

Yate Heritage Newsletter

Autumn 2008



Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Yate Heritage Newsletter. As I write, I am fully aware of the unstinting work of the various history groups and individual historians, who continue to produce good historic research to bequeath to future generations.

Butcher, Baker, Candle Maker has recently been produced in book and CD formats by the **Sodbury Mapping Group** section of the **Sodbury Vale Family History Group**. This provides a unique and detailed analysis of the history of Sodbury's town buildings and inhabitants from 1795. A fantastic achievement priced at - **CD £8; book from £15**.

Contact **01454 313541** for more information.

Harry Lane continues to do justice to our local history. With an inexhaustible appetite for research, **Harry** is delving into **Squire Hooper** and the history of **Stanshawes Court**. It is hoped that a publication on this will be out by 2009.

The **South Glos Mines Research Group** also continues to impress. See news of their dig at **Yate No 2** later in this newsletter.

Our main feature however, is a return to the famous **Parnalls** firm. Since the last exhibition on **Parnalls** in 2002, we have unearthed a lot more material and are now able to tell a wider story of the company.

Parnalls of Yate & Bristol *by Lorna Brooks*

Despite its long and important contribution to the **Yate** area, the name of **Parnall** is barely known to most young people and newcomers to the area. Yet, at sometime, everything from kettles to gun turrets, and alarm clocks to whole aircraft were made at the site on **Station Road**. The exhibition, **The Parnall Story**, tells not only the story of the **Parnall** firm in **Yate** and **Bristol**, but also the history of the **Yate** site and the people who worked there.

Shops and Aeroplanes

Parnalls started life in the early 19th century as shop fitters and cabinet makers. Their long experience in the woodworking industry led to the company's recruitment to build aeroplanes for the Air Ministry during World War I



G-AAIN-12 (2)

Parnalls continued their successful involvement in the aircraft industry. During World War II, their gun turrets could be seen on two-thirds of bombers. But this success came at a price - the factory received two direct hits in the early part of 1941 and 53 workers lost their lives.

Domestic Appliances

Peacetime brought with it new industries and new demands. **Parnalls** took advantage of these new markets by turning to domestic goods. It produced an amazing array of products including:- vacuum cleaners, alarm clocks, clothes presses, cookers, washing machines and from the 1950s, tumble dryers. **Parnalls** remained an important engineering and metalworking company! The factory had contracts to make fuel pumps for jet engines and parts for compressors, amongst a myriad of other products for different companies.

A Second Family The factory was as well known for its social calendar as it was for its production line.



Parnalls Annual Dance 1954 (J Blacker)

The firm put on many events including dances, sing-a-longs, children's parties and much more.

For many workers, **Parnalls** was like a second family and many spent their entire working life there.

In 1958, **Parnall** merged with the **Radiation Group** and the factory became known as **Jacksons**. Like Parnalls, the **Jackson** era came and went, and the factory acquired many new names and owners before becoming **Indesit**, as it is known today.

The workforce has greatly diminished over the years, and various parts of the site have been sold for land. The aircraft are long gone now, but if you know where to look, parts of the original factory still stand to remind **Yate** of its rich industrial past.

Yate No 2 Colliery

SGMRG Site Investigations Update

by Steve Grudgings (Mines Research Group Chair)

Background to the Shaft Collapse

Yate No 2 Colliery shaft collapsed in March this year. This is the first such collapse in our local area that I know of and is a timely reminder of the dangers of having a mining hobby! Fortunately the collapse (which lies in private woodland) was promptly reported and equally promptly securely fenced off by the Coal Authority.

The collapse was reported to us by local member **Jeff Baker** who lives nearby, and with **Jeff** and **David Hardwick's** support, we approached **Mrs Rodden**, the land owner, for permission to do some preliminary archaeological investigations outside the fenced area.

The general approach that the Coal Authority takes to dealing with shaft collapses is two-fold, firstly they fill it with inert materials (normally graded limestone or similar) and then take the shaft area down to bedrock and put a steel reinforced concrete capping in place. The reason for this **double secure** method is that shaft filling can subside or even collapse over time and that shaft caps are often breached from the side. If this approach is taken at Yate No 2, then many of the features around the shaft area will be destroyed and our initial investigations are intended to identify the nature and extent of these.

What we know already

Before reporting on the investigations, I wanted to give a brief synopsis of what we know about **Yate No 2**.

- Both **Yate No 1** (on the corner of Broad Lane) and **Yate No 2 Collieries** were equipped with **Newcomen Pumping Engines**.
- These engines would have been installed to dewater the seams to rise (ie to the east) and whilst we have no dates, a timing of 1810-1820 is probable
- There was a narrow gauge railway to take the coal from **Yate no 2** to **Yate no 1** where it was screened and sent out on the main line railway.
- There were many other smaller pits nearby, the only one that survived to be photographed by me was the **Little Vein Pit**
- The Shafts are around 300 yards deep



Dramway Engine Common

David Hardwick and others have amassed lots more materials relating to Coal Mining in **Yate** and these will be published in due course.

The site today

The site is private in **hillocky woodland** and the **Mines Research Group** had done some very basic clearance work in 2003. At that time the engine beds for the winder with holding down bolts and foundations were visible. The only other feature noted was a brick circle believed to be a chimney base, either for boilers or a ventilation furnace. This is around 2 yards from where the shaft collapsed, so the ventilation theory is more likely!

From the fence, it is possible to see about 20 feet down the shaft and other than the remains of the shaft wall there is not much to see. Our investigations were centred in the raised area surrounding the shaft as this was the area we expected to be most damaged by the shaft capping preparation work and because it is not so threatened the area around the engine beds has not had much attention.

Findings to date

The remains will be investigated, measured and photographed as long as time permits. Interpretation is still underway but it is now clear that most of the **rubble** is wall tops and includes:-

- A 3 feet thick stone wall, roughly halfway between the engines and the shaft (possibly a heapstead wall?)
- Extension of this wall at either end (retaining wall?)
- A stone wall, hidden behind spoil and leaves alongside the path leading to the shaft (retaining wall beside the railway?)
- Quite extensive runs of brickwork at two points to the west of the site (best theory so far is headgear supports)
- A curved run of brickwork leading towards the **furnace base**

What happens next?

The Coal Authority were due to do an Environmental survey on 27th June, to assess impact of their work programme on wildlife, this will then better inform the timings of their next phase of work. We have 2 more working parties scheduled in July and as part of this we need to make clear our own plans and intentions for the site ahead of the Shaft Capping work.

We obviously intend to be present when the Coal Authorities contractor starts work, but this is expected to proceed faster than our recording capabilities allow and so we need to ensure we can pre-empt this as much as possible.

Frog Lane Colliery Project

The **Mines Research Group** and **Yate Heritage Centre** have now embarked on a major exhibition and book project for 2009 marking the anniversary of the closure of **Frog Lane Colliery** in 1949.



Miners at Frog Lane Pit c1907

Frog Lane was the last mine in the area to close.

This will be a perfect opportunity to utilise both the extensive research undertaken by the mines research group and also the recent oral history, which has prompted a lot of new history and brought a lot of unheard material into the public domain.

Friends trip to Wickwar Brewery

by Jan Murley

Early on a fine September evening last year, we made our way to **Wickwar** for a tour of the **Brewery**. We were welcomed in the **Arnolds Cooperage Building** with a glass of ale (or fruit juice) and given a brief talk on the history of the brewery and shown a video of the beer making process.

Wickwar Brewery started in 1990 when master brewer **Ray Penny** opened up his own brewery on the site of an old Coopers Shop. It later expanded into the old brewery building across the road which was purposely built in 1860 for **Arnold Perrett & Co's Brewery**. The building was on a natural spring and had a water wheel that not only supplied power for the brewery but also provided power for streetlights, thereby making **Wickwar** one of the first villages in the country to have electric streetlights. The

current occupants have very sympathetically restored the building to much of its original condition and we were able to see the beer making process at every stage right through to the finished product stored in casks in the basement.

At the end of the tour we sampled yet more of this company's award winning ale before returning to Yate. As we left to board our coach we were all given a **Wickwar Brewery** beer glass as a souvenir of our visit, which we all agreed had been a very interesting and extremely enjoyable occasion.



Socialising in style at Wickwar Brewery



Inspecting the machinery



Touring the cellars at Wickwar

The Heritage Volunteer *By Mike Garrett*

I started working for the **Heritage Centre** as a volunteer in February 2007 after retiring from work at the **University of the West of England**.

It seemed a golden opportunity to satisfy my interest in local history. Firstly, I acquainted myself with all the materials, documents and items stored at the Centre.

Having grasped what was required **David** let me loose on the **Cardbox** database; cataloguing some of the items and objects that had not been recorded.

Later, I was happily recording interesting items extracted from a ledger containing the minutes of Vestry meetings of **Yate Parish Church**. These were recorded from the mid 1800s right through to the early 1900s. Also contained in the ledger were records of parishioners' pleas for money and clothing to the local **Poor Law Guardians**.

When this venture was complete, I went on to extracting information contained within several ledgers of building work carried out by a local building contractor **F T Ranger**. These ledgers began in the mid 1930's and continued until the late 1960's. Work was undertaken by this company for local companies such as **Parnall's** and **George's Brewery** as well as **Gloucester County Council**.

I now await the arrival of more local historical documents at the Centre, to continue this interesting work.

Dates for your Diary

All lectures, quizzes and film shows begin at 7.30pm

14th September - Food Day

A combined event with **St Mary's Church**.

Linked to **South Gloucestershire Food Festival** and **Heritage Open Sunday**; with demonstrations and activities. 12-4.30pm

16th September – 15th October

Yate Art Open 2008 showcasing local artistic talent.

16th September – Autumn Quiz

General Knowledge Quiz, £6 per team of 4-5 people.

23rd September – Lecture, The Bristol Blitz

with John Penny. £2 per head

27th September – Heritage Centre Friends Coffee Morning.

10.30-1.30pm

12th October – Friends Trip to **Kemble Air Museum**. Midday onwards!

16th October – 22nd November

Butcher, Baker, Candle Maker – an exhibition linked to the buildings and people of Chipping Sodbury since 1795. The display is based on the 1795 Poor Law Map.

21st October – Lecture, The Siege of Gloucester

with Malcolm Watkins. £2 per head.