

# Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society Newsletter

Number 192

October 2021



Poundsford - View of excavated shaft base  
See Mining in Sussex page 5



# Newsletter 192

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## Editorial

Welcome to *Newsletter 192*.

Please note the AGM is planned to be held on 20th November, see the attached notice.

### **Nyewood Brick and Tile Works. Harting**

I have been contacted with a request for any information particularly photographs of the Nyewood Brick and Tile works which had a railway siding into it from Rogate Station. This closed in the 1980s and the late Vic Mitchell carried out a survey in 1985 before the chimney and kilns were demolished but efforts to trace this have so far failed. If any member participated in the survey or has information as to its whereabouts please contact the editor.

Visit our website - [www.sussexias.co.uk](http://www.sussexias.co.uk)

## SIAS Events

All the autumn and winter meetings are held at

West Blatchington Mill Barn, Holmes Avenue, Hove BN3 7LF

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2021 2.00 pm - AGM** See enclosed notice for details

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022, 2.00pm. *Lost industries of Brighton***

Local author and historian Chris Horlock will be using his extensive photographic collection to illustrate how industry and commerce in the Brighton conurbation has changed from the Victorian era to the present day. A number of 'old style' manufacturing industries that have gone will be detailed, including the locomotive works at Brighton Station and Allen West off the Lewes Road. The retail industry will also be featured, including the demise of large stores such as Hanningtons, Vokins and the London Road Co-Op. Chris will also consider the wider picture, as to why these changes have occurred and the impact it has had on Brighton.

**19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 2.00 pm. *Film Nite (afternoon!)***

Details in next Newsletter



## Events from Other Societies

### Malcolm Dawes

Detailed below are events organised by other societies, which may be of interest to our members. If you have details for future events please send these to:

Malcolm Dawes, 52 Rugby Road, Brighton, BN1 6EB

or e-mail to [malcolm.dawes@btinternet.com](mailto:malcolm.dawes@btinternet.com).

*Covid restrictions may apply to the listed events and may result in last minute changes.*

*So it is essential to check the web sites if you are planning to go to the event.*

**Weekend 8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> October. *Giants of Steam Autumn Gala***

Visiting locomotives –Merchant Navy Class No. 35028 “Clan Line”, Mausell Schools Class No.30925 “Cheltenham” and USATC S160 No.6046. Further details on access and timetables at [www.bluebell-railway.co.uk](http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk)

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30pm. *Goodwood Motor Circuit***

Chichester Local History Society presentation by Hil Sloan. Non Members £3. New Park Centre, New Park Road, Chichester. 01243 784915

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2.30pm. *Maritime Shoreham***

Brighton and Hove Archaeology Society, Local History Forum talk by Trevor Povey. £4 non-members. Ventnor Hall, Central United Reformed Church, 102 Blatchington Road, Hove. [www.brightonarch.org.uk](http://www.brightonarch.org.uk)

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October. *Autumn Industrial Trains***

Narrow gauge trains in action, plus demonstration runs with the road machines

and contractor's monorail. Resident steam trains running around site. Amberley Museum. [www.amberleymuseum.co.uk](http://www.amberleymuseum.co.uk)

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October. *From Ordered Streets to Ordered Sale Rings – the livestock markets of Chichester***

Chichester Novium Museum evening lecture. Times and location yet to be announced. For further information see Novium website or telephone 01243 775888

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 10am to 4pm. *Opening day at the Brede Steam Engines***  
Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. <https://bredesteamgiants.co.uk>

**5<sup>th</sup> November to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2022. *Steam Lights at the Bluebell Railway***  
Entire trains bedecked with lights. Lineside Festive Scenes and Horsted Keynes Station adorned with lights and decorations.

Timetable and booking procedure on the web site. [www.bluebell-railway.com](http://www.bluebell-railway.com).

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November. *London to Brighton veteran car run***

[www.veterancarrun.com](http://www.veterancarrun.com)

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm. *Britain's Railways in the 1980's, part 1. The early 80s***  
Southern Electric Group, Sussex Branch event. £3 visitors. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick. [www.southernelectric.org.uk](http://www.southernelectric.org.uk)

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm. *Cakes & Ale – a Full English in your 17C local***  
Chichester Local History Society presentation by Dr Janet Pennington. Non Members £3. New Park Centre, New Park Road, Chichester. 01243 784915

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November. *How Dr Beeching saved the Railways***  
Volks Electric Railway Association winter meeting. New meeting venue, Patcham Community Centre, Ladies Mile Road, Patcham. Further details at [www.volkselectricrailway](http://www.volkselectricrailway)

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November. *Steam train excursion from London Victoria to Eastbourne Steam hauled return journey from Hastings through Battle to London***  
Photographic opportunities in Sussex. [www.railwaytouring.co.uk](http://www.railwaytouring.co.uk)

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December, 10am to 4pm. *Opening day at the Brede Steam Engines***  
Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. <https://bredesteamgiants.co.uk>

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> January, 10am to 4pm. *Opening day at the Brede Steam Engines***  
Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. <https://bredesteamgiants.co.uk>

***Do please check details before travelling***

*The details of these meetings and events organised by other groups are only included as a guide and as a service to members: inclusion here is not intended to be seen as an endorsement.*

## **Zoom Meeting Report by John Blackwell**

# **Mining in Sussex – From Prehistoric Man to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

## **Peter Burgess**

Our second Zoom meeting welcomed Peter Burgess of the Wealden Cave and Mine Society and a SIAS member.

England's oldest flint mines are the well known ones at Cissbury Ring on the South Downs. These were shallow mines, up to 10 feet in depth with short horizontal galleries, as they were lit only by daylight, which followed the flint seam. When one mine was exhausted another shaft was dug next to it and the excavated chalk from this mine was used to infill its predecessor.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Weald became the centre of England's iron industry with numerous bell pits still visible where the iron ore was extracted. In the eighteenth century the industry moved to the north and midlands where coal replaced charcoal as fuel for blast furnaces. An interesting attempt to revive iron-ore mining was made at Snape Wood (TQ 631 305), near Wadhurst, as a result of a seam of iron ore being discovered during excavation of the railway cutting. The ironstone was worked with mines on both sides of the railway cutting from August 1857 to September 1858, the ore being sent to Staffordshire. Peter had visited the workings which had just enough width and height to 'fit' a standing man, as his images showed.

Noting the abandoned early twentieth century sand mine at Marehill, Pulborough where pillar and stall working was used to mine moulding sand for the iron industry. Peter then moved on to the centrepiece of his presentation, the little known limestone and gypsum mines in the Sussex Weald. There are three outcrops of the limestone Purbeck Beds which are situated in a line running from Broad Oak to Battle. Peter described two interesting sites both on Lord Ashburnham's estate, the first at Orchard (now Archer) Wood north of Battle (TQ 742 184). This was worked from 1786 to about 1818 producing the raw material for lime kilns which produced fertiliser for his extensive estate. The mine was deep and was subject to flooding with an overshot waterwheel apparently situated in the main shaft being fed from a surface lake turning a crankshaft connected to the pumping rods which operated two pumps. There is also an intriguing reference in the Ashburnham Papers to a rails being laid in 1806 but whether iron or wood is not stated.

The second was the Forest Mine at Poundsford south of Burwash Common (TQ 647 214) where Peter along with members of the Kent Underground Research Group undertook excavation of a shaft over a period of three years. They lined the shaft with corrugated iron sheets held in place by rectangles formed

of scaffold poles until they met the original wood supports with timber lining. The accumulated spoil was removed to a depth of 50 feet where a gallery was located. In the gallery one could see the remains of the original timber arches supporting roof boards with waste sandstone blocks infilling between the arches. *(see front cover)*

The Rev. Arthur Young visited and described the method of working, blasting using black gunpowder, removal in buckets which were raised up the shaft by horse gin. The limestone was burnt in kilns on site producing 10,000 bushels per month between April and November. Mining died out here in about 1840 but the Beds continued to be worked for roadstone until circa 1900. This mine also suffered from flooding which flowed out in an underground passage and discharged into the River Dudwell. During the excavation floodwater was found at a depth of 40 feet and had to be pumped out in order to access the gallery. There is surface evidence of many shafts being sunk at this site to access galleries.

Layers of gypsum, underlying the limestone, were discovered at a depth of about 150 feet when a borehole was sunk in the 1870's by the Sub Wealden Exploration Committee who were investigating the geology of the Weald and hoped to discover deep seated seams of coal. In 1876 a shaft was sunk at Mountfield near the borehole and gypsum extraction commenced. A horizontal working was made along the length of the gypsum seam with surplus left in to support the roof. Following drilling and blasting the rock was removed on a tramway to the bottom of the shaft where it was raised to the surface. In 1945 an inclined shaft was dug east of the vertical one for ease of removal and equipped with endless rope haulage, later being replaced by a conveyor belt. Mining at Mountfield ceased in the early nineties and Peter was privileged to visit the mine in 1994 whilst it was still being maintained (it is now flooded) and showed many fascinating photographs taken on this occasion.

1963 saw mining operations started at Brightling, these were accessed by Land Rover vehicles via a 500ft drift and the mine now consists of hundreds of miles of workings on the room and pillar basis. The excavated gypsum is crushed before being transferred from Brightling to Mountfield for processing and distribution; the mine being in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with no roads. An open aerial ropeway three and a half miles in length was constructed (see illustrations on back cover) for this purpose but when life expired in 1986 it was replaced by a closed conveyor system on the same alignment. At Mountfield the gypsum was heated in kilns and plaster products for the building industry produced. (one was known as 'Sirapite' being used during the first half of the twentieth century as a finishing coat for the interior walls of buildings. Somewhat unfortunately it was initially marketed as 'Parisite', - due to its similarity to 'Plaster of Paris' - this was

soon rectified!) The finished products were distributed from rail sidings which ran into the plant. In 1973 British Gypsum established a plasterboard factory alongside the plaster works at Mountfield but this product has now been transferred to their Nottinghamshire works. (*see rear cover*)

48 members and friends enjoyed a most interesting and informative evening on a subject that had not been covered before.

**Postscript.** A question posed on the evening enquired if coal had been discovered in Sussex. The answer is No but in 1805 when new wells were being sunk at Bexhill a seam of black lignite or fossil wood was discovered. Two shafts were sunk the first in a field near the seashore where at a depth of 164 feet a bed of three and a half feet of “strong coal” was found and boring continued to a second bed of “bad quality very sulphurous” but then the sea began to enter and although an 80 h.p. engine was employed to pump out the water the works were inundated and abandoned. A second shaft was sunk inland at the foot of Bexhill Down and the pump front the first mine was utilised to also pump water from this mine, no record of anything in the nature of coal was found and the venture ceased in 1809 with estimates of eighty thousand being expended!! *Information from The London Evening Standard of the 20 April 1889*



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## **‘Bottled holidays for home consumption’**

**Martin Cobbett**

**Sands & Co 1899**

**Geoffrey Mead**

Now what is that title all about...? I have NO idea! I saw in a Portslade charity shop this 19<sup>th</sup> century volume and as I had another of Martin Cobbett's books [he was a well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century sporting writer, especially as regards horse racing and did something about Plumpton racecourse origins, a topic that I had been researching]. Born in 1846 he lived until 1906 and was Brighton born, but is buried in Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey. He wrote articles on just about every conceivable sport from gig-boat racing in the Channel off Brighton, to Ashes Test Matches and the Doncaster races, by way of a boxing match or two. His final book was 'Wayfaring Notions' published posthumously in 1906, with a forward by his daughter Alice; in that she notes her father's wide sporting associations and his prodigious walking expeditions, the book is full of walking tours he undertook, many in Sussex his home area. One in particular was well known to me; he walked from Plumpton to Brighton via Falmer, nothing unusual in that, but that Cobbett started at 4pm on a late December afternoon! This curious collection of essays 'Bottled holidays...' has one chapter with some interesting IA background, being a description of a walking journey down the Dover road from South East London.

“As regards fatigue, I think that of all the main roads leading out of the metropolis the way to Dover is about the most trying for a pedestrian. Town lasts a very long way, in fact until Shooter's Hill is reached the suburbs are not cleared, as a rule the footing is not good and there is but little level ground and some of the hills to be negotiated are formidable. The roads ought to be better than they are as generally the bottom is chalk, which in any but frosty weather wears well and makes a capital bed for 'metal' to lie in. For some distance however between Crayford and Gravesend they are constantly being powdered with chalk and lime-grit and that spoils them; not only because it makes the surface soft but also for the reason that the stones work about...leaving Greenwich... close at the side of the Royal Park wall is Blackheath, a public recreation ground... the holes made in assertion of profitable rights to walk off with gravel cut it up a good deal...Dartford [a] busy place enough, with paper mills, powder mills, ironworks, lime-works, cement and other works. From Dartford to Gravesend are half a dozen of the most gritty, dusty, droughty miles in England. Excavations for chalk honeycomb the hilly country and undermine the road and chimneys crop up like 'stalks' in the black country[sic] ...of the two sides the left is the least inviting for an errant traveller, as most of the burning goes on there, but some



of the big pit-makers have kilns on both sides. On paper the look-out over the Thames should be pretty, but the banks are, as a rule flat, and the water traffic is not over interesting. One of the most disappointing stretches in the country is this and on past Rochester to Rainham; in fact scarcely one pretty bit...from the windy heath are fine views, one of the prettiest, that across the river with the Essex highland backing the opposite bank of the Thames....By Greenhithe and Gally Hill the dust manufactories are exceedingly thick and their smoke, the fine particles pervading the atmosphere, the glare of the chalk road, and the parched look of the lime-grit and the dust-powdered grass and hedges by the roadside...on the road the pulverised chalk-stone, burned or unburnt, lay thick, and made walking hard work, while the path, being formed of nubbly pebbles, offered no profitable change. [Several lime works of varying sizes advertised along this stretch and a couple of 1862 images are attached.] Our walk to Rainham is pleasant enough...here are met with the first of a local breed...brickmakers, most of them...they are among the poor class of unskilled workers...a brickmaking family would toil for periods and at a pace hardly creditable. Rainham once made, real Kentish country begins; the hop gardens are frequent. [I have attached some images from an 1862 trade directory of breweries nearby.] Sittingbourne and its brickies...and the thriving clay diggers and pugbakers have turned out some good men. From Gutteridge Gate to the pretty little village of Bridge [both near Canterbury]... comes a long bit of downhill which is, however, fully made up for the pull up to Barham Downs which follows...The bit of stream running through Bridge, like the Mole in Surrey, and the generally subterranean stream between Croydon and Epsom is one of the mysterious family of 'bournes'. This, which gives its name to several villages, Bekesbourne, Patribourne, Littlebourne and others and is dignified as the Little Stour, has a knack of disappearing at intervals, a circumstance to be accounted for by its having in its course large swallows or chalk caves which break the continuity of the stream till they are filled. Nearly all the way to Dover there used to be open downland on the left of the road, but it has been all enclosed. A little further on...through a dip in the hills on the left a glimpse can be obtained of the cliffs of Ramsgate and the shipping in the bay. Across the way the blue lines of Cape Grisnez."

Martin Cobbett's journey here takes him from the clays and gravels of the London Basin out eastward onto the chalk along the Thames-side, and the use of that chalk in a range of industrial processes and the environmental damage ensuing is well made. As he works along further into North Kent, the marshes that still occupy some sizeable areas of the south bank come in for a less than happy comment; it is a notion of how in just over 120 years our perceptions of what constitutes landscape 'beauty' have radically altered. I did a short walk on the Cliffe Marshes in that stretch

a few years ago and was entranced by the wide open skies, the quiet and the sense of space. As he moves across the Medway the scale of brickmaking using the loessic brickearths and Thames Estuary muds and silts along the low-lying coast is noted. I studied a set of 1940 1" OS maps recently and that area around Sittingbourne that he mentions was full of brickworks and industrial rail lines amongst the swathe of paper mills and various industrial enterprises. As ever, with any writer of landscape I like to feel that the traveller has some notion of what they are traversing, the rise and fall of the land, the rocks and soils beneath their feet, the trades and industries that exemplify the neighbourhood and with Martin Cobbett the prodigious walker this is patently obvious.

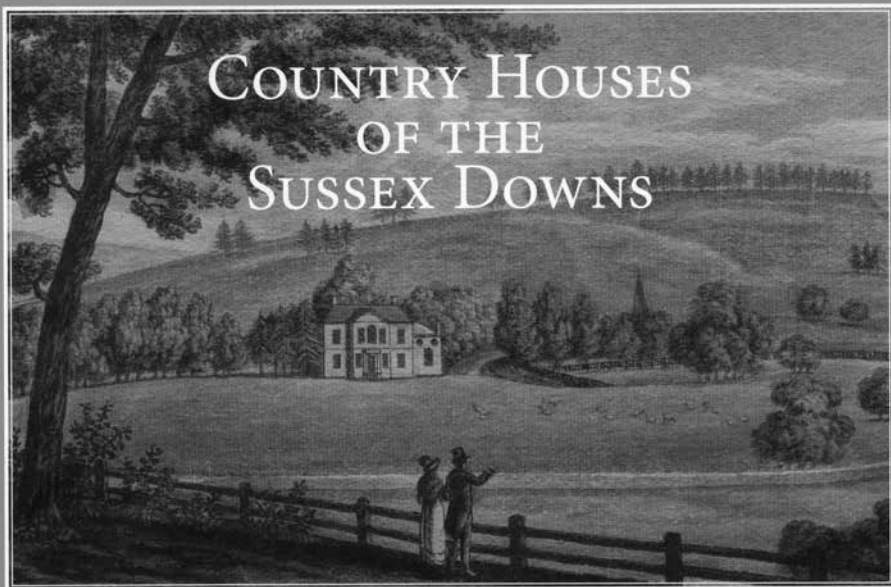


**Book Review by Alan Green**  
***Country Houses of the Sussex Downs***  
**by Sue Berry**

Sue Berry is well known as a prolific writer on architectural and urban history subjects and her work regularly appears in the *Georgian Group Journal*. As well as this Society, Sue is a prominent member of Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS) and for many years organised their highly-successful conferences.

This, her latest book, forms the sixth in the *South Downs Series* published by the SAS and deals with the development of Sussex country estates and their houses along the Downs from the Hampshire border in the west to Beachy Head in the east. This is no mere gazetteer, as the title might at first suggest, but a comprehensive study covering all aspects of the country house including influence, funding, costs and inheritance as well as the all-important architectural styles and details.

No fewer than 31 houses are covered by the book, ranging in date from the Norman castles of Arundel and Lewes to the last ones to be built in the early 20C – the new Cowdray and the rebuilt Stanstead. The four chapters are arranged chronologically and each introduces the new-built houses and chronicles the continuing changes and fortunes of the existing ones. Each chapter includes case studies covering a couple of the houses in greater detail whilst the fourth also brings all the stories up to date, including – sadly – a few demises.



SUE BERRY

There is an appendix providing a detailed case study of the evolution of West Dean House from c1600 to 2020, illustrated with superb axonometric drawings by John Warren, an architect who had worked on the house for 20 years. At the end of the book are details of how to access the houses (or their remains) where this is possible. As one has come to expect from this author here is a book containing meticulous research presented in a most accessible manner, and profusely illustrated with engravings, drawings and photographs, mostly in colour. It is a joy to read and a must for the bookshelf of every lover of Sussex and every country house aficionado. It is available by post from the SAS (see their website) and is stocked by, *inter alia*, Kim's Bookshops in Arundel and Chichester as well as the SAS bookshop in Lewes.

*Country Houses of the Sussex Downs*, Sue Berry, 160 pp softback, 230 x 177,  
Sussex Archaeological Society, Lewes, 2021. ISBN 978-0-904973-32-7. £12.50

**Book review - Geoffrey Mead**  
**Mudlarking; lost and found on the river Thames**  
**Lara Maiklem 2019**  
**Bloomsbury publishing £9.99**

This book was the BBC Radio Four book of the week last year and I found it a great 'listen', but remiss on my part as I only bought it a few weeks ago. Perhaps not at the top of everybody's idea of IA it does actually have a surprising amount of IA content, if only in uncovering the various strata of historic waste goods. I have been teaching a class on Zoom on 'Landscapes of SE England' and was conscious that although I have a substantial Sussex archive, once I cross the county border my library is lacking in works of the Home Counties. It was this that impelled me to start seeking out information further afield than Crawley, Rye and Thorney Island. 'Mudlarking' outlines the journey the author takes along the tidal Thames from Richmond, through the western suburbs into the City, and eastward via Docklands and Greenwich to the estuary, looking at sites in the Kent and Essex marshes before ending at the Yantlet Line [of which I had not previously heard] which marks the eastern boundary of the Thames river authorities, being a line drawn across the estuary between the Hoo Peninsular near Allhallows, Kent and the Crow Stone, Southend on Sea. The action of the river in covering and uncovering deposits, of river transport wash affecting the stability of the banks, and the tidal flows and human activities that are the daily life of the Thames all have a bearing on what can be discovered. Our landscapes in the Weald are after all fluvial deposits of sands and gravels, muds, clays and silts laid down in a similar fashion to the watery workings of the present Thames. As an exemplar of the type of geological information that can be gleaned from 'Mudlarking' is the chapter on the south bank area of London at Vauxhall; here Lara outlines the characteristics and origins of the London Clay, along with the changing route of the post-glacial Thames. This leads on to a passage on the type of fossils, both at that spot and lower down the estuary along with flint and in particular the finds of gunflints [which the index lists as 'gun flights!]. The geology forms a major component of the industrial life of the river as the location of wharves and quays, landing grounds and docks were heavily dependent on the rock and soils below. The various stages of human industrial activity in both importing and exporting, in manufactures and storage, have all left their mark on the riverside landscape.

Lara Maiklem is a long time 'mudlark' and has a licence to gather material, you cannot just scavenge from likely spots along the foreshore; she works in conjunction with the Museum of London and her field of expertise ranging across a multiple of disciplines, brings a learned approach to this pastime. The social history and

economic life of the riverside communities is brought to life by the detritus and ephemeral objects discovered and in studying these groups of objects she brings to life long-lost lifestyles, manufactures, and simple domestic items here have an extended life through these researches.

As with all well-written factual material this book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography and list of useful websites and museums, all accompanied with an extensive index and a cursory glance through the latter, taken alphabetically, throws up a wide range of topics of IA interest- 'Abalone', this is a marine shell from warm climes imported to a shell warehouse at Queenhithe Dock for use in furniture inlay, jewellery, buckles and buttons; a photographic image taken in 1896 shows men in straw boaters and bowler hats wandering amongst bins and boxes filled with shells as big as dinner plates. The rejects and floor sweepings then end up in the river, as Lara puts it - '*to embellish the mud*'. For letter 'B' I chose the Board of Ordnance; the mudlarking here is from the foreshore at the former navy yards at Woolwich, Deptford and at Tower Beach where all manner of musket and cannon balls are discovered, presumably some of this material was sourced from the Sussex Weald, alongside the aforementioned, gunflints are also found but these mainly were from Brandon Suffolk. Glass in a myriad of forms seems to appear everywhere from fish paste and Bovril jars to dark brown beer bottles with thick molten glass blobbed lips, Victorian poison bottles right through to pressed -glass luxury perfume bottles; one stretch of foreshore at Tilbury is known locally as Bottle Beach. Somewhere in the middle of the index comes 'M' and here, way out on the Essex coastal marshes lies the appropriately named Mucking; this has been the repository of London rubbish for well over a century and all manner of historic bottles and jars, crockery and general household detritus can be located there. At the other end of the alphabet under 'W' the now long-gone whaling industry had a base at the Greenland Dock, Rotherhithe where the London whaling fleet was based, and apart from the industrial processes of rendering whale oil down for a variety of purposes, whalebone made a good and strong alternative for use as a wood substitute in boat building yards of which there were many along this stretch of the Thames.

This is partly a travel guide to the Thames immediate foreshore and partly a work of social history and one that appeals to me, as it deals with the less than glamorous areas that most other social histories avoid; as someone whose own research has looked at such unlikely spots as Patcham, Portslade by Sea and suburbia in general I found a kindred spirit in Lara Maiklem!

## Mystery Photo

Do you know your IA?



A slightly different mystery object.  
Yes it's a lamp post, but what is special about it and where is it and why?

~~~~~

### NOTE

*Please let me have your images and memories for the next Newsletter (or two!) It may be it something you pass every day, but the rest of us may be unfamiliar with. Social media , Facebook, YouTube, etc are growing with increasingly interesting groups that I find impossible to keep up with, if you spot one please let me know. I am always looking for examples of our IA heritage.*

## Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society

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Opinions expressed are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society unless specifically stated

Subscribing to the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society gives automatic membership to the Sussex Mills Group

The Sussex Mills Group also produces a *Newsletter* that is sent to members with this *Newsletter*

**See Mining in Sussex page 5**



Brightling Aerial Ropeway  
exiting mine 1988



Brightling Aerial Ropeway  
1988

