NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP



Newsletter 162 – April 2022

NIAG's newsletter is published four times a year in:-
January, April, July and October

NIAG committee

President: Geoffrey Starmer 34 The Crescent Northampton NN1 4SB

Secretary: Peter Perkins 116 Northampton Road Earls Barton Northampton NN6 0HF secretary@niag.org.uk

Treasurer: Terry Waterfield 6 Bakers Lane Norton Daventry NN11 2EL treasurer@niag.org.uk

Members: Adrian Denton; Mick Dix; Ron Hanson; Mike Ringwood; Geoff West

Website: niag.org.uk (webmaster: Terry Waterfield)

Newsletter: **E**ditor: Roy Sheffield

7 Elysium Terrace Northampton NN2 6EN

newsletter@niag.org.uk 01604 720983

Next issue: JULY 2022 for which all copy must be received by **10 June 2022** please.

Articles: around 1200 words please and accompanied by good quality photographs/drawings, etc. where possible. Shorter items always welcome – from one photo with caption upwards – if in doubt please contact the editor who will do his level best to talk you into becoming a contributor!

Front cover photo: *County Arcade of 1900, Briggate, Leeds (designed by Frank Matcham)*

Photo © ***Roy Sheffield***

News, reviews, information.....

'Painted Boats'This is a 'fictionalised documentary' made by Ealing Films in 1945. Horse-drawn and motorised boats with butties feature throughout and most of the location filming (which constitutes a good proportion of the film's total length of 63 minutes) was done on the Grand Union Canal between Stoke Bruerne and Braunston, a stretch fairly well known to many NIAG members. The film's director was Charles Crichton, then in the early stages of his directorial career and who went on to direct far better-known Ealing output such as 'The Lavender Hill Mob' and 'The Titfield Thunderbolt'. Painted Boats is a far from typical Ealing product, however, and well worth looking out for on TV; also available on DVD – current online price is around £10 plus postage.

Clive Hardwick's Northampton building models
Clive's passing was marked in NIAG's January 2022 newsletter and members may like to know that a good number of photographs of his superb 1:76 scale models can be found on the following web-page:-

https://nenequirer.com/2018/12/10/the-man-who-recreates-northamptons-lost-landmark-buildings/

2021 Peter Neaverson Award for Outstanding Scholarship in IA
Some members will remember Peter Neaverson (died 2004) from his time at Leicester Industrial History Society. He instituted the above award and for 2021 the winner was Lynn Pearson for her book on '*England's Co-operative Movement – An Architectural History'* (304pp., hardback) published by Liverpool University Press at £40 (discounted by some sellers). Very good reviews have been made of this work.

'Eagles Over Water: The Story of Aquila Airways' by Norman Hull (1994)
Those present at Joel Kosminsky's 'VC10s and Threepenny Bits' talk on 5th December 2021 may recall him speaking of his affection for flying boats and BOAC's place in their history. This book from 1994 tells the story of one of the last commercial operators of these planes, finishing in 1958. An engaging tale of a never-to-be-seen-again method of travel; hardback, approx. A5 in size with many illustrations of many aspects of the company, including its involvement in the Berlin airlift. The author later lived in Northampton, working for HM Customs & Excise. Copies can be found on the second-hand market.

'Fake Heritage - Solving Mysteries' by Tom Welsh

Members will recall Tom's article in our January edition on the subject of tanning premises, etc. near to St. Peter's church in Northampton and may be interested to hear that he has recently self-published the above title. The book is in paperback or digital format, consists of 337 pages, has a small amount of local content and is available from Amazon in both formats, both reasonably priced.

Ian L. Wright 1926-2022

Those with an interest in railway photography will be saddened to learn of Ian's passing in January. He taught art at three county schools (Raunds as well as John Lea and Girls' High School in Wellingborough, where he was a contemporary of another well known railway historian, Robin Leleux), subsequently retiring to Cambridgeshire. Ian's photographs belied his artistic background, always being perfectly composed and usually containing not just a train but surroundings which gave the main subject context and, equally importantly, space to be better appreciated – in other words, works of art in themselves. He described himself as 'an intermittent railway photographer' as canals, trams and architectural subjects also claimed his attention but was keen to encourage others with helpful advice and copies of his photographs, if requested. His homes in this county included Irthlingborough and Billing Road East, Northampton and these were liberally but neatly adorned with sundry items of railway memorabilia, one or two of which I would have given my eye teeth for! NIAG's July 2021 issue contained one of Ian's photographs and another one features below.



Higham Ferrers branch train at Wellingborough (Midland) 5.4.52 © Ian L. Wright



Wellingborough roundhouses:-

Photographs, courtesy (and copyright) of Ron Whittaker, dated January 2022 during removal of subterranean remains of roundhouse no.1 by the site developer. Remains of stabling bays within the roundhouse can be seen quite clearly.

See also Mick Dix's site visit report in January 2022 edition of NIAG newsletter (pp.10-11)



IA in the news.....in a sense!

Spotted in the national press – in an article about a one-time UK politician, now raised to a scarcely credible height in a 'tech giant', this individual was described as being possessed of ***'a thick hide, well tanned by British politics'.*** I am arranging for the despatch of a NIAG membership application form to the writer and will keep members posted as to its progress....he is clearly the sort of person we could put to good use!

John Eunson and Northampton Gasworks

At NIAG's first meeting at St. Matthews Church Hall since covid restrictions were lifted, Frances Peacock from Northampton Gasworks Heritage Group spoke about John Eunson, one of Northampton's forgotten heroes who gave reliable supplies of both gas and water to the people of the town in the 19th century. John Eunson was born in 1832 in Kirkwall, Orkney and trained as a civil engineer and also as an architect. He joined Northampton gasworks as engineer in 1854 and became sole manager of the Northampton Gas-Light Company from 1864 until his death in 1911. He was a man of some standing in the town. His father, also John (1804-1880s), was himself involved in the gas industry and ran a gas retort manufacturing business in Dudley (Eunson & Son) where he developed a fireclay-lined retort which worked more efficiently than an unlined cast-iron retort. One of these was purchased for Northampton gasworks resulting in him being appointed consulting engineer to the Northampton undertaking in 1845. The company was involved in a number of innovative developments in the gas industry; for example, John West one of Eunson's pupils developed a vertical retort which was more efficient that the conventional horizontal type.



Iohn Eunson

Northampton Gas-Light Company was incorporated in 1823 and the works were constructed on Mill Holme Meadow, close to the River Nene and Grand Union Canal, opening in 1824, with the first building in the town being lit by gas on 7 June of that year. Although, the primary use of the gas was to light the town's streets with 176 street lamps, the more profitable use was lighting of private premises. Despite being approached by brokers who proposed that the gasworks should use fish oil to fuel the gas retorts, coal was used. The first two gas-holders were enclosed in a brick shell, but were found to be dangerous due to the risk of explosion if leakage and build-up of gas inside the brick shell occurred. When replacements were built in 1837 and 1848, they were built without the shell.

When John Eunson joined Northampton Gasworks in 1854, he and his father became, in effect, joint managers of the facility. At this time, the works was producing some 26 million cubic feet of gas per annum for lighting streets and buildings in the town centre. However, greater capacity

was required and a major expansion began. The company was re-incorporated to raise fresh capital and the works were completely rebuilt, the Eunsons designing all the buildings, gas-holders and production facilities. By 1858, the company was supplying gas to the surrounding parishes of Abington, Duston, Dallington, Hardingstone and Kingsthorpe and had become one of the most significant gas suppliers in the country. After a brief period when Hunter Jones was brought in to manage the gasworks in 1858, John Eunson resumed his role as manager in 1864, a position he retained until his death in 1911, after which his son George Eunson took over until 1948. This was 12 months before nationalisation of the gas industry took place in 1949 so the Eunson family was in control of the gasworks for over 100 years, John Eunson himself being in charge for over 50 of them!

By 1924, production at the Northampton works had increased to 1,032 million cubic feet per annum with only 3% being lost to leakages compared with 16% back in 1854. The gas supply network had been increased to encompass Kislingbury, Harpole, Brixworth, Boughton and Pitsford and by 1937 five other gas companies had been taken over – at Weedon, Towcester, Long Buckby, Newport Pagnell and Olney.

A total of 6 gas-holders were built in Northampton after 1850: No 1 – 1854 but replaced in 1900; No.2 – 1860 but replaced in the 1950s; No.3 – 1870; No.4 – 1878; No.5 – 1889; No.6 – c1937. Gas-holders Nos. 1 and 5 were the last two to be demolished in 2013.



A large office block designed by John Eunson was constructed on the northern edge of the gasworks site in 1880 and extended in 1896. Today, it is the only building remaining on the gasworks site, bordering the St Peters Way roundabout. A town centre office and showroom was opened in Abington Street in 1906 and remained in use until 1966, the now disused Marks & Spencer store stands on its site.

Gas production continued until 1969, when natural gas came on-stream and the works was adapted to handle it. After closure all buildings and

structures were gradually demolished, apart from the former office block. This is now owned by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) with the Gasworks Heritage Group campaigning to save the building. A length of 1930s art-deco-inspired brick wall with iron railings stands adjacent to the former office block.
In 1877 John Eunson was additionally appointed as consultant engineer to Northampton Water Company and in 1884 for Northampton Corporation. Following a major cholera outbreak in Northampton in the 1880s, he carried out deep borehole trials in Northampton and was also involved in developing Ravensthorpe Reservoir to supply water to the town in 1890.

Frances commented during the talk that in the very cold winter of 1947, the gas company sold a large amount of coke to Northampton residents to help them keep warm. This raised the question as to what the gas company usually did with the coke produced as a result of baking coal in the gas retorts. Suggestions from the floor included supplying local blast furnaces, blacksmiths and ironfounders but any more definitive information from members would be welcome.
This talk, full of detail, showed how important the Eunson family was to development of both gas and water services in Northampton in the 19th century and the particular role played by John Eunson. Eunson's grave is in St Giles' churchyard and the Gasworks Heritage Group have recently restored it.
See *Northampton Gas Light Company & Gasworks* page on Facebook and Roberts & Frisby's 1980 book: '*The Northampton Gas Undertaking 1823-1949'* for more information

Report by Peter Perkins

****

BOAC – VC10s and threepenny bits

American passengers saw VC10s as inferior to Boeing 707s, despite VC10s being 15 minutes faster across the Atlantic than 707s. Before 1971 when the coins were withdrawn, we'd reply by giving them a threepenny bit: "Balance it upright on your seat armrest. It always stays upright on a VC10, but never on a 707 .... then tell us which plane is inferior!" VC10s, with their four, tail-mounted engines, were smoother and quieter – and fifteen minutes quicker but decimalisation in the UK robbed us of the VC10's best advert!

Joel Kosminsky filled the second slot in NIAG's winter programme of talks

with his entertaining presentation on life behind the scenes at Britain's state-owned, long-haul airline, BOAC, during the 1960s and 70s. He had applied for one of the airline's 30 general apprentice posts almost by accident, he told us, having no greater previous interest in public transport than when the next Routemaster would be going his way. From 3,000 applicants Joel was one of the successful candidate and began the training scheme for the post, part of which involved Institute of Transport exams, studied for on block release, and moving through the airline's four main divisions (reservations, traffic, cargo and flight operations) along with experience-based training away from London at Prestwick Airport.

First proper stop on the training ladder was in reservations at BOAC's Victoria terminal, its call centre. The large majority of seats on planes, certainly at that time (late 1960s), were generated by travel agents with only about a quarter contacting BOAC direct. The office had what they considered to be the best electronic booking system in the world at the time, the efforts of other airlines being deemed distinctly 'clunky' by comparison!

In 1970, whilst working in Control, his boss asked Joel if he was doing anything that Saturday as a new Boeing 747 was going on a proving flight and would he like to go? Yes, he would, and followed this up with being a passenger during 'circuit and bump' training at Stansted in a VC-10 and an assessment flight for two first officers in a Boeing 707 – that is when he learned that planes DO go sideways after all, mainly when they are taken into the eye of a thunderstorm.....deliberately!

Load control was next stop – planes needed their flying surfaces to be trimmed according to the weights of fuel, cargo, passengers and crew, mail and amenities which were computed using huge hand-cranked mechanical calculators producing chinagraph pencil lines on graphed paper.....watching the process was as far as general apprentices got in this section; safety considerations precluded their live input!

Passenger service unit was a safer option at that stage of apprentices' careers and consisted in part of being polite to passengers whilst escorting them to their planes and persuading them by subtle nudges to only ever fly BOAC in the future!

The next two months, spent in cargo division, were Joel's dullest time spent in BOAC but his next allocation, in flight operations, was the most

exciting, where all BOAC's flights were monitored. Not many GAs went to Control. Operating problems were solved here – for instance: the plane is in Bangkok, *most* of the crew is in Singapore and the passengers are in Hong Kong! Control Centre managed all manner of flight disruptions – instant severe weather or an abrupt, unexpected change of government could play havoc with schedules, splitting planes from crews, passengers or cargo.

Victoria Terminal, formerly Imperial Airways' HQ, Airways House,was a glorious Art Deco building opened in 1939 to house the airline's reservations and administration offices, but also transfer passengers to and from flying boats on the South Coast and land-planes at Croydon Airport. Passengers registered for their flights at Victoria then went to the 'Palm Court' for refreshments and to be entertained by a musical trio on a dais. A private charabanc used to take passengers to Croydon for formal check-in where they and their luggage were weighed. Until the late 1940s planes needed detailed all-up weight information for safe loading and fuel calculations.

Flying boats were operated to worldwide destinations from Poole and Southampton. Before Airways House was built, special trains ran from Waterloo to both towns. Flying boat passengers and their luggage were weighed on the train! An Imperial, later BOAC, flight clerk conducted each weighing in the privacy of a special compartment with 'jockey scales', among his other duties. The clerk stayed in that compartment throughout the train trip in both directions because he was guarding gold bullion travelling in and out of the country. At the coastal hotel he slept with the gold stowed under his bed, the room locked on the inside all night!

Southampton departing passengers stayed overnight at the South Western Hotel. For flights from Poole passengers stayed at the Harbour Heights Hotel. The overnight stay was needed because flying boats left early in the morning, often at 5am. Flying boats only flew by day, at around 200 - 250 mph., and night-time stopovers added significantly to overall travelling time. Given limited range and not flying at night, the first Australia flights took 18 days. Post-war, faster planes brought that down to nine! Southampton's flying boat services stayed operational until the last flight on 7 November 1950.

Joel claimed that the real reason he had been allowed to join BOAC was because he was the only person on the planet who didn't know that staff had cheap or free flights! Keen to make up for lost time he flew to Sydney, Australia, to visit family, the first of, so far, 27 trips! Two of those 27 trips to

Sydney were just for the weekend – on the plane Thursday evening, straight from work, arrive Sydney Saturday morning. Stay awake for almost 36 hours with family and friends then on the plane to London on Sunday evening, back Monday 6a.m. and into work – jet-lagged and, Joel affirmed, not to be recommended!

Report by Roy Sheffield

****

'YE OLDE TECHE' *(NIAG Members' Evening 14th January 2022)*



Ron Whittaker followed up his November 2021 talk on '100 Years of SATRA' (full article will be in July 2022 newsletter) by detailing the history of the building known as "Ye Olde Teche" in Abington Square, which was the first home of SATRA. The building was situated next to the old Bantam Cock public house and housed the Northampton Technical College under its principal, John Blakeman. The building is linked closely with the Northampton Grammar School which was founded by Mayor Thomas Chipsey in 1541. For 300 years the school was based in adapted buildings at St. Gregory's Church in modern Freeschool Street but in 1864 it moved to the Corn Exchange on the Market Square. The school then expanded and is reported to have moved to new buildings on Abington Square in 1867. Ye Olde Teche seemed an odd new building for a school, with its ecclesiastical windows and tall tower but the Grammar School remained in the building until 1911 when it moved to its brand new premises in Billing Road.

Science evening classes started at Ye Olde Teche in 1876 and by 1885 City & Guilds courses in leather and boot & shoe manufacture were held. These were supported by Sir Philip Manfield and others but many manufacturers and the union opposed the courses as they were concerned that the craft secrets of manufacture would be openly passed on!

By 1910 the boot & shoe department, led by the respected E J Swaysland, expanded through the building of a corrugated iron structure at the rear of the College. Under Blakeman's leadership the Technical College continued successfully after WW1 but the conditions in the building were far from satisfactory. In 1918 the College took over a small factory in St. Michael's Road, which backed on to Ye Olde Teche, to train ex-servicemen in footwear manufacture.

Visits by His Majesty's Inspectors in 1924 praised the work being undertaken but expressed complete dissatisfaction with the accommodation. This must have prompted the Education Committee to search for suitable alternative premises and in 1924 they purchased the St. George's Avenue site for £7,000. However, budget restrictions meant that only the Technical College was built and this was not opened until 1932. The Art College moved to St. George's Avenue in 1937 but the central section was not completed until 1961. Ye Olde Teche was finally demolished in 1936 to make way for the Savoy Cinema and shops.

Ron Whittaker

****

Old photographs of Northamptonshire mills

(NIAG Members' Evening 14th January 2022)

Thirty four glass plate negatives found in a Northampton house have been donated to NIAG. They show a number of watermills and windmills as well as other local scenes, most of which were taken in Northamptonshire in the early 20th century. Some of the pictures were featured at NIAG's Members Evening in January.

The 4 inch by 3 inch glass negatives were discovered in the loft of a house in Hervey Close off Birchfield Road East in Northampton, by the parents of the donor, when they moved there in the 1960s. There was no information as to who took the photographs, when they were taken or even where they were taken. Most were views of buildings and some were obviously watermills and windmills but strangely four were photos of jazz bands taken from magazines, with dates in the 1920s.

Scans of the negatives showed that some of the views were obvious – for example the 1823 Battle of Naseby obelisk and the farm implement gate at the entrance to Holly Lodge at Moulton. Others were less obvious, such as the ruins of St John's church at Boughton Green and the ruins of the Dower House at Fawsley Park. Some of the pictures were of things which have disappeared, including the Washington house at Little Brington and the

Cowper Oak at Yardley Chase. Although obviously pre-WWII, there was little else in the pictures to identify when they were taken.
The collection included pictures of four watermills and five windmills – one a tower mill the others post mills, none of which exist today. Two of the watermills were identified as Billing Mill (still extant) and Olney Mill (Bucks) (demolished in 1965) but the other two have not yet been identified and are reproduced here. Any suggestions will be welcome but it is possible they may not be in Northamptonshire.





These are the two mystery photos – no prizes for successfully identifying the locations but huge kudos if you can!

With the aid of Trevor Stainwright and his book: '*Windmills of Northamptonshire',* the pictures of windmills were identified. The tower mill was at Wootton, the stump of which is now incorporated into a house and the post mills were at, Badby, Naseby, Old and Scaldwell. Furthermore, we know when the post mills were demolished, showing that the windmill pictures must have been taken between about 1900 and 1914. So it is reasonable to surmise that most of the other photos (apart from the jazz bands) were of similar vintage.
The pictures will eventually be added to the Image Archive on NIAG's website.

Peter Perkins

****

A journey round the Cheshire Ring in 1977

(NIAG Members' Evening 14th January 2022)

Myself and seven friends decided to take on the challenge of completing the Ring in seven days! The Ring is made up of the Trent & Mersey, Bridgewater, Rochdale, Ashton, Lower Peak Forest and Macclesfield canals and is 97 miles in length with 92 locks, However, we started our trip

on the Shropshire Union canal, thereby adding another 20 miles and 8 locks to the totals!

We did manage to complete the circuit in the allotted seven days and even had time for a couple of extra excursions,.the highlight being a return trip down to the river Weaver using the Anderton boat lift. Continuing north we had to pass through three tunnels in quick succession: Barnton (572yds.), Saltersford (424yds.) and Prestonbrook (1,239yds.), which had an S-bend in the middle. After arriving in Manchester we had to navigate the only section of the Rochdale canal still open At the time the condition of the locks (9 in 1.5miles) was so bad through the centre of the city that we had to have a guide with us all the way.



On the penultimate day we had time for a return trip through the Harecastle Tunnel. 2,897 yds. long, it took us 40 minutes each way and has an extremely low section of roof in the middle which was pretty scary.

On the last day we examined the steel lock at Thurlwood (*see photo above*) which had been built In 1958 but was out of use by 1972!

And so ended a week of hard work, with some trepidation but, most of all, great fun.

Geoff West (Members evening: 14th Jan 2022)

****

Northampton gas works album (photographs copied by Geoffrey Starmer)

Judith Hodgkinson gave a presentation of a selection of Geoffrey's copies of photographs held on loan at that time by Northampton Central Museum. The prints date from the 1860s up to the late 1880s and depict various aspects of the site, including alteration and extension works – a selection are included here.



No. 3 gas holder under construction in 1869



No. 4 gasholder under construction 1877



Weston Street in 1887

14
Another forgotten Northamptonshire station

In a previous issue of the NIAG Newsletter we explored the rather short existence of the railway station at Tiffield, on the Blisworth to Towcester section of the erstwhile Northampton & Banbury Junction line, which later became a part of the Stratford-upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway (SMJ). A few miles further east, also on the SMJ, there was another station which also only saw passenger services for a matter of months and has now disappeared from the landscape. Salcey Forest was opened to passengers in December 1892 on the recently completed ten mile route of the Stratford, Towcester & Midland Junction Railway, linking Towcester with Ravenstone Wood Junction on the pre-existing Midland Railway branch from Northampton St. John's Street to Bedford. This line was itself an extension of the larger East & West Junction Railway (EWJR), which already ran from Towcester to Stratford-upon-Avon, and further westwards to Broom Junction, all of which would also become a part of the SMJ. The new section of line enabled the Midland Railway company to compete with the Great Western Railway for Bristol to London traffic by using the full length of the SMJ from Broom in the west to Ravenstone Junction in the east, therefore shortening their previous rather circuitous route via Birmingham and Leicester by some thirty miles.

The station was built to a design first seen at Rubery and Hunnington on the Midland Railway Halesowen branch in the West Midlands. It seems that when the new line from Towcester to Ravenstone was nearing completion, the Midland Railway, who were certainly more than just an interested party, assisted their smaller neighbour with plans for station buildings.

Substantial two-storey living accommodation was provided for the station master and his family, constructed in red brick with blue brick strings. It abutted the rather less impressive single-storey, twin pavilion passenger accommodation, which had a central wooden glazed screen with dwarf brick walls leading onto the platform. Contemporary reports indicate that the bricks were supplied by Messrs Kings & Smith of Northampton and the Easton Neston Brick Company, and mantelpieces and fireplaces were provided by Johnson & Wright of Northampton. Water for the station was supplied from a newly sunk 30 foot deep well located close to the buildings. Behind the single short and rather low blue-brick edged platform was one goods siding and a small brick hut for the 12-ton capacity weighbridge. Until 1912, when the line from Towcester to Ravenstone Wood became one single block section, a small signal box was also located close to the station.

As it turned out there were not too many passengers to cater for, and with hindsight it is perhaps difficult to understand how a station could have been justified in such a rural location. There was no main road access, the station being reached by a bridleway that had once been a loop of the main road from Northampton to Newport Pagnell. Local influence resulted in a diversion to better serve the grand estate at Horton, and indeed this may later have been one of the reasons for the station being provided. Horton village was the nearest habitation, with Hackleton, Piddington, and Stoke Goldington all being some distance away, but the total population of the immediate area amounted to only a few hundred.

Nevertheless, the station was served by a twice daily train between Towcester and Olney, formed by a locomotive and rolling stock hired from the Midland Railway company, with whom the new railway had built a close relationship. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that the inhabitants of this area on the fringes of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire were not exactly embracing their new mode of travel, and the first train from Olney to Towcester on 1st December 1892 carried just a handful of passengers. Things did not improve, and it was soon found that receipts were insufficient to cover even the hire cost of the trains. A decision was therefore taken to suspend the service after Thursday 30th March 1893; the reason for this unusual ‘last day’ was that the next day was Good Friday and trains would not normally have run on that day anyway.

Although closed to passengers, and therefore unstaffed in normal railway terms, the station then followed a somewhat somnolent existence as a home for a local lengthman, or permanent-way worker, who was thus able to live adjacent to his own stretch of line. The route was only normally used by goods trains, which between the wars notably included fast banana traffic from Avonmouth Docks to the Fyffes warehouse at St.Pancras; on high days and holidays an occasional special passenger train might pass by, but none of these would stop. The station did have its own goods siding, and in the early days some local agricultural and coal traffic was handled, but this facility was withdrawn in 1908.

This casual existence continued through the next fifty or so years, until, amongst a flurry of early rationalisations, the newly created British Railways decided that Salcey Forest was an unnecessary expenditure, and the station building was demolished around 1955, leaving just a pile of bricks and other materials on the disused platform. In fact, some of these were ‘obtained’ by the incumbent, who moved to another disused local station

and took certain items with him to refurbish his new home.
Thereafter the trains continued to pass for a few more years, but in June 1958 the line was closed to allow for the construction of a bridge on the new M1 motorway which crossed the route at Quinton. Although this was meant to be a temporary measure, through traffic never returned and the line saw out its last years as a place of storage for redundant rolling stock; at one time almost three hundred passenger carriages were stored on the stretch past Salcey Forest station.



An enthusiast's special attracts some attention as it passes Salcey Forest on Sunday 15th July 1951. At least one NIAG member is known to have travelled on this train, which covered the length of the old SMJ main line from Ravenstone Wood to Stratford-upon-Avon.

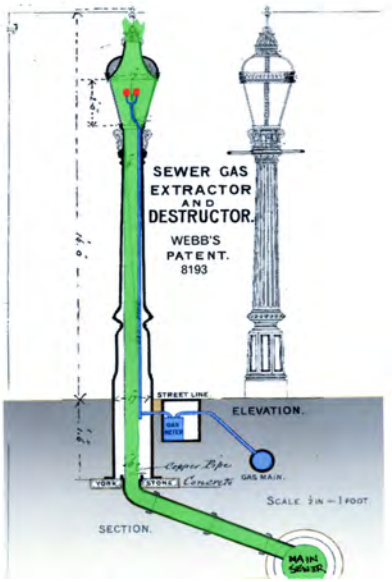
Sixty years later the station can still be located; a walk along the overgrown trackbed from either Quinton or Horton will still reveal the bricks of the platform edge peeping from the undergrowth. Today, photographs would seem to be the only real reminder of how Salcey Forest station once looked, but remarkably it is still possible to actually see its likeness. A second station was built on the line further west at Stoke Bruerne and fortunately this was sold into private ownership before it could be demolished. A glance over the parapet of the minor road bridge just up the hill from the canal village will reveal a superbly preserved 'identical twin' of Salcey Forest, both stations having been built to exactly the same design. It should be noted, however, that the station is now private property, so closer inspection is not possible without permission.

Barry Taylor

Sewer gas destructor lamps

En route to our annual autumn holiday in the New Forest this year we broke tour journey for a stopover at Winchester. Walking around the old, cobbled streets near the cathedral I spotted what appeared to be a beautifully restored Victorian gas lamp post. On closer inspection however a brass plaque revealed that it was a ‘rare sewer gas destructor lantern made by the Webb Lamp Company to pull bio-gas from the sewer below.
This piqued my interest and, never having heard of such an ingenious invention, I took to Google as I thought other members may also be interested and this piece is drawn from information found online.
In Victorian England gas build-up in sewers was often a problem for city dwellers. Old sewers were not always laid with sufficient gradient or on a true line resulting in the accumulation of dangerous and highly inflammable methane gas. To prevent the build-up of stagnant gases, holes were made in the sewer walls and free-standing vent pipes, known as ‘stink pipes’, were installed to allow the foul gases to escape over the heads of pedestrians.

In the 1890s Joseph Edmund Webb (1862-1936) of Birmingham invented and patented a device called the 'sewer gas destructor lamp' to deal with the problem of putrid sewer gases.





Webb's lamps looked like the ordinary gas lamps that were once a common feature of urban streets and his idea was to vent methane gas up and out of the sewers, through the lamp post to the burner at the top where it would be consumed by the flame. Webb expected the lamps to be fuelled entirely by sewer gas, effectively turning a public nuisance into functioning street lighting.

It was soon realised however that the system wasn't working as anticipated in that there was not enough methane to power the lights. The flame would often die out and the remaining unburned methane would be released into the atmosphere creating nauseous conditions in the area, almost as previously. By 1895 Webb had modified his design so that the lamps burned town gas, as ordinary gas lamps did, but they were still connected to the sewers below. The heat generated by the lamp head created an updraught which drew methane from the sewer through the lamp column to the flame, where it burned together with the town gas at a temperature of 700 degrees Fahrenheit (371 degrees centigrade). A single lamp was said to be capable of venting up to three quarters of a mile of sewer making it both practical and economical. Webb took out five patents between 1892 and 1901 to protect his sewer gas destructor invention, with each design improving on the last.

The sewer gas lamps turned out to be so effective that they were installed all around the UK in many towns and cities including London, Sheffield, Winchester, Durham, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton and Blyth. Operation was continuous with the mantles being permanently lit. Lamps were installed at points where sewer gases were likely to be trapped such as the tops of hills or high points along a sewer's run. The city of Sheffield, being a hilly area, was more prone to gas pockets than many and so had the highest number of sewer gas destructor lamps. Eighty-four such lamps were erected in the city between 1914 and1935 with some remaining in use until the end of the 20th century. Many of these lamps remain and 24 of them have now been restored and converted by Pudsey Diamond Engineering to LED imitation gas mantles run by solar power, Four remain as gas lamps although today none ventilate sewers.

By 1907 the company claimed that its sewer lamps were ventilating 30,000 miles of sewer. Ultimately however the lamps were rendered obsolete by changes brought in by the Public Health Acts requiring that all building drainage systems were individually vented at roof level.

London's last remaining sewer gas destructor lamp on Carting Lane, a

nondescript side street off The Strand by the Savoy Hotel, was installed in 1897, knocked over by a reversing lorry some years ago and has now been replaced by a replica. Although an imitation, the lamp has earned Carting Lane the nickname of ‘Farting Lane’.

Twenty-five Webb Lamp Co. Ltd. patent sewer gas destructor lamps have now been Grade II listed in Sheffield and Northumberland as well as other examples in Seaton, Ripon and the Carting Lane lamp. Many more still exist. The Blists Hill Victorian Town in Telford and the Science Museum in Kensington have both re-erected working examples.

Joseph Webb was succeeded as managing director of their company by his son Joseph Leonard (1889-1977). As late as 1970 the town of Whitley Bay bought up all the remaining spares from the company as they were going out of production and the Webb Lamp Company Ltd seems finally to have disappeared in the late 1970s.

'Raw' methane has more than 80 times the warming power of the carbon dioxide produced by burning the gas and, all things taken into account, methane is still 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at warming the earth. Thus, these lamps were not only beneficial in terms of reducing offensive odours but, even though Joseph Webb could not have realised it, his company also played a part in reducing a harmful ‘greenhouse gas’.

Brian Timms

****

Meat and greet: the end of a village institution

Our East Sussex village is in mourning. Our immensely popular family butcher closes forever this Saturday *(now 11 months ago! - ed.)*.

The business has existed for over 150 years. Thomas Jarvis was a Victorian local farmer. When houses cost almost nothing, he clubbed together with fellow agriculturists to buy Bateman's, Rudyard Kipling's future home. In 1870, he opened a butcher's shop in the village of Burwash. It did well. In 1900, he started a second one in our village next door, Etchingham.

Thomas built a combined shop and house for his son, Albert, just returned from service with the Royal Sussex Regiment in the Boer war. Near the

counter still hangs a photograph of Albert, prosperous and suitably butcher-like in apron, cap and Edwardian moustache, flanking the Christmas display that hangs outside the shopfront. To this day the glass proclaims “A. Jarvis” in the ornate lettering of the period.

Albert's great-grandson, Nigel, is the current incumbent. He is 65, and has decided to retire.

I visited Nigel to talk about it. We are regular customers, but I had only been “front-of-house”. From his kitchen, he has a fine view across the meadows by the River Dudwell. He showed me the tiny back premises downstairs. There, each day, he takes in the whole carcasses of lamb, pigs and sides of beef, and breaks them down into primal cuts. They are then boned out, trimmed, tied, cut.

Until 1934 the shop had no electricity so once a week a huge block of ice came up on the train from Hastings and was carried in a hessian bag by horse-drawn cart the few hundred yards from the station to the shop. The little room built to accommodate it survives. During the war, I imagine the shop was rather like that of Corporal Jones in *Dad's Army*, handling rationing and shortages.

Nigel was brought up next to the Burwash shop and later worked as a meat inspector. In 1985, he succeeded his Uncle Nelson and has run the place ever since. I half-expected him to tell me that over-regulation, supermarkets and vegetarianism had defeated him. Not so, he says. “I thought it would be the death-knell when Waitrose and Tesco came so close, but no.”

The business has grown, modestly but steadily, over his 36 years in charge. “The trick,” he believes, “is to treat everybody the same.” During the lockdown people stayed at home, took comfort in something they could trust and preferred the Jarvises' small masked queue to the grim socially distanced waits in Sainsbury's. Custom went up by 50 per cent. Average annual turnover in recent years has been about £150,000.

Eating habits have certainly changed, Nigel says. Fewer people want Sunday roasts now. Instead, “chicken fillets fly out the door” - a metaphor that makes me laugh as I imagine the scene. The sausages are justly famous, made more so when a publican, who bought lots of them in the 1980s, persuaded Nigel to brand them “Burwash Beauties”.

The customers – mostly individual families – keep coming. They like the

local sourcing: F.J. Jarvis & Sons sells no imported meat -"unless you call Scotland imported". They also like the quality, and the chat. As for price, it can always be undercut by the supermarkets, but it is not stupendous. The Jarvises have never got fancy.

In fact, it is rather fascinating that a completely straightforward family business has survived so much social and economic change so well for so long. I think the character of the business today would be wholly recognisable to Thomas Jarvis 150 years on. He would surely approve.

Why is Nigel stopping, then? "Because I can," he says. "Thirty-six years is a fair stint." He loves the place and the work, and has never had any trouble from vegan protestors, thieves or vandals. "I did once pick up someone by the collar and throw him out," he recalls, "because he was being so rude about a friend of mine."

But although the job is peaceful and satisfying, it is also relentless. Since his late 20s, Nigel has almost never – the shop being open on Saturdays – managed a weekend away. In the 21st century his one substantial holiday was a fortnight fifteen years ago to see relations in New Zealand ("I was offered a butcher's business in Akama while I was there!") Now he has built up enough pension to go, and cycle, motorcycle and do the other things he enjoys before he gets too old.

It is the inflexible commitment of set hours, more than money, which presents difficulties for the young. The next Jarvis generation, though well settled in the neighbourhood, does not want to take on the trade. In former times, when it needed more labour, young people could train up in it and find career opportunities to rise. Nowadays very few staff are needed. When you do want them, they are hard to recruit.

Anyway, the family business goes on. Nigel's younger brother, Graham, continues in the thriving Burwash shop, and so do the Burwash Beauties. Nigel will certainly be around to help him - "I need to work. I can't stop." He will still be found at the summer hog-roasts in which he specialises.

But it is impossible for us villagers not to be sad. There are only about 700 of us and we are only too conscious of how lucky we have been. The word "hub" is on everyone's lips these days, but we are losing a rare one

© Charles Moore and The Daily Telegraph and reprinted by kind permission of Charles Moore

22

The lot of an Irthlingborough baker's boy in the '60s

In 1964, when I was just over 14, I started to work for Bill Drage, one of Irthlingborough's three bakers as a Saturday delivery boy, having inherited the job as successor to both my elder brothers. I had previously taken over a morning paper round from my middle brother but this new job was a significant improvement: no early morning toil before having to catch the school bus to Wellingborough, no sorting newspapers, no cycling in the wet and, most importantly, I earned, on starting, £1.00 for a day's work versus 12/6 for five mornings on the paper round. Another significant employee benefit, as it turned out, was that William George (Bill) Drage was one of the nicest, most generous, relaxed people you could ever wish to work with, or for, with a terrific sense of humour and a genuine kindness. This latter characteristic manifested itself in the way he treated those customers who, from time to time, found it difficult to pay.

This job became my regular part time employment on Saturdays, school and university holidays and coverage for other staff until 1972 when permanent work and life changes took me, initially at any rate, to the South Coast.

Saturday was the longest working day for all Bill's staff, when payment for their weekly bread was collected from customers, and when they also tended to buy extra treats for the weekend (e.g. Hovis, cakes, malt loaf etc.) If the following Monday was a bank holiday then extra bread would also be required. For Bill the day had begun the previous afternoon when the various products were prepared from flour, yeast, water and other ingredients, allowed to develop and rise (prove) and then divided into loaf size portions and placed either in tins, on trays or on the floor of the oven. As today, all loaves had to be of a fixed weight, 2lbs. for a large and 1lb. for a small, which could be checked at random by Weights and Measures officials. At midnight temperature in the oil fired oven, which was kept warm constantly (especially useful at Christmas to precook all the local residents' turkeys), was raised to baking temperature using burners fired onto the base layer of bricks and baking could then begin. Large and small steamed, tin and batch loaves were baked, de-tinned, cut if required and, still warm, loaded onto wire trays ready for the vans or, in the case of Bill's father, George, the boot and back seat of his Ford Consul. As my delivery colleague, Harry Cowper, noted, the misted-up car full of warm loaves looked "like a courtin' couple were in there, down Ditchford, on a Sat'dee night". I suspect the crumbs and burnt crust remnants might have been a bit uncomfortable for Ditchford purposes though!

The complete round generally consisted of three sections for me and my partner, either another part timer or one of the full time employees, variously Harry, Ken G, Ken W, Greg or even, in exceptional circumstances, one of the elder Lines boys “helping out” in an emergency! Each section of the round needed approximately the quantity of bread which filled the delivery vehicle and therefore a convenient break-off point at which to return to the bakehouse, park on the High Street (on a blind hill) and reload. Even today more than 50 years later I remain surprised that we were never written off by vehicles speeding over the hill, notwithstanding the lower traffic levels in the 1960’s! We were often treated to various insulting hand gestures and complimentary “terms of endearment” in local dialect as surprised drivers passed by or were forced to stop quickly. Rear access was difficult for loading and the bakery fronted directly onto the road being frequently accessed by passing trade, before a more convenient retail shop was opened. Over the years the bread vans comprised a variety of vehicles, Bedford CA or CF, complete with three speed column change and unpredictable brakes and in which I learned to drive, Ford Escort, BMC Minivan and occasionally Bill’s personal Morris Oxford or Ford Cortina estate car.

At the end of the first section – the West end and “top” of the town – it was back to the bakery to reload and for a cup of tea, a fresh and usually warm bread roll and cheese with a Player’s No.6, or a roll-up to follow, depending on how flush with cash we were. Each sale was booked and the week’s supply totalled and paid, generally in cash, or put “on tick” for settlement at a later date. The second stage which was followed by lunch at home, comprised the South and East of the town, a generally more prosperous area with a far greater proportion of owner occupation rather than council, farm or Co-op owned properties. Interestingly, they could often be less forthcoming with payment as well as more rude and patronising. It is also true to say that the old adage “where there’s muck there’s brass” could equally be applied to some of their houses and kitchens!

Good progress in the morning meant that the afternoon session for Bill and me just involved the Addington Road estate (just over a mile from the bakery) and, if necessary, completion of George’s smaller round, before retiring to the Drage family home to “cash up” check that no-one had been missed and for a cup of tea and one of George’s Woodbines apiece. Mrs Drage senior, the sister of the local C of E Sunday School head teacher, was a woman of a serious nature who spent most of the time admonishing her husband for smoking himself to an early grave – he could certainly cough for England!

Sometimes we ran short of product and it was necessary to make a dash to Crane's Bakery in nearby Higham Ferrers for extra supplies or, alternatively, for Bill to do a small bake and deliver on Sunday. Neither were enthusiastically welcomed by customers at the end of the round.

This has been a necessarily short description of the job and it is difficult to describe the fun, variety and characters that made the day fascinating and rewarding for a young man, but a few random observations and quotes might help:-

…...the elderly lady with the perpetual cigarette in her mouth and the nicotine stain through her grey hair

…...the man with a huge number of children who never had money but an endless variety of "new" systems of payment for the future

…...the snobbish woman who greeted me at about 11 a.m., wearing a dressing gown that never quite fitted, as she leaned over my basket to choose a loaf

….. the lady with a pram full of washing at the back door

…...the time I, at 15, had to console a lady and visit her husband, lying in state, he having died the night before

…...the family who specified a "lightly burnt loaf" (*I suspect this may be my …...family!* ed.)

…...and the endless variety of jokes heard, notes about bread requirements left, and the different characters and personalities in the small town of Irthlingborough, many of whom I remember as if it were yesterday.

Richard Lines

****

Arcades and other weather-protected retail arrangements.....

Shopping arcades as we would recognise them were developed in Paris from the late 18th century, initially at the Palais Royal site. This became a meeting place for the upper echelons of French society but, post-revolution, for all classes of Parisians, once the arcade proper was added. Businesses and developers quickly noted the success of these Galeries du Bois and further arcades quickly followed with around 30 such constructed before the end of that century. It was said to be possible to traverse almost the whole of central Paris under cover of the arcades!

British builders might have followed the Parisian examples sooner had we not been at war with France at that time but once conflict ceased the Royal Opera arcade, running between King Charles II Street and Pall Mall in London, (the first British shopping arcade) was opened in 1817. Although the first of its type in the UK and supremely elegant it is also the most overlooked, being situated in an area away from pedestrian routes and other shopping streets. The arcade has survived two major fires and the demolition of several previously adjoining buildings to continue its resident businesses' trade in high quality goods and country wear.

A dozen or so more arcades remain in Greater London including, of course, the very well known and top rate examples Burlington (1818), and Piccadilly (1909) Arcades amongst others and a surprising cluster of three arcades in Brixton, these dating from the mid-1920s to early-1930s and though perhaps not such architectural gems, they are interesting survivors nonetheless.

Outside London a further cluster of generally high quality arcades are located in Leeds (see front cover illustration). Five are in or adjacent to Briggate in the city centre with two having been designed by pre-eminent theatre and music hall architect, Frank Matcham. Thorntons Arcade is the oldest, dating from 1877, with the other examples having been built between 1889 and 1900. A variety of architectural styles have been employed – personal taste will dictate preference! A further example in the city, the Victoria Quarter, started life as a normal street, open to air, but was glazed over (and pedestrianised!) in 1990. The central, longitudinal, section of its glass roof comprises a coloured glass canopy by British artist Brian Clarke and references Leeds' heritage as a centre of the textile industry. It is the largest stained glass window in Britain and Europe. The Victoria Quarter is certainly a striking addition to the Leeds streetscape.

West Yorkshire boasts quite a number of Victorian shopping arcades – if they interest you and you have thusfar eschewed visiting the towns of Huddersfield, Keighly, Halifax, Dewsbury, etc, not to mention Leeds,. then I recommend a weekend away discovering their merits – I will certainly supply shopping arcade details for your trip!

Locally, we are not too well served. Northampton Co-operative Society Limited had its own 'in-house' arcade running through the centre of its Abington Street premises of course – the arcade is still there and still provides a through route between Abington Street and St. Giles Street, crossing The Riding in the process, but it now houses a number of

independent retail businesses and does not seem to thrive so much in the 21st century. When totally Co-op, it was possible to fulfill the majority of your day to day needs without setting foot in the open air, be it for homeware, drapery goods, pharmacy, greengrocery and florist, grocery, butcher, fishmonger, electrical goods, tobacco (in its separate kiosk), haircuts (his and hers!), restaurant meals and, if you could get a ticket, dance too, in the evenings!

To avoid unnecessary infliction of pain, I will not be mentioning Northampton's erstwhile Emporium Arcade! However, arcades of varying size and quality can still be found fairly near at hand in Bedford (1904), Peterborough (where Westgate Arcade of 1928 has been incorporated into the much newer Queensgate Shopping Centre), Leicester, Letchworth (1922) and, until quite recently, St Neot's (a fairly small 1925 build but recently demolished). The grandest arcade within easy travelling distance is Leicester's Silver Arcade of 1899 (sensitively refurbished by Leicester City Council in 1979) running between Silver Street and High Street, near to the Market Place. This is on four levels and whilst shops now occupy only the ground floor, the upper level balconies, now offices, are still easily accessible by stairs and lifts and repay the effort of getting there with a superb vista of the structure's internal arrangements.



Silver Arcade, Leicester: 1899 by Amos Hall

Developers' perceptions of shoppers' tastes and requirements from the 1970s onwards have given us bland, sometimes brutal, shopping centres, described by one disillusioned 20th centuryite as *'a synthetic conglomeration of shops and ne'er-do-wells reproduced along almost identical lines throughout the country so that discerning shoppers may experience the same chill of alienation wherever their travels may take them'.* Modern-day planners have improved on this, of course – we now have enormous car parks jammed with incoming and outgoing traffic trying to find or trying to leave parking spaces, none of which have proved to be anywhere near the superstores they were hoping to be visiting and who often have little patience with hapless pedestrians who are obliged to run for their lives either still in search of, or replete with marvellous bargains and are now in a big hurry themselves to join the endless queues of vehicles making their escape attempts. Just occasionally one wonders if this is an improvement on getting to a town centre arcade, calmly choosing one's wares and having them delivered by the shop boy that same afternoon!

Not quite on the same level of grandeur as the arcade were canopied parades of shops. Better examples had cast iron uprights, with varying degrees of decoration, and glass panelled canopies. Later ones had tubular steel uprights but were equally efficient at keeping rain and snow off window-shoppers and also gave protection to goods displayed outside the shop proper. Rarely was one premises on its own provided with such protection, more often a row of premises which presumably had been built as a block for a property company to let out to individual shopkeepers. Seaside towns seemed to favour such arrangements – there's no money to be made from bedraggled holidaymakers! The most local canopied shops known to your editor used to be those at Hillmorton where two, possibly three blocks had canopies of differing ages and quality – recent checks reveal that all except one have now disappeared, sad to relate.

The era during which these canopies were installed seems to have been fairly brief, probably 1900 to 1914 approximately although some from that era were certainly replaced in the 1950s and 1960s to judge by their styles.

The third type of protection against inclement (or even excessively warm) weather was the canvas canopy operated by the shopkeeper or his 'boy'. From about the 1880s these canopies were supported on vertical, wooden poles located in cast iron sockets in the ground, more often than not in the kerb stones (to avoid presenting obstacles to the passage of pedestrians).

Certainly Northampton has a few examples remaining, known ones being in Clare Street, Bridge Street, Overstone Road and Barrack Road though there will almost certainly be others, along with survivors in other towns in the county – your editor would be keen to hear of any such finds. Stowage space for the blinds was primitive in early manifestations – later versions had self-retracting blinds and later still, kerbside poles were rendered redundant by cantilevered metal supports, all operated by the 'boy', the blind ending up stored away in the manufacturer's custom-built 'blind box' fixed above the shop's display window. All of these blinds had one, common disadvantage – unless operated correctly (they rarely were!) by the 'boys', they had the ability to deposit large quantities of collected rainwater right where it was not wanted – a quality attested to by an employer of my mother-in-law in the 1970s who, venturing out on a now hot afternoon after a summer downpour, returned to her office drenched to her unmentionables due to the unthinking opening of the water-filled blind by one such 'boy'! If she had done only half the things to the 'boy' she outlined in her ensuing tirade it seems doubtful he would have achieved his majority!

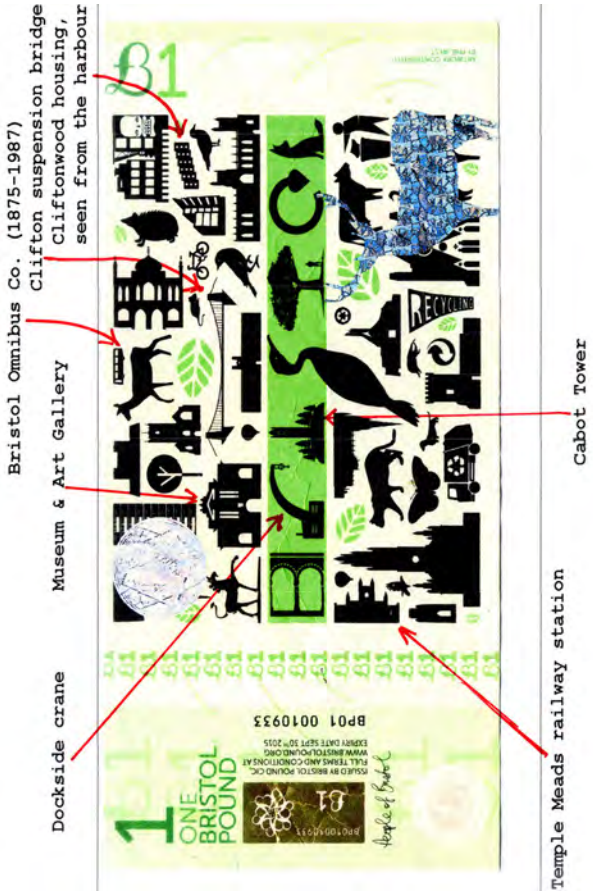


Awning support sockets in Clare St., Northampton

Arriving at the smarter shopping arcades in days of yore could have been by carriage-and-four, assuming one had managed to flag down the Duke of Edinburgh, but lesser mortals had to be content with arrival by tram or, later, bus. This provided a subliminal selling opportunity for one wily and well-located electrical goods shopkeeper, all according to his 'boy'. A bus stop just happened to be outside the shop and, although the shop's windows were by that point of UV-resistant glass, removing the need for blinds against sunlight, the blind itself still sat above the window. Seeing a queue of passengers getting wetter and wetter whilst awaiting their bus the shopkeeper would send the 'boy' out to wind down the blind. Result: happy and drying-out passengers! The shopkeeper was in everyone's good books and, in his own mind, they would naturally buy their next TV and/or food mixer from their Good Samaritan! Never scientifically proved, of course!

Roy Sheffield

The Bristol pound is no more.....



Launched in 2012, and claimed to have been Britain's largest community currency, the £B became a victim of the surge in cashless payments and, according to the Daily Telegraph, crypto-currency usage. It went out of use on 30 September 2021. The £b1 I own, donated to me by a Bristolian friend a few years ago in an overblown flourish of beneficence designed, I later discovered, to mask the fact that the note was already out of date (see the small print just above the serial number!) has a number of representations of items of interest to IAers woven into its design. I have marked the ones I recognise – there could be a (very) small prize for any member spotting more of the same!

CONTENTS

News, reviews, information 1

John Eunson and Northampton gas works – Peter Perkins 4

BOAC – VC10s and threepenny bits – Roy Sheffield 6

Members' evening presentations:-

'Ye olde teche' – Ron Whittaker 9
Old photos of Northants. Mills – Peter Perkins 10
A journey round the Cheshire Ring – Geoff West 11
Northampton Gas Works album – Judith Hodgkinson 13

Another forgotten Northants. station – Barry Taylor 14

Sewer gas destructor lamps – Brian Timms 17

Aspects of retailing.....

Meat and greet: end of a village institution – Charles Moore 19
The lot of an Irthlingborough baker's boy – Richard Lines 22
Arcades and other weather-protected retail arrangements – Roy Sheffield 24
The Bristol pound is no more.... (*inside rear cover*)

Members will be saddened to hear of the passing, on 12 March, of Cecil Swann, one of NIAG's earliest and most stalwart members. A fuller appreciation of Cecil's life will appear in our next issue.

Printed by: Book Printing UK, Remus House, Coltsfoot Drive, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9BF