

Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society Newsletter



Billingshurst Signal Box, now located at Amberley Museum, see page 8



Newsletter 178

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Editorial

Welcome to *Newsletter 178*, Your committee has been able to plan a full selection of visits, see pages 3 & 4, be sure and book your place soon.

As I was finalising this issue there was news from the final presentation on the recent discovery of the most complete waggonway found to date - The Willington waggonway in Tyneside built 1795. I can only suggest that you search on the internet for this, it does appear to be one of the earliest, if not the first, to be laid out at 'standard' gauge 4 feet 8½ inches and using other innovations. well worth a look. It is time to for planning your spring and summer excursions, please do send me a report and images to share with other members.

Subscriptions are Now Due

Unless You pay by Banker's Standing Order,
Your Subscription became due on the 1st of April 2018.
The rates remain unchanged at £15 for full membership,
and £5 for each additional family membership at the same address.

Cheques payable to SIAS should be sent me
Peter Holtham 12, St Helens Crescent, Hove Sussex BN3 8EP

Early payment would be appreciated.

Forthcoming SIAS Events

Malcolm Dawes

The following SIAS meetings are held
at West Blatchington Mill Barn, Holmes Avenue, Hove BN3 7LF

Friday 11th May Visit to Beehive Terminal and Gatwick Mail Centre

Meet at Beehive at 3:00 pm. for a tour of the building including the rarely seen control room with John King of the Croydon Airport Society. The beehive is the original terminal building at Gatwick which opened in 1936. Parking is limited so car share is advisable The Beehive is well served by local buses (Metrobus) - four routes, all of which also stop at Gatwick South Terminal. The Beehive stop is now called City Place.

Following a stop for refreshments we meet at Gatwick Royal Mail Centre in James Watt Way at 6:30 pm. for a conducted tour where we will see how the mail is sorted and moves around the building.

Booking is essential with John Blackwell 01273 557674
or e-mail johnblackwell@ntlworld.com

Saturday 26th May Cruise the Solent aboard SS Shieldhall

The largest operational steam ship in Europe departing Southampton at 4:00 pm and returning at 6:00 pm. The cost is £10 per person, plus any travelling expenses one may incur, and is kindly subsidised by SIAS member Jim Hawkins.

Travelling details are available on the Society's website. www.sussexias.co.uk.
Numbers are limited so booking is essential with Jim Tel 01273 507973
or e-mail jimandhelen@talktalk.net

Wednesday 27th June 100 years - Devil's Dyke Bombing Testing Range

Start 7:00 pm. meet in car park north of the Devil's Dyke Hotel, 6:45 pm.

A joint walk with Brighton and Hove Archaeological society, led by Martin Snow to commemorate 100 years since the 1918 requisition of the Dyke Estate to enable the building of a Bomb testing facility - Quality Control. We will visit the various remains that are still to be found in the landscape and will be expounded.

Martin has researched in the National Archives to produce the facts of this 'lost' use of a Victorian Pleasure Ground that is still a popular destination for tourists and local walkers; not to mention the updating for use to launch modern hang gliders. If there is time then the artefacts of the Pleasure Grounds that may still be viewed will be visited and explained.

Do come prepared for cool, windy conditions – it is mid summer after all!

If too wet we will conduct a virtual tour in the bar in the hotel.

There is pay and display car parking, so please do consider car sharing.

Saturday 21st July Visit to Bluebell Railway to see the progress of the ‘Atlantic’ Project’, a new build of D. E. Marsh’s 4-4-2 H2 class locomotive *Beachy Head*. Meet at the entrance to Sheffield Park Station at 10:30 am. for a guided tour with David Jones followed by lunch in the station’s *Bessemer Arms* and/or a chance to visit the Museum. In the afternoon we board the 1:30 pm. train (fare chargeable) or proceed by car to Horsted Keynes for a conducted tour of the carriage and wagon works. There will be an admission charges to the stations/museum totalling £5.50 unless travelling by train.

Numbers are limited to 24, first come first served. Please register with John Blackwell Tel 01273 557674 or e-mail johnblackwell@ntlworld.com

Sunday 5th August. Visit to Sir William McAlpine’s Railway and Museum, Fawley Hill near Henley-on-Thames

We have been extremely lucky to have been offered a group visit to this private standard gauge steam railway in the grounds of Sir William’s house near Henley. (Only invited groups can visit the Museum and our last visit was ten years ago). The grounds are full of historic railway structures, saved and transported by his company whilst working on civil engineering contracts across the country. Items such as the massive iron finials from Blackfriars Bridge and the stone carriage entrance arch from Waterloo Station. There are warehouses that contain his huge collection of railway artefacts including the original iconic destination board from Brighton Station.

The Museum is open from 12:00 to 5:00 pm, and is situated at Fawley Hill near Henley, with the free car park in fields a short walking distance from the Museum. Tea and coffee are available; however, it would probably be best to plan to have a picnic in the car park before entering the grounds. The suggested donation is £10 per person. SIAS has been asked to pass on the donations in advance.

Advanced booking will be essential. Initially we will have to restrict bookings to members but we hope that we will have sufficient places to allow one guest per member. To secure your booking please send an email to Malcolm Dawes at malcolm.dawes@btinternet.com. The £10 donation can be given to Malcolm or our treasurer Peter Holtham at an SIAS meeting. Once you have booked a place you can also send a cheque, payable to SIAS, to Peter at the address listed at the end of the Newsletter.

September Hollycombe

Advance date for your diary

Saturday 6th October 7.30 pm. The story of *Crystal Palace* and its transport

The extraordinary story of this once great building told by Ian Gledhill. This is a gem of a talk full of wonderful details and presented by a very entertaining speaker. Not to be missed. Usual venue at West Blatchington Mill barn.

Please see the Mills Newsletter for details of Mills Group activities

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 email to malcolm.dawes@btinternet.com

Thursday 19th April, 8.00 pm. *Farming in Kent in the 40s and 50s*

Life on a 48 acre farm in the Weald of Kent. Wivelsfield Historical Society talk by Peter and Jackie Bates. Visitors £2.50. Wivelsfield Church Hall. Note change of venue. www.wivelsfield-historical-society.co.uk

Sunday 22nd April. *Spring Bus gathering*

Vintage buses with rides around the museum. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Saturday 28th April. *Toy and Rail Collectors Fair*

Horsted Keynes Station, Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Sunday 29th April. *Spring Mechanicals Day*

Stationary engines, tractors and working machinery. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 5th- 6th May. *Magnificent Motors Rally*

Classic cars, motorbikes, buses, commercial vehicles. Seafront, Eastbourne. www.magnificentmotors.co.uk

Sunday 6th May. *Motorcycle Show*

Vintage motorcycles cruising into the museum. On display throughout the day. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Sunday 6th May. *Historic Commercial Vehicles Run, between London and Brighton*

www.hcvs.co.uk

Monday 7th May, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. *Bank Holiday Open Day at the Brede Steam Engines*

Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. 01323 897310. www.southernwater.co.uk/visiting-the-giants-of-brede

Saturday 12th May. *Minis at the Quarry*

Gathering of Minis of all types from the earliest Sevens through to the final Sportspacks. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 12th- 13th May. *National Mills Weekend* See Mills Newsletter for further details

Sunday 13th May. *Commercial Vehicles Day*

Vintage lorries and vans from before and after the Second World War. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Sunday 13th May. *Southern Classic Car Show*

Classic cars on show in the station grounds. Horsted Keynes Station, Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Monday 14th May, 7.30 pm. *Bitten by the transport bug*

Southern Electric Group talk by Brian Boddy. £3 non-members. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick. www.southernelectric.org.uk

Weekend 18th - 20th May. *Branch Line Weekend*

With visiting GWR loco 813. Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800.
www.bluebell-railway.co.uk.

Weekend 19th- 20th May. *Military Vehicle and Home Front Weekend*

Exhibition of military vehicles with re-enactments, dioramas and period trains. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 19th- 20th May. *1940s Weekend*

Kent and East Sussex Railway. Period displays and vehicles. www.kesr.org.uk

Tuesday 22nd May, 7.00 pm. *The history of photography in Eastbourne (1856-1916)*

Eastbourne Local History presentation by David Simkin. The Hub on the Hill, St.Michael and All Angels Church, Willingdon Road, Eastbourne. Visitors £2. 01323485971. www.eastbournehistory.org.uk

Friday 25th to Tuesday 29th May. *Visit of 60163 Tornado*

Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Monday 28th May, 10 am to 4 pm. *Bank Holiday Open Day at the Brede Steam Engines*

Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. 01323 897310. www.southernwater.co.uk/visiting-the-giants-of-brede

Weekend 2nd- 3rd June. *Tinkers Park Steam Rally at Hadlow Down* www.tinkerspark.com

Weekend 9th- 10th June. *Mid Summer Steam Show*

Large scale and full-size working steam engines on display around the Museum. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk.

Monday 11th June, 7.30 pm. *60 years out and about on the Southern*

Southern Electric Group talk by Michael Baker. £3 non-members. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick. www.southernelectric.org.uk

Wednesday 13th June, 7.30 pm. *Restoration of the Mary Rose*

The finding, raising and restoration of the historic ship told by John Morgan, Mary Rose Trust. Chichester Local History Society. £5 non-members. New Park Centre, New Park Road, Chichester. 01243 784915.

Wednesday 20th June, 7.45 pm. *The Selsey Tramway and a Short Surprise*

The story of the railway with something secret to conclude the evening. Sussex Transport Interest Group talk by Joe Whicher. London Road Station, Brighton. 01273 512839. www.sussex-transport.co.uk/stig

Thursday 21st June, 8.00 pm. *Discovering timber-framed buildings and their people*

Illustrated talk showing the carpenters' skilled work and the people who lived in the houses in the 15th and 16th centuries. Based on research into a Chailey hall house. Wivelsfield Historical Society event. Visitors £2.50. Wivelsfield Village Hall. www.wivelsfield-historical-society.co.uk

Weekend 23rd- 24th June. *Emergency Services Weekend*

Fire engines from the Museum's own collection together with visiting fire engines and exhibits. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 23rd- 24th June. *Model Railway Weekend*

Displays at Horsted Keynes and Sheffield Park Stations. Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Sunday 1st July. *Eastbourne Bus Rally* Opportunity for trips on buses all day. www.eastbourne-classicbus.co.uk/page29.html

Saturday 7th July, 10 am to 4 pm. *Open Day at the Brede Steam Engines*

Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. 01323 897310. www.southernwater.co.uk/visiting-the-giants-of-brede

Monday 9th July, 7.30 pm. *A tribute to the Electrics on the Southern*

Southern Electric Group talk by Alan Harvey. £3 non-members. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick. www.southernelectric.org.uk

Friday 13th July, 8.00 pm. *Preston Manor*

The lifestyle of Sir and Lady Thomas-Stanfords who lived in the house in the Edwardian Period. Burgess Hill Local History Society talk by Jackie Marsh-Hobbs. Visitors £3. Cyprus Hall, Cyprus Road, Burgess Hill. www.burgesshillmuseum.co.uk

Weekend of 14th- 15th July. *Railway Gala Weekend*

Steam, diesel, petrol and electric locomotives on display with rides on the trains all weekend. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Saturday 21st July. *Sussex Vintage Model Railway Collectors Annual Exhibition*

Knoyle Hall, Knoyle Road, Brighton. Confirm details at www.sussex-transport.co.uk/svmrc

Saturday 28th July. *Toy and Rail Collectors Fair*

Horsted Keynes Station, Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Sunday 29th July. *Classic Car Summer Show*

Classic motor vehicles and accessories from the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. Up to 200 cars on show. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Sunday 29th July. *Worthing Seafront Bus Rally* - Note: Date not confirmed at time of going to press – need to check web site. www.worthingbusrally.co.uk

Saturday 4th August, 10 am to 4 pm. *Open Day at the Brede Steam Engines*

Steam and working industrial engines. Situated 6 miles from Hastings on A28 to Ashford. 01323 897310. www.southernwater.co.uk/visiting-the-giants-of-brede

Weekend 4th- 5th August. *Tinkers Park Rail Gala*

Model Railway Show and Southdown Bus Event on the 5th at Hadlow Down. www.tinkerspark.com

Saturday 11th August. *Historic Cycles Day*

Bicycles from 1800 to the present day. Procession with riders in period costume. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 11th- 12th August. *Steam through the ages*

Different railway eras recreated throughout the railway. Victorian at Sheffield Park, World War II at Horsted Keynes and Seaside Holidays at Kingscote. Bluebell Railway. 01825 720800. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Monday 13th August 7.30 pm *Archive of Cine Films part 2*

Southern Electric Group presentation by Keith Carter. £3 non-members. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre, Southwick. www.southernelectric.org.uk

Weekend 18th - 19th August. *Vintage and Steam*

Steam engines on display and working around the museum grounds. Other displays include, commercial vehicles, military vehicles, working narrow gauge railway, model boats, classic cars and traditional vintage fairground. Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. Singleton, Chichester. www.wealddown.co.uk

Sunday 19th August. *Petrol Locos Day*.

Working petrol locos including World War I Simplex and Wickham sets. Amberley Museum. 01798 831370. www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

Weekend 25th- 27th August. *Hellingly Festival of Transport*

www.ehvc.biz

Advance Notice of AIA conference

31st August to 4th September.

This year's conference will be held in Nottingham University
<https://industrial-archaeology.org/conferences/annual-conference/>

Do please check details of events 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.*

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**Billingshurst Signal Box**

**John Blackwell**

The box for the London Brighton and South Coast Railway is recorded as being erected in 1876 but is of the earlier Saxby & Farmer (S&F) Type 1 constructed between 1857 and 1868 so it is probable that the box was re-used from an earlier unknown site. In its original form the base would have been open with the supporting posts showing and the signal posts projecting through the roof (known as a stilts box). Before decommissioning and removal to Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre in 2014 it was the oldest working signal box with original interlocking frame on the British system and is the only remaining example of an S&F type 1 box. Following restoration at Amberley the box was 'opened' together with the newly constructed engine shed on Sunday March 25<sup>th</sup>. The lever frame dating from 1876, signalling levers, block instruments and the track diagram were also saved and are now part of the new exhibit.



## **Smeaton's Harbour**

### **Ron Martin**

A recent television programme in the series *Britain at Low Tide* on Channel 4 described the abortive attempt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to provide a deep water harbour for Rye. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Rye was a very important port in East Sussex, following the demise of Old Winchelsea in a big gale of 1280. It had always suffered from the twofold problems of silt being brought down by the rivers and long shore drift carrying shingle along the shore line.

An approach was made to an Italian engineer in 1593 who recommended a new cut from Rye running south-west towards what is now Winchelsea Beach. This idea was abandoned as being too expensive but the concept was resurrected at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and an Act of Parliament was passed in 1723 authorising the work to be carried out. Major civil engineering works were always very time consuming, with legal matters, design details, getting financial backing and tenders for costs to be obtained. The work proceeded slowly and by the 1750s work had been completed canalising a 1½ mile stretch of the Brede River.

Presumably the promoters of scheme were unsatisfied with progress and they consulted John Smeaton the eminent engineer who is considered to be the father of civil engineering in Britain. He commissioned a survey which shows the works already done and the extent of work still to be carried out. This shows the canal running southwards from the west end of the straightened Brede river and a cut to the north of Rye connecting the River Brede to the River Rother. This is something that has always puzzled me. The explanation was that Smeaton, knowing the problem of harbour getting clogged with shingle proposed that the water from the three rivers, the Rother, Tillingham and Brede be combined and run out through the new harbour to keep it clear. This sounds an admirable idea but how to reverse the flow of the Brede was not explained and it was never carried out. The result was that in 1777, when the work was complete, within six weeks the harbour became unusable. Unfortunately for Smeaton his name was always associated with this disastrous scheme, even though he was not entirely to blame. One shudders to think how much money was lost by investors. The only use part of this was put to use was that the canalised part of the River Brede was incorporated in the Royal Military Canal of 1805 but even that was a white elephant and never tested in action.

## **October Evening Meeting**

### **Hearth and Home. Aspects of Sussex and its Building Materials with Dr Geoffrey Mead**

#### **Report by John Blackwell**

A welcome return of SIAS member and geographer Geoffrey Mead opened the Winter Lecture Programme. The presentation made plentiful use of geological maps and references to that unique resource '*An Account of the Building Materials used in the Building of Stanmer House 1722-1727*'<sup>1</sup>.

Climate change in the past, created the building materials we use today, forming three distinct geological bands running from west to east of the county. The Weald, with deposits of stone, sand and clay was originally heavily forested. The chalk Downs contain flints, for building, in the upper layers but where these are not present in the lower levels at the foot of the scarp, this chalk was used for limeburning and cement production, as illustrated by the Ouse valley.

The coastal plain is some 10 miles wide south of Chichester before narrowing and ending at Brighton. This brick earth produced, when fired, the buff coloured bricks used for the grand houses of Brighton and Hove. At Stanmer House 330,000 bricks were purchased from 10 different Brighton brickyards. Geoffrey illustrated his talk with fine examples of the county's buildings. Timber framed houses, noting that the half timbering was not needed for strength but showed off the wealth of the owner. Brick built houses, showed the many different hues of red the different beds of Wealden clay could produce. Roofing materials included thatch, a by-product of farming, clay tiles, finials and decorative terracotta ware.

Horsham Stone, a sandstone quarried near Slindon, provided the roofing material for the Priest House at West Hoathly which has not needed a new roof since 1540 and is supported by colossal timbers; naturally these had been viewed by Geoffrey. Warminghurst church provided an example of winkle stone, a limestone containing fossilised winkle.

No talk on Sussex building materials would be complete without an example of mathematical tiles and rather than the more usual glazed black colour seen in Brighton an unglazed example in High Street Seaford showed a rich red shade. Houses and cottages built of flint abound in the county and examples were shown as well as galletting, chips of flint inserted into the mortar used in high quality construction.

As has come to be expected from Geoffrey; an erudite presentation but with less of his always amusing anecdotes than normal.

<sup>1</sup> Available for reference at The Keep ACC 4600/7

## **January Evening Meeting**

### **By Train to Chichester with Alan Green**

#### **Report by Mike Slamo**

A good turnout heralded the first talk of 2018 for a welcome return by our own member, Alan Green, whose talk on Chichester was eagerly awaited.

Alan started by explaining the line to Chichester was opened on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1846, from Ford, being an extension of the line from Brighton, firstly to Shoreham, opened 12<sup>th</sup> May 1840 and then extended to Worthing on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1845, and then in stages to Chichester, arriving on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1846. The next section, from Chichester to Havant was opened on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1847, and by June of that year, Chichester had through train facilities from Brighton to Portsmouth.

Throughout the talk, illustrations were shown from the time, right through to modern day shots, showing how much things have changed over the years. It is surprising what material is still available from those early times, and very interesting to compare with the current state, where stations still exist, and see what has happened where the lines have long since gone.

The next development saw the construction of a line north from Chichester, to Midhurst, which place was reached on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1881, connecting with the line from Petersfield to Midhurst (LSWR) and Midhurst to Pulborough (LB&SCR), opened in 1864 and 1866 respectively. The line closed in stages, the last section to go being that from Lavant, which was latterly used for freight, before finally closing in the 1990s. This brought memories flooding to quite a few in the audience.

No talk on railway history is ever complete (seemingly) without reference to one Colonel H. F. Stevens, and this was no exception. Using his usual “budget on a string” principle, he constructed a light railway from Chichester to Selsey. It would appear that much ridicule was heaped upon the line in postcard form at the time of the light railway’s running and some examples were shown, much to everyone’s amusement. The line closed at an early stage, and only one artefact appears to remain to this day, an abutment to a bridge, at Hunston, whose restoration has recently been completed. It should be said that at the time when all these lines were operating, Chichester was a crossroads with through traffic to all kinds of places. In recent times, Malvern Wells was mentioned in addition to such delightful outposts as Pembroke Dock, Milford Haven, and, of course, in steam days, the West of England was a favoured destination of through trains.

One other line was mentioned, being the short branch from Barnham Junction to Bognor Regis, which caused much mirth when it was suggested that one of the reasons for its continued success was not that holiday makers wanted to go there, as much as all the people who wanted to leave!

A very entertaining evening, enjoyed by all who attended, and I certainly found it fascinating, so thank you Alan, very much indeed.

## February Film Night

### Report by Malcolm Dawes

Our midwinter film show evening, held on a cold night in February, aptly started with old and new films of how heavy snow could affect railway travel. First of all, we had a recent scene on a station in the USA where a snow plough was fast approaching the station, clearing very deep snow. A young woman standing on the edge of the platform was filming the approaching train with her iPhone. Today people tend to film everything on their phones and are oblivious of what is going on around them. She did not seem to comprehend what was going to overcome her – and it certainly did, as tons of snow shot across the platform and the last we saw of our intrepid photographer was a blur of a body carried away by the torrents of snow. We continued with the snow theme but from of a very different era. The rescue of a steam engine in 1955 stuck in a drift at Bleath Gill in the Pennines. The engine was almost buried under snow drifts but rescue was on the way with steam engines pushing a snow plough and help from a group of railway men dressed in the usual jackets, waistcoat and caps, each with a shovel. The management who at least had coats to protect themselves from the cold, decided that a way to get the snow plough through the drift was to cut thin slices through the snow – these instructions included a 1950s joke about thin slices of cake very similar to that served by his mother-in-law. But the slices worked and the snow plough reached the stranded locomotive. Not the end of the problem though as the engine was frozen solid. A wonderful solution to this was to wrap paraffin soaked sackcloth around the pistons and driving wheels and to set it on fire; a burning inferno but an instant solution, proof provided by shots of the locomotive being pulled away by the rescue train. No evidence of a risk statement before setting fire to the stranded engine.



The first half of the evening continued with double decker trains on the Southern, tin tabernacles, an aerial ropeway dumping coal off the cliffs of Dover, and a steam railway engine running on a monorail filmed at Blaenau Ffestiniog. (This extraordinary system was under threat and has now been relocated at Tanat Valley Light Railway, Oswestry). More gems included the final run of the Brighton Belle, restoration of Jill Mill and Brighton Sewers which included a piece from our local celebrity Geoffrey Mead who was in the audience and admitted that it was the first time he had seen the film.

After the break the entertainment continued with a video about a journey to Doleham the least used station in East Sussex. Other films included Every's Lewes Foundry, Volk's Railway and the Lynton and Lynmouth funicular cliff railway where the passenger cabin was replaced by a Triumph Herald Convertible, part of a publicity event. One extraordinary film showed a demolition of a tall brick industrial chimney that did not go to plan. An excavator working at the base of the chimney obviously took a too large section of brickwork away causing the chimney to fall vertically downwards. The excavator was surrounded and covered by fallen bricks but somehow the driver just walked away. Not exactly a man with the skill of Fred Dibnah but unbelievably lucky. The evening concluded with some nostalgic bus films. Some classic Southdown Buses from the 1960s travelling around Worthing and Brighton and the massive celebrations in Hastings on the first day of trolleybus running, with huge volumes of bunting, and a very determined bus inspector in a bowler hat making sure the line of trolleybuses was kept in order.

Another entertaining evening from our resident expert on locating obscure films, Martin Snow.



## Correspondence

### Lace House Black Cat

I read, with interest, the report extracted from the *Brighton Argus*, entitled 'Brighton builders rescue mysterious 91 year old black cat', which appears in SIAS Newsletter No. 177 (January 2018). However I fear that one of the theories as to its significance, advanced by 'some local historians', is fanciful and suggests that the research of those local historians leaves something to be desired. If the black cat appeared on the façade of Lace House in 1926, it certainly was not 'one year after Newmans & Co. opened their Jaguar showroom in the building'. In 1925, the company eventually to become Jaguar Cars was, and for the previous three years had been known as Swallow Sidecars. It changed its name to S.S. Cars in 1934 and the following year used *Jaguar* as a model name for the first time. Not until 1945 did the company assume the name Jaguar Cars. It may have been that in 1925 Newmans & Co. had a showman at Lace House displaying the products of Swallow Sidecars but it certainly wasn't a Jaguar showroom and, if so, it could not have associated the model black cat on the façade of its building with the later trademark of Jaguar Cars. Thus perhaps it's fortunate that the *Argus* dismissed the local historians' theory and went with George Taylor's 'seagull frightener' theory instead. But then, as so often is the case with the media, why let the facts get in the way of a good story!

Yours sincerely

**Michael Davis**

## The Original Clean Green Machine

Mick Hamer

Brighton's first electric bus arrived on Easter Sunday in 1908, swooping downhill to the seafront to be met by a throng of international journalists and other dignitaries who had just enjoyed a lavish lunch at the Hotel Metropole.

The lunch was hosted by the Electric Vehicle Company, of West Norwood, the firm that made the electric buses, which were known as Electrobuses. The rest of that Sunday afternoon was spent taking the guests on a jaunt along the seafront in the silent and fume-free Electrobuses and displaying its virtues to the local townsfolk.

It was the beginning of a substantial operation of electric buses in Brighton and Hove. At its peak, in the years immediately before the outbreak of the First World War the twin towns had a fleet of 12 Electrobuses running on a route from Castle Square, by the Royal Pavilion, and along Western Road into Hove. This was then the largest fleet of electric buses in the world, a record that would not be equalled until the mid-1990s, when the American city of Chattanooga also built up a fleet of a dozen electric buses.



An Electrobus outside Hove Town Hall surrounded by sailors returning to their ships after attending a reception at the town hall, on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1914 (*Step Back in Time*)

Today, the only remaining relic of the Electrobus enterprise is a motor repair shop in Montague Place, Brighton. This was purpose built to house a fleet of electrobuses operated by the local bus company, the Brighton, Hove and Preston United. It was made a Grade II listed building in 2015 because of its historical significance.

The electrobus first made its debut on the streets of London, when the London Electrobus Company began running a service from Victoria Station to Liverpool Street in July 1907. The Electrobuses were popular with the travelling public. They



were not only quiet and fume-free but they were also very reliable, unlike the embryonic motor bus. At any one time about a quarter of the petrol buses in London were off the road for repairs.

The Electrobus's future seemed to be bright. In September 1908 Douglas Fox, a leading consulting engineer of his day, told the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science



An Electrobus outside the Bank of England, taken in 1908

that the Electrobus “was probably a more formidable rival than the petrol omnibus, not only to the horse omnibus but also to the tramway.”

However, the progress of the Electrobus in London had been hamstrung by the chicanery of the company behind it. When the London Electrobus Company first issued its shares in April 1906 it claimed to have a patent giving it a monopoly on the Electrobus. The claim was false and a series of court actions forced the company to refund investors who had bought its shares. Not surprisingly, the company's reputation was irreparably damaged.

The introduction of new transport technology in Brighton and Hove had been problematic. Brighton Corporation had begun running electric trams towards the end of 1901. But the genteel inhabitants of Hove were steadfastly opposed to allowing electric trams to run in their streets.

In 1903 the local bus company, known as the United, introduced its first motor buses. The early motor buses were dirty and extremely noisy. They were widely loathed throughout the twin towns and especially by ratepayers along Western Road, the main thoroughfare linking the two towns.

In November 1907, Hove Borough Council received a petition from 545 local residents protesting about the deafening din and foul smell of these mechanical monsters. “They are not only detrimental to the welfare and prosperity of this beautiful town, but are also calculated to drive away many of the residents and visitors,” said the petitioners.

A couple of weeks later Brighton received a similar petition complaining about the “dangerous speed, enormous weight, unbearable noise [and] unpleasant smells” of

the motor buses. Both councils began to put pressure on the bus company to clean up its act. As a result the United placed an order for a fleet of Electrobus with the Electric Vehicle Company.

The delivery of first Electrobus in 1908 was followed by three more electrobuses in 1909. "The silence of these buses was much appreciated by the public," said Frank Smith, the secretary of the United.

Under continuing pressure from the two councils and disgruntled local residents the United laid plans to expand its Electrobus operations.

At first sight the Electrobus didn't look very different to a contemporary petrol bus. Its body was the standard double-deck body of the day, seating 34 passengers, 16 inside and 18 on top. The most obvious difference was the lack of a long bonnet housing the engine at the front of the bus. The Electrobus just had a simple panel in front of the driver.

The problem with all battery vehicles, even today, is that their range is limited. Pound for pound, petrol packs far more power than any battery. The Brighton Electrobus had batteries made by the Tudor Accumulator Company. Each battery weighed 30 cwt, or 1½ tons. However, even this weight only gave the Electrobus a range of around 32 to 36 miles on a single charge.

In the capital the London Electrobus Company had a slick system for getting round this problem: it swapped the exhausted batteries for fresh ones halfway through the day. So after the morning shift, the Electrobus returned to their garage near Victoria station to change batteries, a process that took just three minutes.

The United's main garage in Conway Street was largely geared up to the demands of maintaining the fleet of motor buses. To make full use of the Electrobus the company needed a purpose-built garage.

So in October 1908 it leased a plot of land in Montague Place from Brighton Borough Council and started to build a garage big enough to service 16 Electrobus. The garage opened in June 1909. After finishing the morning shift, the Electrobus discharged their passengers in Castle Square and nipped up the road into Kemp Town and the Montague Place garage. There they swapped their batteries, and returned to Castle Square for the afternoon shift.

At the beginning of January 1910 the London Electrobus Company went broke. One of the prime movers behind the company was Dr Edward Ernest Lehwess, a German lawyer, whose name had been linked to several other fraudulent enterprises. Lehwess not only controlled the London Electrobus Company but also the Electric Vehicle Company, which he treated as his private piggy bank.

Lehwess bought eight of the electrobuses for the knock-down price of £800 -- a new Electrobus cost £700. He sold them on to the Electric Vehicle Company, which



The old electrobus garage in Montague Place, Brighton (*Mike Harmer*)

in turn sold them to the United for £3,411 - a profit of 325 per cent. Lehwess and his fellow fraudsters pocketed this money - the creditors of the London Electrobus Company didn't see a penny.

The United, which was very much the innocent party in all this skulduggery, now had a fleet of 12 Electrobus, plus five petrol-electric hybrids, in addition to its fleet of 25 motor buses.

Public complaints about motor buses continued unabated and in 1913 Hove Borough Council asked the Brighton chief constable to investigate. His conclusion was unequivocal. Over a three-year period there had been more than 150 complaints about motor buses, but only a dozen complaints about Electrobus.

The United scrapped its hybrid buses before the outbreak of war but kept the electrobus running. In 1916 Thomas Tilling, a transport group that ran buses and parcels vans all over the country, took over the United. Tilling's policy was to run hybrid buses, similar to the ones the United had scrapped. It kept running the electrobus, largely because of wartime petrol shortages.

In April 1917 the electrobus finally stopped running. Brighton councillors wanted to know what had happened to their quiet buses. Tilling answered in May. The Electric Vehicle Company hadn't made any parts for seven years or so and a shortage of spares had meant that the Electrobus were no longer roadworthy.

Mick Hamer is the author of *A Most Deliberate Swindle: how Edwardian Fraudsters pulled the plug on the electric bus and left our cities gasping for breath*, Red Door, 2017.

## **“Allen West’s Wartime Secrets Revealed”**

### **William ‘Pincher’ Martin**

During my time at Allen West in the 1950s I obtained a copy of a pamphlet which had been issued to staff following World War II (originally it was an article in the Brighton and Hove Herald newspaper of 29 September 1945). Unfortunately little detail is reported; presumably wartime restrictions were still in place. The original is somewhat wordy and I have therefore abridged it.

The story of that great engineering triumph ‘Mulberry’ the pre-fabricated harbours<sup>1</sup> towed across the Channel to give shelter to our little ships immediately after D-day-has already been told. What has not so far been told is that those pier heads contained important electrical machinery manufactured secretly in Brighton nor has it been told that Brighton engineering skill has been closely concerned in the construction of control gear for the famous oil line, ‘Operation Pluto’; for the fog dispersal scheme known as ‘Fido’; in the swift defeat of the magnetic mine menace; and in the making of essential machinery for plant which has been producing the “miracle drug”, ‘penicillin’.

Behind carefully guarded doors and screened windows ‘hush-hush’ work of the highest importance was still going on, but in the main machine and assembly shops may be seen a whole variety of output, including huge blocks of shining electrical control plant, with plate names and directions etched in Russian, all ready for export direct to our Soviet Allies.

The Allen West workshops had, during the war, produced a remarkable variety of Service equipment, such as that needed for the electrical firing of tank cannon, aero engine testing, the production of ‘jerrycans’ (large petrol containers which helped so greatly in the advance from EI Alamein), cold storage plants, and air-sea rescue equipment. For the Admiralty alone over 100,000 starters, controllers and resistances for electric motors and 1,250,000 pattern articles of various types have been supplied during the war years.

When the Germans brought into operation as one of their ‘secret weapons’ the magnetic mine, a scheme for the protection of the Fleet against these mines was soon developed by Admiralty engineers, and the company was asked to undertake the manufacture of special control gear for the purpose. Development work was involved but designs were put in hand immediately and, in view of the extreme urgency, production was commenced before the designs were complete. The works were so full at the time that lavatories had to be used as stores for parts of the equipments as they were made! This equipment was supplied to over 2,000 British and Allied vessels. A large number of oscillators with control gear and controllers for spring hammers for dealing with acoustic mines were also supplied. ‘Midget’ submarines and ‘human torpedoes’ which have figured in a number of

daring naval exploits had essential parts of their mechanism made in Brighton, and in an official letter to the company it was stated: "I have not heard of a single failure of the mechanism when on operations, which is satisfactory," (*faint praise WM*) "and I am very grateful for your help and suggestions in making the device a success".

This self-contained Radar trailer will be exhibited to the public in operation on the Sea Front east of the Palace Pier during Brighton's Victory Thanksgiving Week. Equipment of this design (manufactured at Allen West's factory at East Moulsecombe) was instrumental in overcoming the menace of 'tip-and-run' raiders. Long range detection gave timely warning to RAF Fighter Command and made it possible for the enemy to be intercepted many miles from the coast.



At the outbreak of war the company employed about 2,000 hands covering staff and works, and they were the 'backbone' in the strenuous years that followed. During the war the numbers went up to 4,500, the increase being largely women employees, many of them part-time. No names of members of the Allen West organization have been mentioned because, as a member of the firm explained -- "It is difficult to apportion credit among so large a number. Many will recognize with pardonable pride, and perhaps realize, for the first time, the importance of the work on which they were engaged; but there are also many, who while not being directly connected with this work, were essential in the organization and should take equal pride in its achievements, but all realize that whatever extremes they went to in doing their duty, and more than their duty, it was not comparable with what was being done by members of the fighting services who were using the apparatus produced."

<sup>1</sup> see [www.relaysystem.co.uk/1944\\_Pagham\\_at\\_War.pdf](http://www.relaysystem.co.uk/1944_Pagham_at_War.pdf) - for an account of Pagham and Selsey's involvement.

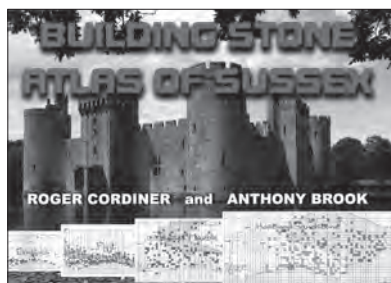


## **Building Stones Atlas of Sussex**

### **Roger Cordiner & Anthony Brook - 2017**

#### **Book Review by Geoffrey Mead**

There you go...you wait forever for a detailed book on Sussex building materials ...and two come together! Only two years ago we had a superb volume on the West Sussex building stones by Roger Birch and Roger Cordiner and now we have one to cover the whole county by two local authors; Roger Cordiner and Tony Brook. Published in A4 landscape format, one that favours the shape of Sussex, this volume is a compendium of all the information needed on the geology and use of the Sussex building stones.



The atlas is organised in geological sequence from the Lower Cretaceous to the Quaternary, followed by imports from other British sources. Imported European stones are also included and this is an important inclusion as the long coastline and its relative proximity to France in particular, has seen many of the coastal communities utilising such important materials as Caen Stone, with examples at Marlipins at Shoreham [the first illustration] and Firle Place.

The atlas format is easy to follow with the main text being on the left page of the pair and the Sussex map, divided into 2 kilometre squares on the right. The source areas are indicated as a coloured geological outcrop, the places where the rock is seen as coloured squares. Some sections are given more detail as seen in the pages devoted to the Hythe Beds quarries.

There are copious illustrations which have reproduced in a clear presentation, some indicate specific features of the building materials, other wider shots show entire structures and some, even wider, show outcrops and quarries. Where appropriate specific localities are added, as for the Horsham Stone quarries.

A wide ranging appendix gives good glossaries of architectural and building terms, basic geology terms and a comprehensive bibliography and index.

This is a **MUST** for anyone interested in our local geology and examples of its economic usages. A well-researched and well written account presented in a highly accessible format of use to both professionals and general interest readers.



## Update on Dumpman Films for 2018

Continuing the ten year anniversary theme of the last few years, some titles have again come of age. To celebrate their longevity, they will be available at reduced prices for the rest of this year:

- |                                                |         |    |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|----|
| • Uckfield to Lewes track bed explored         | 3 x dvd | £9 |
| • The disused railway of Lyminster             | 1 x dvd | £5 |
| • Midhurst to Chichester track bed explored    | 2 x dvd | £9 |
| • Midhurst to Pulborough track bed explored    | 2 x dvd | £8 |
| • Baystone bridge to Christ's Hospital station | 1 x dvd | £5 |
| • Hardham canal tunnel illuminated             | 1 x dvd | £4 |
| • Demolition of the Pullman works, Brighton    | 1 x dvd | £4 |

Full detailed descriptions of these titles can be found on the website: [www.dumpman.co.uk](http://www.dumpman.co.uk) in the catalogue pages. All anniversary offer prices from last year are also staying the same, for now. Titles are available on ebay or by emailing directly with your requests (preferred).

For those of you who enjoyed the Dumpman/Bald Explorer collaborations (available on Youtube), there are expected to be more of these shortly.

Enter "Dumpman Bald Explorer" on Youtube to see the five shorts completed so far.

Watch this space for details of new Dumpman titles being cooked up later in 2018, with the much anticipated return of the Raleigh Chopper, doubtlessly clattering uninvited through someone's back garden and hopefully disappearing speedily before being apprehended.

*Do please support Chris in this venture, he has kindly allowed me to use clips on the February Film Nite (Ed.)*

***Please keep you eyes open for unusual features on your travels, or it may be something you pass every day, but the rest of us are unfamiliar with. I am always looking for examples of our IA heritage. If possible, let me have a picture, either for this feature or to provide inspiration for a future article(s).***

## Mystery Photo

Do you know your IA?



No brownie points for reading the subject of this months 'mystery', but this postcard is from 1905. So where was the exchange sited and until when? Where was it then moved to ? Brighton was one of only 60 towns to take up licences to run local telephone services, later the monopoly of the GPO was to take them all over except for Kingston-on-Hull, which continues today independent of BT.

*(Thanks to Tony Mckendrick-Warden for providing the image from his collection)*

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### Correction to SIH 47 - from Paul Snelling

Further to my article in SIH 47 on Southdown Bus Garages and other premises in Sussex. I was made aware that the picture numbered SEC 307 had the wrong caption. Upon investigation I found that in the picture library there were two pictures numbered 307 and I picked the wrong one. - See Back Cover for images.

**Top:** Two for the price of one. The building nearest the camera was 5, Steine Street. Originally a house, in 1915 part of the building was let to Southdown. Eventually they took over the whole building in 1917 and it remained the Head Office until new offices in Freshfield Road opened in 1964. Beyond is the exit from the Manchester Street coach station, opened in 1931.

**Bottom:** Pool Valley was the centre for Southdown bus operations in Brighton. It was established by Brighton Borough Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1929. Stagecoach Southdown vacated Pool Valley on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2010 when the Coastliner 700, the only bus service then using the site, took up a stand in Old Steine. Pool Valley then became a coach station, a role it still performs to this day with only National Express and Crewflyer using it. Brighton Corporation never used Pool Valley for their bus services although pictures exist of their vehicles laying over in the yard. The photograph is undated but the newest vehicle in shot is the single decker on the right hand side which dates from 1962.

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See page 22 for captions

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