
INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND *NEWSLETTER*

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Diary dates

11-12	May	IHAI Spring Tour, Co Kilkenny
22	June	<i>Waverley</i> visit to NE Antrim
5-8	July	Mining History Conference, Wales
11-12	July	Mills Conference, Huddersfield

IHAI Spring Tour

As notified in the February newsletter, the highlight of the IHAI calendar will take place in a matter of weeks from now. Our Spring tour, organised by Barry O'Reilly, will focus on Co Kilkenny and its heritage of watermills and bridges. Full details, booking form and a list of accommodation contacts are enclosed with this newsletter.

Those on past trips will know that the social side is every bit as enjoyable as the site visits themselves. If you plan to come, please notify Barry as soon as possible so that he can organise a suitably sized minibus. At €25, it's a bargain!

10th National Mills Conference

Those who attended last year's Irish Mills Conference at Sion Mills, Co Tyrone, may be interested to know that a similar conference is also held every year in Britain. This year's will be based at Huddersfield University.

Day 1, on Thurs 11 July, will entail tours of regenerated mills in the Colne Valley, Dewsbury and Batley. Day 2 is a series of talks and workshops on the social and economic effects of mill regeneration.

For further details contact Nigel Grizzard, NGCS, Oakwood House, 637 Roundhay Road, Leeds LS8 4BA (tel 0044-113-2359677); website www.ngcs.net.

Making Waves

Waverley, the world's last sea-going paddle steamer, will be stopping at Red Bay, Co Antrim, on Sat 22 June to pick up passengers for a cruise around the scenic Antrim Coast to Fair Head and back. If you wish to go or would like to know about other cruises around the west coast of Britain, contact Waverley Excursions Ltd, Waverley Terminal, Glasgow G3 8HA (tel 0044-845- 1304647).

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM was held at Belturbet Railway Station, Co Cavan on Sat 23 March. The usual suspects and some new faces turned up in the morning and were welcomed by the station's manager Jim McCauley. He outlined how the site came to be restored, starting with a community initiative in 1995 and followed by a recently-completed FAS restoration of the goods store (now a conference centre) and adjoining station (now offices and exhibition area).

Historian George Morrissey then led a tour of the town, starting with the 1887 railway bridge over the Erne River. We then inspected the site of Dixon & Dunlop's distillery and continued on to the 1836 triple-span road bridge, also over the Erne. A stop at the site of the riverside army barracks, now demolished, was followed by lunch in a local hostelry, after which we returned to the station for the AGM.

Following reports by our chairman, secretary and treasurer, the outgoing committee was re-elected along with new member Mary Mulvihill, whom we are delighted to welcome 'on board'. See the end of this newsletter for committee contacts.

Norman Campion concluded proceedings with some fascinating cine film of the Blessington steam tram (taken by a Dr Shaw in 1931) and of the Cavan & Leitrim railway.

Many thanks to our hosts at Belturbet for a very enjoyable day, and to Ewan Duffy for organising it.

Anna Liffey Mill Conservation Plan

Fingal County Council has just commissioned a conservation plan for Shackleton's Mill, just downstream from Lucan on the River Liffey. Your editor, in association with Deirdre McDermott (architect), Mary Tubridy (environmentalist), Claire Walsh (archaeologist), Anne O'Dowd (museum consultant) and Frank Robinson (engineer), were privileged to be awarded the contract for the preparation of a plan for the mill and its surrounding grounds. The aim of this plan is four-fold:

1. To document the site's architectural, industrial, landscape and social history.
2. To establish the significance of the site's built and natural heritage.
3. To identify factors which could diminish the site's special character.
4. To propose policies that will retain and enhance the site.

Once agreed and adopted by the council, this plan will form the basis against which proposals for the site's future development will be assessed.

The team would be interested to hear from anyone (by 31 May if possible!) with information which could give it a better understanding of this site and its development, and also suggestions for policies which would ensure the mill's survival for future generations.

Please contact the editor directly (details at end) or Deirdre McDermott at McDermott Norton, International House, Tara St, Dublin 2 (tel 01-636-0961).

Irish Mills and Milling Conference

As reported in the last newsletter, the Society for the Preservation of Ancient and Traditional Irish Mills, held their first conference at Ballydugan Mill, Co Down, on Sat 2 March. *Billy Dunlop* reports on proceedings.

The day started with talks by Prof Fergus Kelly (School of Advanced Studies, Dublin), on 'Water rights and milling in early Irish law', and by Dr Colin Rynne (University College, Cork) on 'The archaeology of milling in later medieval Ireland'.

After an excellent lunch in the mill (now a well-appointed hotel), participants visited Tom Harris' mill at Ballynahinch. This mill, which has been in the his family for over 70 years, still operates under water and diesel power to crush animal feed for local farmers. The party then travelled back into Lecale and the National Trust's corn mill at Castleward, near Strangford. Ken Pullin, one of the Trust's volunteer millers, had the wheel turning and explained the mill's operation. All in all, an excellent and very worthwhile day. [details of the Society can be had from William Hogg - phone number at end - *Ed*]

Ulster Canal Forum

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland held a public meeting in Monaghan on 12 March to stimulate public interest in the reopening of the Ulster Canal. Over 200 people attended under the chairmanship of Ruth Delany, author of *Ireland's Inland Waterways*.

The Ulster Canal opened in 1842 and linked Charlemont on the River Blackwater with Wattle Bridge on Upper Lough Erne. It ran via Caledon, Monaghan and Clones, a distance of 93km. At only 12ft (3.66m) lock width, its main claim to fame is that it was Ireland's narrowest canal. However, it was never a commercial success on account of competition from the railways and had been abandoned by 1930.

Since the opening of the Shannon-Erne Waterway in 1994, Fermanagh's Lakeland is now accessible from the Shannon. The IWAI sees the reopening of the Ulster Canal as the next step, connecting the Erne network with Lough Neagh and facilitating access to the Bann navigation and

also the Lagan, Newry and Coalisland canals (should these ever be restored).

In 1997, Rivers Agency (DANI) and Dúchas jointly commissioned a feasibility study into the reopening of the Ulster Canal to achieve this link. The findings were published in 1998 as *A Feasibility Study into the Reopening of the Ulster Canal*. Three refurbishment options were examined:

1. Reinstate the canal to its original dimensions (6m bed width/ 3.66m lock width) along its original route.
2. Widen the canal to 8m bed width and 6m lock width along its original route. These larger dimensions are "consistent with the dimensions of the adjacent waterways."
3. As option 2, but rerouted in places in order to preserve some original locks as permanent heritage features. Greater use would also be made of existing rivers.

The report concluded that option 3 delivered best value for money and is now being appraised by the NI Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure. It is not yet known when a decision will be reached regarding whether or not to proceed with the project.

Turing to the proceedings themselves, Colin Becker, IWAI President, began by outlining the benefits of a restored canal for recreational use, amenity value and business opportunities. Although the IWAI did not have a stance on a particular restoration option, he personally was in favour of option 3.

Erskine Holmes, joint Chairman of UWG, outlined the 1998 feasibility study. He, too, advocated option 3 and also noted that even if option 1 was adopted, the original locks would have to be rebuilt in order to make them structurally sound and watertight. He also noted that it would prove difficult for boats to negotiate Lough Neagh if limited to the existing 3.66m lock gauge. Erskine noted that the project was an opportunity to capitalise on the surviving built heritage and make a significant economic impact on those areas through which the canal passed.

Dick Warner, broadcaster and waterway buff, outlined the economic benefits accruing from the reinstatement of the Shannon-Erne Waterway between 1989 and 1994. Although it cost IR£30m to restore (over its 63km length), he stated that IR£7.7m per year was returned to the local economy over the four years since its reopening. A further IR£30m was also invested by the private sector. He also noted the creation of 300 sustainable jobs directly related to the canal.

The general consensus was that this was a very worthwhile project and deserving of support. Although none of the three restoration options was discussed in detail, the third was preferred by all those who expressed a view.

---- **BOOK REVIEWS** ----

SHIPBUILDERS IN WATERFORD, 1820-82. Bill Irish. €30. ISBN 1-869857-50-X. Bray: Wordwell, 2001.

This publication focuses on a little covered area of industrial heritage, that of maritime history and associated industries. As the grandson of a (retired) boat builder, the filling of this gap is to be particularly welcomed by your reviewer!

The book deals considers the early days of this industry in Waterford, setting the scene by giving, amongst other things, a brief history of the Quaker movement, prominent in Irish industry as they were. It then progresses to individual shipyards but never loses sight of external developments, such as the passenger acts, which set the conditions for the carriage of passengers by sea, and legislation that impacted on ship design. There are also chapters on building wooden and steel ships and on the Malcomsons, a Quaker family well established in business in the area, most notably through their cotton mill in Portlaw.

Ewan Duffy

WICKLOW HARBOUR: A HISTORY. Jimmy Cleary and Andrew O'Brien. €6.35. ISBN 0-9541147-0-1. Wicklow: Harbour Commissioners.

Although Wicklow has had a port for many centuries, this book focuses primarily on its formal development under the Wicklow Harbour Commissioners from their incorporation in 1851. It charts this development in four stages: early history prior to the Harbour Commissioners, improvement, between the wars, and the modern era up to 2001. Well illustrated with maps and photographs, it provides a useful maritime history of the town with snippets of information relevant to other aspects of industrial heritage.

Ewan Duffy

AN UNLIKELY SUCCESS STORY: THE BELFAST SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY, 1880 - 1935. J. P. Lynch. STG£10. ISBN 0 9539604-3-9. Belfast: Belfast Society, 2001.

Think Belfast, and ship building and Harland & Wolff come to mind. They were, however, but one of several firms involved in this industry and this publication sets out to rectify the widely held aforementioned misconception that Harland & Wolff were the only ones.

The initial chapter progresses through the development of the industry, details of labour relations and the industry's golden years and decline. Interesting facts brought to light in the book include the expulsion of Catholic and non-Unionist Protestants from the ship building workforce on no less than three occasions between 1886 and 1920.

Your reviewer (a member of the profession slated!) would take the author of this book to task over his summary of the problems leading to the decline of this once great industry: "It is sad to witness the passing of a great tradition but economics are brutal and accountants heartless - the end is nigh". I will leave the informed reader to make up their own mind.

Ewan Duffy

ULSTER'S COAL CANALS. Erskine Holmes (editor). £3 (incl p&p). Ulster Waterways Group.

This publication marked the UWG's fourth annual conference (Newry, September 2001) and focuses on the Newry and Coalisland canals, both built to bring cheap coal to Dublin from the Co Tyrone collieries near Coalisland. Copies may be obtainable from UWG Secretary, 4 Brown's Brae, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0HL.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1500-1830. A Skempton, MM Chrimes, RC Cox, PSM Cross-Rudkin, RW Rennison and T Ruddock (editors). STG£95. ISBN 0-7277-2939-X. London: Thomas Telford, 2002.

This book details the lives, works and careers of engineers whose careers began before 1830s. A review will appear in the next newsletter. Copies may be obtained from the Customer Service Dept, Thomas Telford Ltd, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 6UU.

My thanks to Ewan Duffy and Barry O'Reilly for their contributions. All items of industrial interest will be gratefully received by the editor, Fred Hamond, at the address below.

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