

Circular October 1973

Visits The Brighton "A" power station at Southwick, visited by members on 24th August, was opened in 1906 and was the successor to earlier stations in North Street and Gloucester Road, the latter dating from 1882 and thus making Brighton one of the first towns in Britain to have a public electricity supply. Some parts of the original Southwick building still exist although not used for their original purpose. The first station at Gloucester Road contained Brush arc-lighting generators and it is interesting to note that the two remaining operational sets in the "A" station are 30 MW and 50 MW L jungstrom sets also manufactured by the Brush Company, the 50 MW set being the largest of this type to have been built in this country. The station has served Brighton for almost 70 years and, although it suffered bomb damage during the last war, was never put out of action. Unfortunately its days are now numbered and, indeed, demolition work on some of the plant has already begun. A direct-current sub-station also exists containing a massive switchboard, a motor-generator set and a La Cour motor-converter, but it now supplies, through a modern rectifier, no more than a few station auxiliaries. It is unlikely to be practicable to preserve much more than the name-plates of the machines and such small items as the original turbine-room clock and some ornate balustrading from the original switchboard; a comprehensive set of photographs and other documentation does, however, exist. It was disappointing, and indeed somewhat embarrassing, that of the members who signified their intention of being present, less than half turned up. E.O.Taylor

On Saturday afternoon, September 8th, Mr Philip Laurie took a second party of 12 members round Herstmonceux Castle and Observatory. We saw one of the oldest brick buildings in England, interesting new architecture in the modern Observatory buildings and a knapped flint wall executed by one of the last men in this ancient craft. But what of industrial archaeology? Well, there was the telescope of the 1880s - still in use; there were two-hundred-year-old mirrors from William Herschel's telescope (polished by the elbow power of the astronomer who also had to be his own smith, carpenter and mechanic). There was also a fine marble bust of Herschel by Roubiliac, found by Mr. Laurie in a basement storeroom and relieved of white paint which had made people suppose it to be only a plaster cast. The visit was notable for the wit of our guide, which made the digestion of so much information easier. We particularly liked his throw-away line: "Oh, this is all for watching stars, the Sun is my department." Brenda Innes

A successful all-day visit to Lewes took place on Saturday, 22nd September, when 25 of our members were joined by about half that number of members of the Lewes Archaeological Group. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the Lewes Group and its members who did so much to assist the planning of the visit and make preparations generally, and who acted as guides to a number of the groups of inspection. The Southover Church Institute in St. James Street (formerly Pudding Bag Lane) was our headquarters for the day and in addition it enabled Mr. O'Shea to assemble a display which included some very fine photographs by Reeves of Lewes in the 1870s (see separate note regarding the availability of these photos), maps and records from the County Records Office covering Lewes during the 19th Century and pottery shards, with photographs of the mediaeval pottery dig at Ringmer now being undertaken by the Lewes Group. After an introductory briefing based on H.A.Gordon's extensive notes the parties set off for a morning perambulation round sites of interest within the Town itself. Passing almost at once the site of one of the two large tanneries that existed up to the turn of the Century, the present and two earlier railway station sites were examined, including the newly re-decorated shield of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway. Moving on to the banks of the Ouse in the area of Railway Lane, granaries and other buildings connected with the days of more active Ouse navigation were noted as also the site of the gas works of 1822, the site of the Morris foundry of similar date, and the probable area of ship-building.

The parties then moved on to view the Harvey Bridge Wharf Brewery Buildings, the Phoenix Ironworks as seen from the new Phoenix Causeway, and so up School hill passing Baxters Printing Works and on to the Barbican where a display of Sussex tokens and pieces of Sussex glass had been arranged by the Curator, Miss Marsden, who also accompanied us on the Town tour. In the afternoon a wider circuit took members to the quarries, limekilns and tramway at Offham, where most members braved the climb up the incline of the 1809 tramway before moving off to the Hamsey South Lock and canal cut and the remains of the now abandoned Hamsey Railway Loop. Finally, the homeward route took us back via the Pells with their system of leats that once served an important paper mill, some industrial cottages of the 19th Century and so to headquarters for tea and a discussion on the type of report which should be produced on the activities of Lewes during the Industrial Revolution.

W.R.Beswick.

Photographs of Lewes in the 1870s. Several members have asked if copies of the photographs from the Reeves collection, as displayed at our Lewes meeting, could be obtained. An approach has been made to Mr. Reeves by Mr. O'Shea who will be pleased to organize this matter on our behalf. The cost of full-plate prints, including VAT and postage, will be 50p for the first print and 45p for each of any subsequent number (not necessarily of the same print). Members interested should write to E.W.O'Shea, Paston Cottage, Kingston, Lewes, BN7 3JZ., enclosing the requisite amount. Closing date for orders: 30th November 1973. Any queries to Mr. O'Shea on these photos should be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope.

Batemans Watermill. Progress has been made with this restoration but volunteer workers are still wanted. The new or repaired timbers of the hursting are now cut and mostly in place, the new bearing pedestals for the wheel-shaft have been constructed and Jim Smith has cut the new applewood teeth for the pit-wheel. Soon the new wheel-shaft will be placed on its bearings and the fabrication of the wheel started. We have been informed by the National Trust that the Army will not now be able to undertake the digging out of the mill-pond and mill-lade. This will have to be done under contract with the assistance of volunteer labour. The first task is the clearance of all the bushes and saplings along the mill-lade which prevent access from the cart-track for the mechanical excavator. Volunteers are needed for this work.

Mesolithic Manufacture. Mr. R.Bingley reports a Mesolithic surface site in the Netherfield area which is clearly a manufacturing area. Finds include numerous tools and chips of flint together with cores which match each other and are evidently from the same nodule. It is interesting to learn that the nodules used are not of local origin but appear to have been brought from the Downland area.

Books on Sussex. One of our members, Mr. Hugh Barty-King, is the author of a book, "Sussex in 1839", in the "Landscape History" series which a Reading publisher is launching this winter.

Sussex Archaeological Society Lectures. Two lectures in the S.A.S. winter programme may be of particular interest to our members. One is on 8th February 1974, on "Mediaeval Kilns in West Sussex" by C.J.Ainsworth, and the other is on 5th April 1974 on "Sussex Turnpike Roads" by one of our members, Brian Austen. The lectures are held at Southover Grange, Lewes, at 7.30 pm. Admission: 15p for S.A.S. members, 20p for non-members.

Old Hastings Preservation Society. Another of our members, John Upton, is giving a lecture to the O.H.P.S. on "The Battle Gunpowder Industry". The lecture is at the O.H.P.S. headquarters, 39, High Street, Hastings, at 6.30 pm on Saturday, 19th January. Any members living locally are welcome to come to this meeting as guests of our Secretary, A.J.Haselfoot.

Death of a member. We are very sorry to hear of the death of one of our original members, A.E.Philcox, of Lewes, at the age of 86, who joined the Society in September 1968. His son, R.A.Philcox is a member, having joined in January 1972.

Evening Meetings have been arranged for the dates given below. It is intended that these meetings shall be quite informal, although in each case one of our members will open by giving a short talk and showing slides about some aspect of I.A. either in Sussex or elsewhere. It is hoped that members will take the opportunity to report on their own work, to show their own slides, and to put queries about any aspect of I.A. on which they desire information. If these first meetings prove successful further evenings will be arranged and details will be given in the January Newsletter.

Thursday December 13th. Committee Room, Central Library, Grove Road,  
7.30 pm Eastbourne. Mr. W.R.Beswick will talk about  
"Olive Mills in the South of France".

Thursday January 17th Southover Grange, Lewes. Mr and Mrs. J.Farrant  
7.30 pm will talk about "I.A. in Brighton".

Newsletter. It is hoped to produce a proper Newsletter in January, possibly with illustrations. For this it is necessary to have NEWS, which does not come automatically to the Secretary. Therefore, will any member having news items about their own work or about what is happening in their area please send the information to the Secretary, with illustrations if desired. Short articles about any aspect of I.A. can also be sent in. Contributions should reach the Secretary not later than 20th December. Illustrations may be pen drawings (on white paper) or black-and-white photographs, not less than 5" x 4", and preferably 8" x 5".

Addenda to Address List. The following amendments should be made to the address list sent out with the August Circular.

C North East Sussex

Change: GOODE, T.J. & Miss R.J. - "Broadview", Turners Green, Heathfield.

Delete: MEADES, Mrs. D.M. - Huggetts Farm, High Hurstwood, Uckfield.

F Central Sussex

Add: TAYLOR, Miss Y. - "Beacons View", Kingston Road, Lewes.

WYKEHAM, J.W. - "Lavenders", Swanborough, Lewes.

Delete: PHILCOX, A.E. - 12, Gundreda Road, Lewes.

G North Sussex

Add: COX, Mrs. G.B. - 3, Middle Road, Partridge Green, Horsham.

Change: BUDGEN, L.J. - "Little Paddocks", 9, The Birches,  
Manning Heath, Horsham, RH1 6JT

H West Sussex

Change: SAYER, C.A. - Barton Granary, Nyetimber, Bognor Regis.

Delete: DENTON, Mrs. M. - "Sandy Trail", Oakfield Avenue, E. Wittering.

Members Resident outside the County

Add: HUDSON, T.P. - 53, Thurlow Park Road, London S.E.21.

Change: HOARE, Mr & Mrs J. - 107, Western Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5GR.