws in the design. By 1860 Florence Nightingale succeeded in establishing an Army Training School for military nurses at the Royal Victoria Hospital, and in 1902 female army nurses became known as QARNC [Queen Alexandra's Royal Nursing Corps].

A cast iron pier was extended into Southampton Water in 1856, but it was too shallow to land ships, so patients had to be taken ashore in shallow draft boats, until the railway was built behind the hospital in 1900, and in 1903 an electricity generating station was also installed. One of the first things in view when entering the imposing central tower block was a large museum of natural history and anatomical specimens reflecting the interest of many of the doctors. The hospital contained laboratories, and was a seat of medical learning and scientific breakthroughs.

During WW1 a large Red Cross hospital was built in huts at the rear of the site. This expanded the hospital by a further 2,500 beds with many of the staff being Red Cross volunteers. During WW1 about 50,000 patients were treated at the hospital. WW2 saw about 68,000 treated, and in 1944 the hospital was taken over by the US Forces prior to the D-Day landings. In case of an invasion, a break was made in the pier.

After the war, the hospital carried on caring for casualties returning from overseas, as well as some Hungarian refugees in 1956 from the uprising but, due to the high cost of running the hospital, it gradually fell into disrepair and in 1958 the main site closed. The pier was not repaired and was demolished in 1955. A fire in 1963 damaged most of the building, so it was demolished in 1966. Queen Victoria's "time capsule" was unearthed alongside the foundation stone in 1966. HCC received a HLF grant in 2014 to repair and conserve the chapel and tower, and convert into a museum. The site is now open to the public, and called The Royal Victoria Country Park. Only the chapel remains, although this was destined to be demolished, but saved at the last moment and is now Grade II* Listed. Some buildings at the rear, including the former asylum, are now used by Hampshire Police as a training facility.

Although this is just a short synopsis of Ursula's talk, a lot more information about the history of the hospital can be found online and, better still, take a visit to the Country Park, where Ursula said there are a lot of information boards around the site to assist visitors. A round of applause to Ursula for coming along, and giving us an interesting talk about another aspect of Southampton's unique waterfront history.

The HIAS speaker for **April's** meeting was our own Chairman, Rob Fish, and the title of his talk was ***From Bilbao to Britain, 4,000 Children saved from famine and bombardment***. Rob admitted that it didn't really have any IA content as such, but it was of significant local interest, and little known about up until a few years ago. It was in 1937 and, because of the Spanish Civil War, that about 4,000 children, who were called "ninos de la Guerra", together with a few teachers and priests, were evacuated to Britain from the port of Bilbao in the Basque region of Spain, following the devastating bombing of Guernica, a town made famous by Picasso's painting of the same name *"Guernica"*. Picasso stipulated that this painting would not set foot in Spain until "liberty and democracy had been established in the country".

It was in 1936 that a group of army officers headed by General Franco *"orchestrated an armed rebellion against the constitutionally elected Republican Government"*. The generals initially anticipated a rapid quick *coup d'etat,* but that didn't go as planned, because it was *"countered by a spontaneous uprising of popular resistance throughout much of Spain"*.

The newly autonomous Basque Government appealed to other foreign governments to take in their children as they realised, wrongly as it turned out, that it would only be a matter of months before they were overthrown by Franco's army. Other countries accepted about 29,000 refugee children including France, Russia, Switzerland and others, but the *"British Government, as signatories to the 1936 Non Intervention Agreement, refused to accept any refugees"*. It was left to the Duchess of Atholl, who was then President of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, which was a cross-party co-ordinating aid to Spain, started a campaign to persuade the Government to accept the Basque refugee children.

With the refusal from the British Government to offer any financial responsibility – and it was made quite clear that no public money was to be involved, and that the whole enterprise had to be supported by voluntary contributions – and volunteers from wherever the money and the people could be found. Subsequently, about 4,000 children departed on an aging ship called the *SS Habana* on the 21st May 1937. At this point in Rob's talk he showed us an emotional documentary footage of *"Tragedy of the Civil War Basque Refugees"* recorded by Pathé News at the time, showing the parents saying goodbye to their children on the quayside, not knowing when they would see them again. *"Each child had a cardboard hexagonal disk with an identification number, and the words Expedicion a Inglaterre printed on it"*. After a very uncomfortable journey, which was particularly rough around the Bay of Biscay, the children finally arrived in Southampton on the 23rd May 1937. They then went by bus to a "reception camp at North Stoneham in Eastleigh that had been set up in one of the fields. The setting up of the camp in less than two weeks was the result of a remarkable effort by the whole community" who had worked tirelessly to get it ready in time for the arrival of the children. The fields used were kindly donated by a local farmer, Farmer Brown of Swaythling Farm, in North Stoneham, and were meant just for a short time as a transit camp, until the children could be found homes elsewhere in the country. Rob's presentation, which included mostly primary sources including archive film footage, letters, newspaper articles etc., as well as first-hand

accounts from the children themselves who stayed in the U.K, both positive and negative. These primary sources were mainly obtained from a group called the Basque Children Association [BCA '37]: their official Archive is at Southampton University's Hartley Library, and National Archives.

This group is keeping this story very much alive, giving talks, arranging exhibitions and workshops to schools, local history groups and universities, both in Spanish and English, in Spain as well as the UK. They are a non-profit, non-political charitable association run by a small group of volunteers, with some family links to the history of the Basque Refugees. For more information on this group go to – www.basquechildren.org

Rob pointed out that, somewhat surprisingly, not much is remembered today about this extraordinary episode from the Spanish Civil War, and the small part Britain played leading up the WW2. Even at the time, Rob said, the Southern Evening Echo, a prominent local newspaper, hardly covered the story of the Spanish refugee children at all. This is now changing as the BCA '37 group has been instrumental in putting up commemorative plaques at the sites of former colonies housing the Basque children. Locally there are also commemorative plaques in Royal Victoria Country Park, Town Quay Park, and a "Guernica Tree" at Hillier's Arboretum. The group is also preserving and collecting more archival material, so more people will get to hear about this chapter in history from 1937.

By the end of the 1930s and the start of the Second World War, most of the children had left for Spain, which was traumatising for some of them as they had forgotten their Spanish and, some of the younger ones, their parents. Over 300 stayed in the U.K. as, if over sixteen, they were given the choice to stay if they wanted to. Some had no parents to go back to, as either dead, imprisoned or no-one knew where they were. "By 1945, there were still over 250 Basque refugees in Britain and many of these settled permanently, remaining in Britain for the rest of their lives".

We thanked Rob for an illuminating talk about a not very widely known episode from the Spanish Civil War, and the small part played in it by many altruistic people around at the time.

**Write-up for Focus May 2024**

*As I was unable to attend the HIAS **May** meeting, Jim Beckett kindly produced the following synopsis of the presentation titled **Hampshire Brickworks Gazetteer Revision, 50 years on.***

The talk was on the work being undertaken at The Bursledon Brickworks Museum to update the Hampshire Brickworks Gazetteer. The original gazetteer was written by Bill White in 1971, from information gathered by members of the Southampton University IA group.

The team from the Brickworks Museum comprised three volunteers, all of whom spoke at the meeting.

Jim Beckett began by examining the original publication and pointing out how much had changed in 53 years. Large modern brickworks are fully mechanised with bricks even being stacked by robots. Brick slips, thin bricks designed to be mounted in a steel frame, are becoming ever more popular.

Several important brick buildings were mentioned such as the Hockley Viaduct which, in 1971, Bill thought would be demolished, has in fact survived. Jim explained how, compared with 1971, we can now access so much information using the internet, which makes our task easier, but also risks being overwhelmed by data. He went on to explain the fundamentals of brick making.

Richard Newman then addressed those present and explained the investigations he had undertaken on some of the brickworks near Fordingbridge, owned by the Billett family. This began in 1936 but eventually grew into a large family business. Over time Billetts owned Charing Cross and Camel Green works and Rakes Yard in Alderholt. They also worked at Bemerton and West Grimstead near Salisbury and Old Yard and West Park, Sandleheath, near Fordingbridge. Among the slides shown, there were two showing interesting estate plans, outlining the land available for brickmaking on the M.V. Rakes Estate in 1944.

Richard also explained how his research had led him in another direction when he discovered a document in the National Archives. This was a list compiled by the Ministry of Works in 1943, showing the brickworks which were to be closed for the duration. This would have freed up 31,000 workers in a reserved occupation, who would now be able to join the armed forces. After the war, the same Ministry then went on to complain about a shortage of bricks.

Richard was followed by Bob Marshall who began his talk with Selborne Brickworks which he first visited in 1986 while working for the local authority Planning Office. This amusing anecdote was followed by slides taken recently of the works which, like all the other brickyards in Hampshire bar one, had now closed. Fortunately many of the buildings still existed. He went on to describe his site visits to Blanchard's in Bishops Waltham and the nearby works at Coppice Hill.

Bob also described his visits to other sites. One was Petersfield, where the brick-making goes back to the 18th century and where a brick drying building, dating from 1733, was saved and moved to the Weald and Downland Museum.

At the end of the talk Bill White came to the front and spoke about his involvement with bricks. He had wanted to become an architect, but his maths was not good enough, and so it was recommended he should train instead as a bricklayer.

Our **June** speaker was **Graham Horner**, who came along to talk to us about ***The Boscombe Down Aviation Collection***. Graham is a retired Design Engineer, and now the visit manager and regular volunteer at the collection. He began his talk by telling us the history of how the collection came into existence.

It was in 1917 that Boscombe Down was originally constructed and operated as the "Royal Air Force Station Boscombe Down", and an airfield opened on the site, which had previously been farmland, but purchased by the MOD from the land owner. This was operated as a "Royal Flying Corps Training Depot Station", which trained crews for operational services in France during WW1. When the war ended in 1918, the airfield temporarily became an aircraft storage unit before returning to agricultural use. The site then re-opened under the Air Defence of Great Britain Command [a fore-runner of RAF Fighter Command] as a bomber station.

After the outbreak of WW2, the A&AEE [Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment] moved to the site from its former base at RAF Martlesham Heath in Suffolk, and this marked the beginning of Boscombe Down's long association with aircraft research and testing. Also, for a number of years, the site was the home of the RAF School of Aviation Medicine.

Graham then went on to tell us about the present collection, which is "considered to be the finest in the UK", with an extensive display of model aircraft as well. They also pride themselves that the collection mostly allows access to the inside of the planes where visitors can climb into cockpits to get the full experience. The collection is set out in chronological order from its early beginnings through to the formation of the RFC, RNAS to the birth of the RAF.

In chronological order then, Graham listed some of the more significant achievements which happened at Boscombe Down including that in 1945 a new runway was built, in 1946 CATS [Civil Aircraft Testing Station] moved in, and in 1949 an additional runway was added. 1947 a jet engine plane arrived, 1951 there was a non-stop flight to America and then, in 1953, a non-stop flight to Australia. In 1956 Peter Twiss set the world speed record, in 1964 the TSR2 had its maiden flight out of Boscombe Down, and 2017 saw the 100th anniversary of Boscombe Down. Graham informed us that amongst the planes on display at present is a Harrier Jump Jet, Hawk T1, Jaguar GR.1, Hawker Hunter, a Hawker Siddeley Andover plus many more.

Graham ended his talk by saying that, over the years, the site has witnessed many significant developments in British Aviation History, including pioneering trials of many aircraft, which have been of considerable importance to our armed forces. In 2001, following the creation of QinetiQ, a twenty-five year Long Term Partnering Agreement [LTPA] was established with the MOD. Because of this the airfield, and all of the infrastructure at MOD Boscombe Down, have been operated by QinetiQ on behalf of the MOD, with many of the buildings on the site now benefitting from a major transformation programme to improve and modernise the on-site operations and facilities.

After thanking Graham for his interesting, informative, knowledgeable, and anecdotal talk, we are looking forward to seeing him again, when we visit the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection as a group at the end of the month, kindly organised by our Chairman.

# Obituaries

## Margaret Silman

We sadly have to report the death of Margaret Silman, John's widow. This obituary was published in the Hampshire Chronicle on May 8th:-

> ***SILMAN, Margaret****. Passed away peacefully at The Fleet Care Home, Dartmouth on 20th April 2024, aged 91. Much loved wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Funeral Service at Southampton Crematorium on Tuesday 21st May at 1.45 pm.*

This report on the funeral was provided by Eleanor Yates:-

*Alison Stott and Eleanor Yates represented the Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society and the Hampshire Mills Group at the funeral of Margaret, widow of our much loved and much missed John.*

*The service was lovely, full of good music and tributes to Margaret, John and their busy lives together. We heard how they met and married and settled in Chandlers Ford. We learned about John's interest in canals, mills and industrial history and how Margaret, Catherine and Rachel enjoyed the holidays he'd arranged round these hobbies, although I don't think Margaret ever enjoyed dinghy sailing the way John did. The service sheet has some lovely photographs of Margaret, her sisters, John and their daughters.*

*Margaret was very proud of John as he was of her and this was evident from their family and friends who attended.*

## Laurie Wing

Another former member who has passed away is Laurie Wing, who was responsible for compiling the commemorative booklet *Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group 1968 – 2001: A History* which was published in 2002. He also wrote the chapter on *36 Years of IA Study Tours* and adapted a report *Industrial Archaeology in Flanders* written in 1979 by Penny Stowe about a SUIAG visit to Flanders. This, incidentally, was followed by a reciprocal week by the VVIA group to Hampshire organised by SUIAG.

This obituary appeared in the *Southern Evening Echo* on April 25th:-

***WING, Laurie**. Air Commodore (retired), MBE RAF, much loved Dad to Gilly and Jenny, sadly passed away on 15th April 2024. A celebration of the lives of Laurie and Maureen Wing to be held on 1st May 2024.*

## *Robert Bryson* *(Surrey Industrial History Society)*

(Although not connected with HIAS, a number of our members knew Bob so this has been added.)
email from the Surrey Archaeological Society to HIAS, April 18th 2024

**Robert Bryson, Chairman, Surrey Industrial History Group**

It is with great sadness that the committee reports the death of Robert (Bob), its long-standing chairman. Already the chairman when I joined the group in 2004, Bob served continuously in that role, adding several other duties over the years; in fact it was thanks to Bob that the group continued its activities. We played an active part in SERIAC activities, supported research and publishing, and made annual awards to those who had helped in conservation work in various fields. Recently he has organised the popular Zoom talks on I A topics.

Bob had an operation for cancer 2 years ago, and its recurrence recently was a great shock to him and to his family and friends. The funeral will take place on Tuesday, 23rd April at Guildford Crematorium.

*Pam Taylor, Vice-Chairman of the Surrey Industrial History Group*

## *Twyford Waterworks Trust*

www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk
*Registered Charity No. 291720*

*Ian Harden*

Another summer and another open day season is well underway. The May Bank Holiday event was once again very successful with approximately 950 people attending over the two days, the second as usual being in conjunction with the Friends of King Alfred Buses' main running day. The overall figure is lower than the previous year and almost certainly due to the more typical damp bank holiday weather. June's weather was fortunately more co-operative as we hosted an impressive display of MGs of various vintages that were much admired by the 300 visitors. The remainder of the season will take place as usual on the first Sundays of July through to October and if any HIAS members are amongst the ranks of those who have been meaning to visit for a long time, you will see several familiar faces when you do.

For the first two of those dates at least, visitors will be able to appreciate the skills of Southern Water's scaffolding contractors who have provided the means of access for a steeplejack to replace the mortar on the uppermost 50 feet of the 75 feet high chimney. Some of the steel bands will also receive attention and an additional lightning conductor installed. Once completed, his work will leave it in a suitable state of repair for the present to pass on to future generations of volunteers. Fortunately, there is sufficient space for people to pass by the base so as not to be inconvenienced en route to the toilets.

Prior to the start of the open day season, much was achieved during the winter maintenance period. One of the main jobs dealt with by the Steam Team was to investigate a slight leak of steam from shafts linked to the Corless valves that control entry and exit of steam to and from the Hathorn Davey triple expansion engine's cylinders and to develop a plan to deal with same.

The Internal Combustion Team meanwhile was gainfully employed investigating the cause of the governor on the large 4VER Ruston diesel engine running at slightly inconsistent speeds. This was dealt with by modifying the governor's linkage to allow more adjustment than was previously possible. Other work involved preparing the three air receivers connected to the air start system for their biannual insurance inspection and overhauling the Lister D stationary engine.

On the Industrial Railway front, the full overhaul of the Hereford Waterworks Lister locomotive is finally nearing completion and looking very smart after a repaint. One would expect the loco to be in action before the season's end.

Far less technical but in its own way equally as important has been the attention given to the numerous wildlife aspects of the site, especially the pond which was cleared of a large amount of invasive vegetation that was starting to greatly restrict the movement of its numerous inhabitants.

It has long been the aim to achieve accreditation as a museum and earlier this year the Trust successfully completed an eligibility questionnaire enabling us to proceed with the "Working Towards Accreditation" stage of the process over the next few years.

**From the *Inland Waterways Association* bulletin June 8th 2024**

The Navigation Committee recently received an update from IWA's HS2 Lead Representative explaining that even though HS2 has been cancelled north of Birmingham, uncertainty continues about the implications for waterways. This is partly because of the intention to continue with the Northern Powerhouse Rail section towards Manchester and partly because the connection of HS2 to the West Coast Mainline at Handsacre is problematic.

## *Letter from Cornwall* – an update from our former Chairman, Howard Sprenger

Clare and I have been living in Blisland for 18 months now (where has that time gone?) and I thought HIAS members might be interested in a little catch-up from the South-west.

We've been members of the Trevithick Society for many years and were looking forward to attending their monthly meetings when we moved down here. There are two a month – one near us in Liskeard and another in Redruth, although we have tended to miss the latter ones as it's quite a drive, and the ongoing A30 roadworks mean there are often lengthy diversions in place in the evenings and at weekends. Liskeard is more convenient and we have been to several meetings there.

The Liskeard meetings are 'hybrid' ones with members being able to watch on Zoom rather than attend in person. Unfortunately, although Zoom numbers are quite high (anything between 20 and 40 tuning in around the world) physical attendees have become very thin on the ground. At the January meeting, I was the only one present apart from the organisers! If there is no improvement in attendances, the Society is proposing to stop hiring the room in Liskeard, and make the talks available only via Zoom. It makes sense, but it would be a shame if the meetings were to cease. People getting together in a room makes for a lot more discussion than can ever be possible at a Zoom meeting, and this is something that would sadly be lost – at least at Liskeard. I'm pleased to say that at the last meeting there were more members present, so perhaps the message has hit home.

Since 2020, I have been studying for the York University MA in Railway Studies – sadly, now withdrawn by the university despite being a very popular (and profitable) course. I finished last September, and had my graduation ceremony in York in February. Clare and I decided to go up by train, which was an interesting experience as industrial action kept getting in the way, and we ended up rebooking four times before we found a pattern of trains that were actually running!

Getting on the Cross Country service where it started at Plymouth, we were able to find a table, and at Exeter we were joined by a young lady in her early twenties, who had made the connection from Okehampton. She was quite chatty and asked us where we were going and why. After we'd explained about the Railway Studies MA course she said, "Have you ever heard of someone called Tom Rolt?"

"Er ... yes ... you mean Tom Rolt as in L.T.C. Rolt, preservation pioneer, canal saviour and all-round IA hero?" I said.

"Yes, that's him ... he was my grandfather!"

She had never met him of course – he died 50 years ago, after all – but she knew all about him, and we had a good chat about everything that he'd achieved as we sped towards Bristol, where she got off. Talk about a small world – it seemed like a good omen for the graduation ceremony, which indeed went off very well. She told us she is an artist working with several others in Bude, so at some point we'll pop up there and try to find out more about her art. I'm not expecting to see any IA element, though.

It was Trevithick day in Camborne on Saturday 27th April, but we didn't go this year thanks to the aforementioned A30 weekend road closure (the work is due to be completed by June ... we'll see ...). We went for the first time last year, and were very impressed by the number of steam road locomotives and rollers everywhere, together with a healthy selection of classic cars, stationary engines and a classic bus shuttle service. We also bumped into Graham Mackenzie who was in the area while SS Shieldhall was in dry dock in Falmouth.

Fortunately, the A30 was open for the Penzance Classic Bus Running Day the previous Sunday so we drove down to the very far west for it. There weren't quite as many classic buses this year as last but the weather was better, so the crowds were heavier. Like Winchester Running Day, it is a very good day out with some lovely runs out into the countryside to Lands End, St Just and St Ives among other places. The Mousehole bus always draws large passenger numbers as the old short wheelbase vehicles struggle to get round a tortuous 90-degree bend on the way in. However, our overcrowded 30-seater Bristol SUS4A failed to get even that far as, ahead of us, the previous service had stopped on the corner with a clutch problem. Nothing was going to get in or out of Mousehole until it was recovered and although we tried later in the day, we weren't able to get on the bus. James Freeman was there driving Bristol FLF6G 468FTT, but I didn't get a chance to talk to him.

I think that's about it. We've settled in very well, and there is certainly plenty to do. Clare volunteers in the community shop and has taken over as treasurer of the Village Hall. I edit the parish magazine ('Community News' – 40 full-colour pages every month) and Clare is also treasurer for that. Life is certainly busy, and the family loves making the trip down during the holidays. We miss you all, of course, but it still feels as though we did the right thing to move down here. We should be back some time in 2024, and if our visit coincides with a HIAS meeting, we'll pop in.

*Howard Sprenger*
howard@sprenger.family

### Rolt Memorial Conference

Quite by coincidence, the Iron Gorge Museum Trust had organised a Conference about Tom Rolt, in partnership with Keele University, being held in May. The notice says: "The pioneering campaigner and writer LTC (Tom) Rolt was the first President of AIA and 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of his death. His publications played a significant role in the emerging field of industrial archaeology and industrial heritage preservation, and he was personally involved in the foundation of organisations such as The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, the Talyllyn Railway, the Inland Waterways Association and the Vintage Sports-Car Club. In August 2023 the Ironbridge Museums completed a project to create an archive of his personal papers, donated by his family."

## *SWWERIAC 2024*

*Eleanor Yates*

The South Wales & West of England Regional Industrial Archaeology Conference 2024 was held on March 22nd at the Llanhilleth Miners Institute, Newport, which is a building worth visiting even if there's no conference!

The first paper was by **Peter Strong:** ***Sudbrook and the Severn Tunnel***. HIAS has had lectures on the Severn Tunnel before, but this included details which I had not heard before.

Sudbrook is the site of a Prehistoric Hill Fort probably occupied by the Silures, much of which has been washed away by the Severn, later a Roman Fort as the Romans used this site for a ferry crossing, and later a putting green and football ground which will be perplexing to future archaeologists. Sudbrook's medieval manor included the now ruined Holy Trinity Church with the graveyard marked by the finding of human bones on the beach below.

Most of Sudbrook was built as a new village for workers on the Severn Tunnel, on which construction began in 1873. The first cottages were built by contractor Thomas A Walker in 1877, and rapid development took place over the next decade, including a school, Post Office, mission hall and infirmary. Some of the houses – originally known as Concrete Row – are believed to be the first concrete houses built in Britain.

Also built was a large pumping station, required to pump water from the tunnel, including three large brick engine houses, which contained six Cornish beam steam engines powered by Lancashire Boilers, and ventilation towers. The steam engines were replaced by electrical engines in 1962, and the chimney stacks taking smoke from the furnaces were demolished in 1968.

The pumping station was needed because the tunnel continuously flooded, both from the river and in 1879 from "The Great Spring". A team of four divers was employed to clear the debris from the tunnel after the flood. They originally used air lines which abraded on the roof, but Henry Fleuss had invented the sort of tank now used by scuba divers and these enabled one diver, Andrew Lambert, to clear and then reach the door which was designed to control flooding. Unfortunately he had not been briefed on the construction of the sluice gate in the door so the flooding continued but, as soon as they realised, he was able to shut the sluices and work restarted.

After the Severn Tunnel was opened in 1886, Walker started a shipbuilding business at Sudbrook, using the same labour force. This continued in operation, building steamers of up to 700 tonnes, until 1926. The steamers were used on the Severn and in Buenos Aires. Between 1958 and 2006, local employment in the village was provided by a large paper mill, which made use of water from the tunnel.

The second paper was by **Jeff Grosvenor:** ***The Newport Transporter Bridge***. Many HIAS members will have visited the bridge and know its history and construction, but Jeff had some very good photographs of its construction, the opening ceremony and of local youths scampering in the mud below the bridge and hanging from the gondola before plunging into the Usk below. The caissons used in the construction were carefully monitored and, unlike at the Brooklyn Bridge, there were no fatalities caused by the workers getting 'the bends'.

The transporter bridge is now under repair and restoration but will be open again in the autumn of 2025.

The third paper was by **Roger James:** ***Rolls and Royce***. Roger outlined the history of the Rolls family: the male line died out after the last brother was killed in WW1. Charles Rolls was not only rich but a dare-devil. He was a frequent flier in balloons and an early enthusiast of cars, opening the first motor sales shop in 1902 in Earls Court selling French cars. Soon after this he heard about Henry Royce, a self-made fanatical engineer, believing in precision and quality over quantity. A handshake agreement in the Midland Hotel in Manchester created the company. Their cars were made in various factories and workshops in the Midlands. 80% of Rolls Royce cars are still on the road.

Charles Rolls became fascinated by planes and went to America after he had heard of the Wright brothers' successful flight. In 1908 he introduced the Wright brothers to the Short Brothers and planes were made in Britain at Leysdown. CR was killed at the Bournemouth Air Show in 1910. From the start of WW1 the British government requisitioned ambulances and army cars (T E Lawrence took 16 Rolls Royces to the middle east). Rolls Royce was then asked to develop engines for the planes used by the infant Royal Flying Corps, which created the two arms of Rolls Royce to this day.

After lunch we heard **Stephen Lyons:** ***The 1860 Black Vein mining disaster and the Green Meadow cemetery*****.** Stephen knew from newspapers and coroners' reports from 1860 that 142 miners died at this Risca colliery, but there are discrepancies in the reports of their burials. He quickly ruled out 'a mass burial in an unmarked field' but discovered that a field, The Green Meadow, had been donated or purchased, blessed by the bishop and planned for the burials. However many families wanted to use their own family plots in the nearby C of E, Baptist and Methodist churchyards, so in the end only 12 people were buried there. Stephen now heads a charity which maintains the meadow, its wall, grass and gate, although now only two headstones are visible.

The last paper was by **Tony Moon** on the ***Planned Re-opening of the Rhondda Railway Tunnel.*** Created to take coal from the Rhondda to Swansea Docks, the tunnel was so deep that the engineers could not use the normal shaft system but dug from each end, meeting in the middle after 4 years. The original inspection failed as the tunnel was unlined, being dug through rock, so 753 yards had to be lined with brick and concrete. The chief engineer was Sydney William Yockney whose father engineered the Box Tunnel. Only 10% of the tunnel needs repair, but the southern end of the tunnel will be extended so it can be used by cyclists and walkers. The Rhondda Railway Tunnel Society, founded in 2014, is very active in fund raising and publicity.

## Old canal path?

*Peter Oates*

As a former member of SUIAG, before moving away from Hampshire nearly 20 years ago after retiring from the Ordnance Survey, I was reading some of the issues of Focus on your website.

One item in Focus No 95, with a follow up in No 96, caught my eye. It was about the replacement of the footbridge at Millbrook Station. In connection with this it was stated that the footpath from Millbrook Station along the south side of the railway back towards Southampton Station was to be closed.

The follow up item pointed out that the path alongside the railway was a requirement of the Southampton & Dorchester Railway's Act of 1845. I have always been under the impression that the path originated with the construction of the Southampton and Salisbury Canal along the edge of the estuary and that the towing path was used by the general public for the forty or more years before the railway came. This I think is the origin of the path or esplanade referred to in the quoted exchange in the committee stage of the bill.

Of course, when the railway was widened (and part was straightened) to four tracks in the 1930s in connection with the New Docks, the path was moved southwards to accommodate the extra rail tracks.

The latest OS large scale mapping shows the truncated footbridge at Millbrook Station but the footpath seems to still be marked and just truncated at the site of the end of the old footbridge.

You and your members might like to look at some of the pictures on my website Hampshire Waterways (formerly the closed Southampton Canal Society site) https://sotoncs.org.uk/sarum/sarum_today-v5.htm although even some of the modern pictures are now a little dated.

**Reply to Peter by Focus editor, Angela Smith:**

I checked the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 maps on the National Library of Scotland site, earliest is 1895 and there is no path to south of railway, people would have had to walk along the narrow pebbly beach. The next map revised 1907 does show a path which ends up south of the Southampton West Station.

**. . . . followed very swiftly by a reply from Peter**

Yes I have looked at NLS but I've also discovered an estate map dating from about 1850 which shows and labels a "Public Footpath" south of the railway but north of high water. More later.

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Whilst we are on the subject of canals, let's have a couple of . . .

## Canal Jottings

**Police seek driver who cost canal charity £100,000** *(adapted from a BBC Derby report, 16 June 2024)*

Derbyshire Police want to trace the driver of a vehicle – believed to be an HGV which did not stop – that damaged the parapet of a 250-year-old brick humpback canal bridge (No. 16) on the Trent & Mersey Canal just north of Barrow-upon-Trent, south of Derby, on 23rd April, closing it for more than six weeks. Debris from the wing of the bridge fell into the canal following the accident, meaning it was unsafe for boats to pass under for several weeks. This caused some boats to be stuck on a short stretch of the canal until the debris was cleared.

This bridge is a collision "hotspot" and has been hit 16 times over the past 20 years, being on a sharp bend where vehicles tend to cut the corner. It is on a rural route that also gets used by large farm traffic. The Canal and River Trust had to finance the repair costing £100,000, being unable to claim from the unknown miscreant's insurance. Original bricks were re-used for the repair work. The Charity spends more than £1m a year repairing bridges damaged by vehicles which it can ill afford as it is facing a reduction in government funding.

*(Members familiar with using Google maps/satellite and Streetview can find it by searching for Barrow-upon-Trent: the minor road (Sinfin Lane) is north where there is a T-junction where the road crosses the canal. Streetview currently has a good view of previous damage in the same place, though not so serious as this one).*

**Fly-tipping as prevalent as ever near canal in Bridgwater**

*(from Inland Waterways Association e-bulletin, copied from the Bridgwater Mercury of February 15 2024 )*

The co-ordinator of a local volunteer group dedicated to maintaining the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and the docks has warned locals of the dangers of fly-tipping. Mike Slade, who runs IWA Somerset Volunteers, said his group recently came across an incident along the canal at the rear of Lakeside Caravan Park.

"The full extent of the quantity of items dumped was astonishing," Mike said. "We bagged up that rubbish and took it into the car park and advised Clean Surroundings to pick it up. We get a lot along that section". Mike, whose group has spent 30,000 hours on maintaining the canal and docks over the past ten years, said fly-tipping in Bridgwater is just as prevalent as ever, and warns that discarded items along the canal can be of immense danger to the public. "There are lots of bits and pieces that we're picking up, where if someone dumps it under a canal bridge, and another comes along on a cycle or when it's dark, it's potentially a danger," he said.

"Some of the most bizarre items the group has found along the canal in Bridgwater include a single bed, and a double bed, along with a TV box, which were blocking most of the path, and on another occasion – ten empty four-litre milk bottles. A discarded jumper can easily incapacitate the engine of a boat. It affects wildlife – you can get any insect or small mammal going into a can and cutting itself, or getting trapped in a bottle. We've also had fishing line wrapped around and cutting into birds' legs. If you ignore the small fly-tips, then you get people re-offending."

# European Fossil Fuels Needs Survey Of Industrial Heritage Sites

**Mike Nevell,** February 26th 2024

The Working Industrial & Mobile Heritage (WIMH) platform is being developed by umbrella organisations from throughout the industrial and mobile heritage sector in Europe. The European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) is one of the partners in this project. The group is appealing to ERIH members and other industrial heritage sites in the UK for help in collecting evidence to protect a hugely important element of our industrial museums across Europe – their heritage in operation. Other partners currently include: TICCIH – The International Committee for Conservation of the Industrial Heritage; FEDECRAIL – Federation of European Museum & Tourist Railways; FIVA – Federation Internationale des Vehicules Anciens; and the Europa Nostra Industrial & Engineering Heritage Committee.

The working industrial and mobile heritage sector embraces historic machinery at industrial heritage sites and museums, railways, steam ships, road vehicles, and aviation. These all constitute a "social testimony" which ensures that the essential "know how" for the operation of steam powered machinery and combustion engines should not be lost for future generations. Cultural heritage enriches the lives of people and plays a role in enhancing Europe's social capital. Our sector is also an important resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion. Working industrial and mobile heritage depends on the continued and limited availability of fossil fuels, like coal and oil-based derivatives. Such fuels remain necessary for the dynamics of heritage machines and vehicles.

As set out in the 2014 document "Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe", the European Union is committed to promoting industrial heritage. Our sector is currently facing certain challenges, such as reliance on a limited availability of fossil fuels. The European Union, and other national governments such as the UK throughout Europe, need to take a balanced approach to the almost negligible environmental impact of limited fossil fuel usage by the sector and the legitimate objective of preserving this heritage. For example, assisted also by retaining a continued source of suitable coal at a location within Europe.

A key task of the WIMH partnership is to try to gather as much data as possible of the current annual consumption of our sector, especially of coal but also historic oil based fuels. Considerable efforts have already been made in particular by the railway heritage sector in several countries, including the UK, and research is being undertaken by the historic road transport sector.

**Who should respond?**

Working from this foundation, the next steps are to build up a picture of at least approximate fossil fuel usage from the industrial heritage sector. This survey is for museums and heritage sites for whom fossil fuel power is needed for continued operation of pumps and industrial machines which form such an important part of the interpretation to the public at our sites. Not only coal-fired boilers and equipment, but also other machinery which operate with petrol, diesel, or other traditional oil based fuels. Follow this link to fill in the survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeFZ-1De8tw3OtpajPVj5aaGpxupHA73NSHOcHWXe3UEBmC-w/viewform?s=09

For any questions, please contact Hildebrand de Boer, ERIH Board Member + Liaison Officer ERIH + WIMH hildebrandeboer@hotmail.com

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## *Help sought in finding a new home for historic crane*

(AIA's *Industrial Archaeology News, No.207,2024*)

A historic crane in a former engineering works in Yeovil is in need of a new home. The site owners, First Bus, are preparing to demolish the Nautilus Works, an early 20th century complex built by the Petter family of engineers. The site includes the former erecting shop, engine house and foundry. However, First Bus has committed to donating salvageable items to organizations with an interest in the historic machinery left within the complex. The main items are a gantry crane made by Willcocks & Son of Buckfastleigh, c. 1907, and a large workbench. The Petters were internationally renowned for their oil engines for use in agriculture and light engineering, and the site can be said to be the genesis of Westland Aircraft.

Demolition was due to take place in early 2024. Organisations interested in the crane or bench were asked to contact First Group. Smaller items are expected to go to the South Somerset Heritage Collection.

## Southampton Tram Project

*Angela Smith*

The welcome day when we said goodbye to the scaffolding around Car 11 arrived on Thursday May 30th. We had aimed to complete what was essential on the upper parts of the tram in time to tidy-up the workshop before our fourth Model Tram Event being held at Solent Sky Museum on the weekend of June 8th/9th, not having realised it would clash with events commemorating D-Day. The original weekend selected was the first weekend in June until some pop group called 'Take That' were booked to appear at the nearby St Mary's Stadium both evenings! There would have been no parking available around the museum, and hotel room prices were already escalating early on for our visiting exhibitors and attendees. At least it gave us an extra week for the preparations.

But, going back to the start of the year, work was continuing on several fronts. With the scaffolding still in place, the lower level gave access to the roof of Lisbon 715 which needed attention. Spare canvas from when 11s roof was covered came in useful for repairing damage above and around 715s roof, and was dealt with in the same way with the yellow 'goo' (bedding compound) to stick it on, followed by several layers of paint. Ian Harden has subsequently been improving the body paintwork, always seeming to find more to do!

Martin and Jeremy have been de-rusting and painting 11s truck in its container. The motors will be checked and, currently, the springs are being dealt with.

A major item (well, actually two of them) which had been put off for many years was new "J" seats for the curved ends on the top deck. The pair which had been constructed in the early 1980s by the apprentices from the technical college were not satisfactory and, in any case, sometime during our move from the docks to Solent Sky four years ago they seem to have vanished. The seats are made from narrow wooden slats which have to be bent for the curve, and enquiries over the years didn't bring up any means of doing this until a chance conversation early in the year with a neighbour resulted in contact with a Lymington-based yacht builder, Vincent Cook of Cooks Maritime. Using a paper pattern I had made from a similar seat off another Southampton tram, No. 87, of which we have a few bits and pieces, Vince was able to steam-bend the ash slats and the result has been much-admired on our Facebook site. Both have now been stained to match the upper deck seats and are currently being varnished.

However, that's not the end of the story. On the original Car 11, in the condition we have restored it (1929), the front destination boxes protrude from the body. The "J" seats therefore each had four cast iron supports. In the early 1930s the destination boxes were set into the body as it was found that when two trams collided, it was the boxes which met first! So the supports over the new inset boxes were not needed as the seat end sat on the box. We had 6 original supports of two different designs and needed eight. A February visitor from the Fareham model engineering society, Dr Glenn Middleton, offered to make the 2 missing supports from mild steel and these were delivered in June. Hopefully it won't be too long before the seats can take their places on the top deck.

Other tasks being undertaken have been 'fettling' the brass castings for the top deck light fittings. A welcome new volunteer Mike, an electrician, tested the circuits for us and is now fitting the castings and feeding the wiring through. The plan is to wire the lighting circuits to plug into the mains so that we can dispense with the cables and strip lights. The four ex-Portswood tram jacks have been refurbished, a grab pole has been fitted to each platform to make it easier for people, and then the lining was painted round the top deck in time for the tram event. Seven of the ornate patterns are still to be painted – I only had enough time to trace the outlines and complete one. Four at one end had been added when we were still at Millbrook, probably in the '90s.

## Miscellaneous news items from around the UK

**Future of Cannop Ponds resolved:** The future of Cannop Ponds in the Forest of Dean has been revealed by Forestry England (FE). It says one dam will be preserved and the other will be turned into a 'more natural' wildlife haven. In 2022, FE suggested that the ageing dams may need draining, leading to protests from local residents. A spokesperson said the decision will be "better for the future; for flood risk, for wildlife and for the community". *(BBC West and South West, Gloucestershire)*

[Note from your editor: This is a former industrial site with which I am very familiar from many visits to the Forest of Dean. The dams were originally created nearly 200 years ago to supply a waterwheel at Parkend Ironworks]

**New lease for Geevor Tin Mine Museum:** Pendeen Community Homes (PCH), which has managed the historic Geevor Tin Mine Museum in Cornwall for more than 20 years, has signed a new 99-year lease from Cornwall Council to continue running it. PCH has been seeing visitor numbers double and creating year-round employment for 28 local people. The Council added to the site currently attracted about 40,000 visitors a year. The new lease would allow PCH to apply for external funding for future projects. *(BBC News, Cornwall)*

**Listed status for railway public house:** The Railway Tavern in Darlington was one of three pubs built in 1926/27 by the Stockton & Darlington Railway has been given Grade II listing. It was built before the concept of the station had fully developed. Each of the pubs were constructed next to one of the S&DRs coal depots. Darlington's coal depot was at the end of a short branch line. The S&DR chairman had privately built an inn at the railway's Yarm coal depot so in 1826 the S&DR decided to build its own inns. The Railway Tavern was about 280 yards from the main line so did not develop into a fully functioning railway station. *(Heritage Railway 315, Jan/Feb 2024)*

# The Victorian Society – 2024 Top Ten Endangered Buildings List

Griff Rhys Jones, President of The Victorian Society, has launched the Society's 2024 Endangered Buildings List, saying "As always, this sad list of buildings is a testament to the excitement, variety and invention of the Victorian Age. Nobody should dismiss the 19th-century British for their social and political achievements, or their legacy. There is so much to cherish. How terrifying to see buildings I have known, loved or used all my life in need of rescue. Their restoration and re-use make huge commercial sense. They are attractions in themselves. Too many end up in the hands of owners who hope that deliberate neglect will allow them to demolish them."

The buildings in the Top Ten are nationally important Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings including one scheduled monument, in real risk of being lost if action is not taken immediately. Of the ten, two could be classed as industrial heritage – Chances Glassworks in Smethwick which is a Scheduled Monument comprising nine Grade II structures, built 1847-60, and the Cardiff Coal Exchange in Butetown, Glamorgan, Grade II*, built 1884-86.

**Chances Glassworks** is one of the most important industrial heritage sites in the West Midlands, once the world's largest glassmaker. It is on the list because it faces decay and is listed on Historic England's At Risk Register. Robert Lucas Chance established Chance Brothers Glassworks on the former British Crown Glass Company site in 1824 and continued to expand the site to become the largest glassmaker in the world. Glass manufacture took place continuously up until 1981. The site has since stood derelict for over 40 years.

The Glassworks, in the Black Country, employed 3,500 and supplied iconic structures, such as around 2,300 of the world's lighthouses, the Crystal Palace in London, windows for the White House, and the Houses of Parliament. It features a seven-storey warehouse, bridges, and a rare Siemens No.7 Regenerative furnace, probably the last existing example in the world. All these are in poor repair. Deterioration on the canal side of the site has led the Canal & River Trust to close the neighbouring towpath which is a cycle path.

Chances were innovative producers of scientific grade glass, applying for 27 British Patents from 1838-1900. They developed the first cathode ray tubes, working with John Logie Baird, for radar and television sets. The pedigree of the industrial history is outstanding. The site and its buildings are now in the care of the Chance Heritage Trust. The Trust has proposed a regeneration scheme for the glassworks over the last 18 months. The £25m regeneration scheme aims to transform Chances into an urban village, including 150 new homes, business space and a heritage centre, but securing a capital grant is crucial to saving these key buildings and working towards delivering the scheme. The neighbourhood around the site is run-down, and this initiative would improve the locality, bring the buildings back into sustainable reuse, and also begin to regenerate the area.

This is the second time the **Cardiff Coal Exchange**, a magnificent French Renaissance-influenced building, appears on the list of Endangered Buildings, and it remains one of the most important 19th-century buildings in Wales. Here the world's coal prices were determined, and the first £1 million cheque was signed in 1904. Disfigured in the 1970s by an underground car park, segments of the building have been left to ruin. In recent times it was run as a music venue and offices until 2013 when safety concerns forced its closure. After a prolonged period of refurbishment, some of the most significant rooms were included in a scheme that converted a part of the building into a hotel. The hotel portion of the building has been hit by maintenance problems and safety issues. In February 2023 a burst water pipe forced the hotel to close. The water build-up was so intense that Cardiff Council ordered that part of the building had to be demolished because of concerns a section was not structurally sound, and a road closure was put in place due to the risk of falling masonry.

Aerial photos in the Welsh media have shown troubling damage to the structure, with entire floors missing from the top to the ground, with one side of the building now missing. Reports in the media have said the section removed will be rebuilt, but it is unclear if this will happen.

The Cardiff Coal Exchange has been affected because its owners, a Liverpool-based company, Signature Group, went into administration creating headlines in local, Welsh and English national newspapers. The company had for seven years acquired historic buildings across UK cities to redevelop into hotels, offices, and flats. The Coal Exchange was just one of these buildings. In April 2020 one of Signature Group's biggest subsidiaries, Signature Living Hotel Ltd, entered administration owing £113m. The hotel has kept going and in March 2024 opened again.

## Catch-up time . . .

**The Saga of the 'Crooked House' pub :** The owners of the Crooked House pub, which was burned down and then demolished last August, have been ordered to rebuild it in its original form after being issued an enforcement notice for unlawful demolition. The South Staffordshire district council on 27th February states that the building must be "built back to what it was prior to the fire" within three years. The owners have 30 days to appeal.

**Great Musgrave Bridge infilling :** National Highways spent £476,000 by infilling the 162-year-old Great Musgrave bridge in Cumbria and then being ordered to clear it again, new figures have revealed. £124,000 was spent blocking the bridge in 2021 saying it was unsafe for lorries but surveys showed that repointing at a cost of £5000 may have been sufficient. The Eden District Council ordered National Highways to remove the infill after refusing retrospective planning permission and the infilling cost a further £352,000.

# The Association for Industrial Archaeology

(From *IA News, No.207, Summer 2024*)

***Industrial Heritage Sites in England Resurvey Project*** *– Dr Mike Nevell*

The Industrial Heritage Support Officer (IHSO) project, at Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, is pleased to announce that Heritage Innovation has been appointed to undertake a re-survey of the c.600 publicly accessible industrial heritage sites in England. Funding for the project has been provided by Historic England.

The 2024 resurvey follows on from earlier projects delivered by PLB Consultancy in 1998, and by Sir Neil Cossons in 2008. These bodies of work have shaped the past 25 years of industrial heritage management; analysing the state-of-play and informing recommendations for England's portfolio of industrial sites.

The 2024 survey will gather data on these sites which can be compared with the earlier reports. The main focus will be visitor numbers, conservation and maintenance, funding models and community engagement. The survey will also consider how sites are responding to the challenges of Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis and climate change. Any parties who receive an invitation to complete the survey are urged to do so where possible, as this will help to build a truer picture of the experience of sites and people and can inform the subsequent recommendations.

Following the online survey a series of interviews will be undertaken with selected representatives from a variety of sites across all regions of England and the IHSO Steering Group. A report will be produced with an analysis of the data collection, recommendations for sector resilience and opportunities for future research.

The report will run from March until July 2024.

***Historic England adds Interactive Map to its Historic Manufactured Gas Webpage***

Historic England has added an interactive map to its Historic Gas Industry webpages. The new feature allows researchers to search for manufactured gas sites in England from the 19th and 20th centuries and to view summary details about each site. This new feature expands the resources already available for those wishing to research the local manufacture of gas, which already includes a detailed overview report on the history of the manufactured gas industry in England, a heritage assets guide, and advice on recording such sites.

The new interactive map shows the location of hundreds of sites including gasworks buildings and gasholders, non-designated surviving gasworks buildings and gasholders, possible surviving structures related to the industry, sites with only below ground evidence, and sites only known from map evidence. The map also has links to the relevant Aerofilms Collection of aerial photographs where these show these gas industry sites, a database which is held by Historic England.

To view the interactive map follow this link: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/industry-and-infrastructure/manufactured-gas-industry/

***Thefts Cause Temporary Closure of Island Warehouse at National Waterways Museum***

Eleven exhibits missing from the National Waterways Museum in Cheshire are thought to have been stolen from its collection between Friday 9th and Monday 12th February 2024. The Canal & River Trust, which runs the museum, said that a recent 'significant' cataloguing exercise had allowed it to quickly spot that exhibits were missing. The museum's Island Warehouse room, where smaller objects are displayed and where the thefts are thought to have taken place, was temporarily closed.

A security review was completed and the museum was working with police to recover the items. The Canal & River Trust, which operates the museum, released a document which details the missing exhibits.

# King Alfred Buses destroyed in blaze

A few days after our December meeting came the news that a major fire had destroyed buildings on a small industrial estate at a farm in Penton Mewsey near Andover. Chairman James Freeman wrote on December 8th:

*"Overnight Thursday to today Friday 8 December there was a major fire at Penton, where FoKAB has for many years rented a unit that has capacity for eight buses. I am sorry to have to tell you that the fire has completely destroyed the buildings and pretty well all their contents. The fire appears to have started elsewhere in another unit and was well alight by 01.30 this morning. By the time I arrived on site at 08.30 there was little left but the walls and the roof structure. The intensity of the fire was emphasised by the fact that a member, living three miles away, was woken by the exploding fuel tanks and the like. We now have to come to terms with the loss of so many valuable and irreplaceable buses and coaches.*

*"Our unit is almost completely destroyed and most of the vehicles with it. Our Leyland Olympic, JAA 708 is the only FoKAB bus that was in the shed at the time. It is the only bus to remain partly recognisable in the tangled wreckage whereas the other buses have, very sadly, been reduced to ash.*

*"The cause of Hampshire bus restoration has been dealt a grievous blow, with the loss not just of 708, but four other Hants & Dorset buses. Three of them belonged to our member and supporter William Staniforth – the most recent of which, a veteran Hants & Dorset Bristol K5G, only arrived on site last weekend.*

*"This is an appalling disaster and only underlines the importance of our never-ending quest to find a long-term home for our collection."*

Keith Andrews told HIAS members that the Leyland Olympic was eventually retrieved and moved elsewhere for storage. Its future is uncertain.

# Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

(formerly Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group)
(Registered Charity No. 276898)
Web site: www.hias.org.uk

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*DVD Library:* Rob Fish (details above)

**HIAS Insurance terms – Please note:**
Members are not covered for Personal Accident but are covered for third party liability

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***The Solent Steam Packet Ltd (S.S. Shieldhall):*** *membership@ss-shieldhall.co.uk*
***Southampton Tram Project (formerly Tram 57 Project):***
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***Twyford Waterworks Trust:*** Contact - Ian Harden, 31 Melville Close, Lordswood, Southampton, SO16 8DE

## *Save Tall Ship Tenacious* *(Southern Daily Echo, 18th December 2023)*

The Jubilee Sailing Trust has been struggling financially for a number of years due to high running costs, a fall in revenue and the impact of the pandemic. The announcement comes after one of the charity's two subsidiaries, Jubilee Sailing Trust Ltd, went into administration in 2022. .

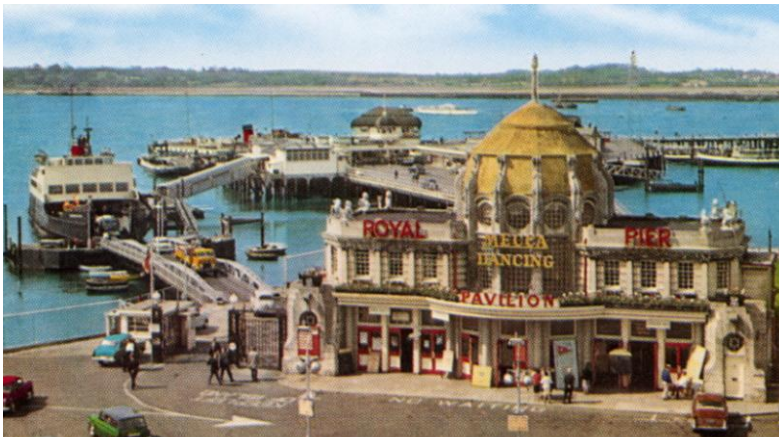
**From your editor, Angela Smith:** Whilst working at the 'tramshed' on June 25th, we had a visit from a couple who had been involved with the Jubilee Sailing Trust almost from the beginning. They told me why the Trust had come to this situation, which I can't reveal for legal reasons. The Trust which was closed down was Jubilee Sailing Trust (Tenacious) Limited, a fairly recent concern run by business people in London and was operating the ship. The original Trust was a separate body and still exists, run by volunteers. This can be found at https://www.tenacious.org.uk, or search for 'Save Tall Ship Tenacious'.

Tenacious is currently in Sharpness dock, and is in generally a good condition but needs regulatory surveys and certification before she can sail again. Investment will be needed to buy the ship and ready her for sailing. The main aims of the campaign are as follows:

To raise awareness of this unique ship, to attract the interest and support of a wealthy individual or foundation that would support and develop a new sustainable operating model for SV Tenacious and to offer knowledge and support to any new owner/operator of Tenacious to ensure the ship continues to be accessible to all.

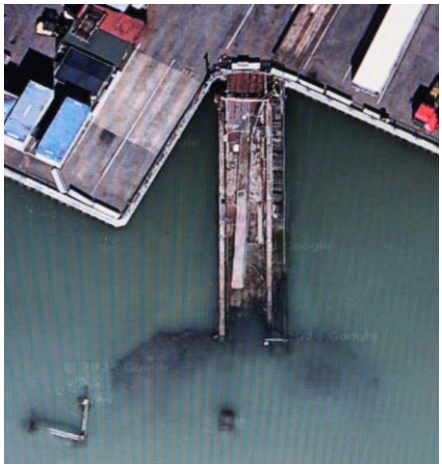
The **Save Tall Ship Tenacious** campaign is not focused on raising the money to buy and operate her because of the large costs and operating complexities involved. The solution to getting Tenacious sailing again lies with an individual or organisation with the vision and resources to operate her. This is a priceless opportunity for someone to do something that is truly unique: get Tenacious sailing again, and allow everybody the opportunity to be part of the crew of a tall ship, regardless of their ability or background.

# The 'Whale' at Royal Pier, Southampton







**Top left:** from a postcard. The two sections of the bridge connected to the pontoon can be seen on the left, with a Red Funnel ferry

**Top right and bottom left:** Close-up of the section of the one remaining Whale under a walkway, and with the pontoon on the left, at low tide. *(Photos by Angela Smith, January 2015).*

**Bottom right:** Recent satellite view of the Whale at high tide. It is not clear from the full view if the pontoon has sunk or has been removed, although some of the superstructure still appears to be in place.

## *Tail-ender . . . . . .*

**Cinderford's rusty pole receives amazing online reviews** *(BBC News Gloucestershire, 9 January 2024)*

A large rusty pole has become an unlikely tourist attraction with online reviews hailing it as "breathtaking". The 19ft (6m) pole stands on Littledean Hill Road in Cinderford, Gloucestershire, next to a sheep field and is thought to be a sewer vent. Reviewers on Tripadvisor have called it "spectacular" and a "life-changing experience". Tom Bull from Severn Cider said they have even made a special edition Rusty Pole cider to celebrate its attention.

Mark Terry-Lush from Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism said: "It's not so much a rusty pole, they used to be called stink pipes and they were connected into the sewage system below. I think it's fabulous. We've got a new attraction which actually kind of fits the industrial heritage of the Forest. It's a beacon of our heritage and a beacon of our history, but also it's a place to come and enjoy this stunning vista. It is part of the hidden gems of the Forest."

Despite the assumedly ironic reviews, on a clear day the location offers picturesque views across the Severn Valley, including Slimbridge, Stroud and the winding River Severn, ranking it the third best thing to visit in the town. The pole, which has more than 20 reviews, is even ranked higher than the town's century-old Palace Cinema.

My thanks to the contributors for items used in this issue. Other articles have been extracted from websites, magazines and regional newspapers. The next *Focus* planned is for December 2024, so the final deadline will be the November AGM meeting, please, if you want to pass items in person.
My contact details are on the previous page.

*Angela Smith*