

SIAS at 50

A look back to the early 1970s

Peter Daniel, January 2022



Iain looking at industries around in late 60s/early 70s and what got him interested in IA. David talking about the inaugural meeting of SIAS in 1972 and what happened afterwards. I am aiming to put the start of SIAS into a national context.

1972 – some key events

- Miner's strike
- Escalation of the 'Troubles'
- School leaving age raised to 16
- Cod War with Iceland
- Ugandan Asians expelled
- Daytime television permitted
- Peak of British car production
- Price & pay freezes
- Final stretch of M6 opened
- Last trolleybuses
- Last Brighton Belle



Some key events from 1972. I wasn't in the south-west at that time, at University in Leeds where Fowlers and Hunslet still made locomotives. List of events – perhaps last two have most IA interest.

Origins of Industrial Archaeology

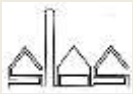
- Worth remembering phrase first used only a few years before – Michael Rix, 1955
- Also in 1955, W G Hoskins, *Making of the English Landscape*, had analyses of 'Industrial Landscapes'
- By 1960s Rix and others were arguing that archaeology didn't end with the Romans or even the Saxons – but today!



Origins of IA. Worth remembering that in 60s and early 70s IA was a new field. Another key book from 1955 was *Making of English Landscape*, Hoskins wrote about industrial landscapes – perhaps first time these had been considered, certainly first time it was suggested that landscapes themselves could provide as much information as documents. Picture is example – Preston. Rix and others arguing archaeology didn't end when Romans came, or even the Normans. At that time later archaeology was simply bulldozed out of way.

Background to rise of Industrial Archaeology

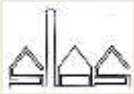
- Late 50s and 60s destruction of much of built environment
- Large areas of derelict land – 'Derelict Britain'
- Destruction of Euston Arch in 1961
- Increasing appreciation of Victorian buildings



Background to rise of IA. Large areas of despoiled land, increasing land pressures, much wholesale clearance. Pressure to reclaim derelict land – book – but no consideration of archaeology or heritage. Loss of Euston Arch in 1961 provoked outcry. Increasing appreciation of Victorian buildings and structures led by people like John Betjeman, Ian Nairn. St Pancras station was very nearly demolished. Picture on left – lower Swansea valley – perhaps largest area of concentrated dereliction.

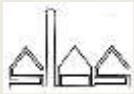
Identifying, recording and preservation

- First stage identifying & recording
- CBA record cards from 1960s
- Great role for amateur groups
- IA seen as recording & selective preservation of sites & buildings
- But led to perception of 'collecting' sites



Identifying, recording and preservation. The first stage in doing something about the wholesale losses was identifying sites and recording them, and this is what IA was in the early days. To their credit CBA greatly involved and set up record card system. Huge role for amateur voluntary groups filling out cards. At this stage IA seen as recording and selective preservation of industrial heritage – mainly buildings and structures. Not at this time much analysis or archaeology, simply recording and collecting sites. SIAS started like that – 2 examples – Frank Hawtin first chairman recording something, members recording limekilns Evercreech I think.

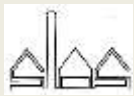
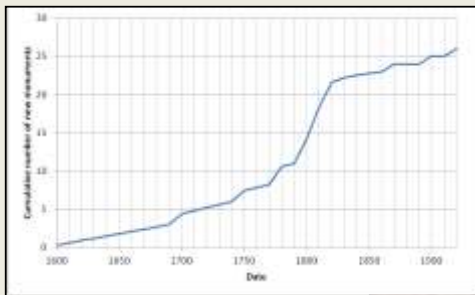
More identifying and recording



More examples of recording. Dave Greenfield at Parrett Works, Derrick Warren and others at Bishop Bros, Paul Bell at Vobster Breach Colliery, Brian Murless under Crossways swing bridge on the B & T Canal.

Progression to analysis and methodologies

- Assessing significance in terms of social & technological history
- Social & landscape approaches
- Increasing use of below ground archaeology
- Manchester methodology



Progression to analysis and methodologies. There was a stage when those not involved could be quite scathing of industrial archaeology with its focus on recording individual buildings and structures, but that was a necessary first step. How can you assess the impact of coal mining or slate quarrying on the landscape unless you first know where the mines or quarries are? How can determine the impact of industrialisation on a community without first knowing when and where industries developed. Gradually from 1990s on more emphasis on synthesis of the information, more below ground archaeology, more assessment of landscape impact, more investigation of the social effects, more development of methodologies to make sense of data.

Growth of IA Societies

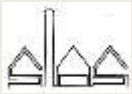
- Precursors – Newcomen Soc (1920), Sheffield Trades Historical Soc (1918), Trevithick Soc (1935)
- By late 1960s area based local societies – eg GSIA (1964), BIAS (1967), Greater London IAS (1969)
- Amateurs making records of whole range of industrial sites and structures
- National conferences leading to AIA 1973



Growth of IA Societies. There had been precursors as specialist societies, Newcomen Soc, Sheffield Trades (now South Yorkshire IAS), Trevithick Soc, started as Cornish Engines Preservation Soc. But from 1960s area-based societies often Counties. Gloucester one of first. SIAS by no means the last. IA at that stage primarily an amateur activity, only from 1990s that there was a great increase in professional input with the onset of developer funded archaeology. Also, from late 1960s more coordination and cross-fertilisation between societies, with regional and national conferences, leading to AIA in 1973. Picture from a national conference in Bath in 1968 – some of great and good of IA, Neil Cossons, Michael Rix, Angus Buchanan, Frank Atkinson.

Surviving industries in 1972

- Important to remember many traditional industries still around at that time
- Coalmining; Tanning; Shoes; Bricks/tiles; Cider



Surviving industries in 1972. Iain will say some more about this. Many industries had already rationalised eg brewing, and by 1972 only one brickworks left. But others were still active. Still two collieries left in Somerset – Kilmersdon and Lower Writhlington. There were still tanneries and fellmongers including French's in Taunton, Baily's and Morland's in Glastonbury, the Eastland Road tannery in Yeovil. Clarks were still making shoes at Street and elsewhere. And, of course, Taunton was still known for Taunton Cider. Fox Bros were still active in Wellington and Uffculme but the last woollen mill in the east of the county in Frome had closed in 1968. There were a number of creameries still working including, Bason Bridge, Wellington, Wincanton, Chard Junction.

Background of industries surviving in 1972 (2)

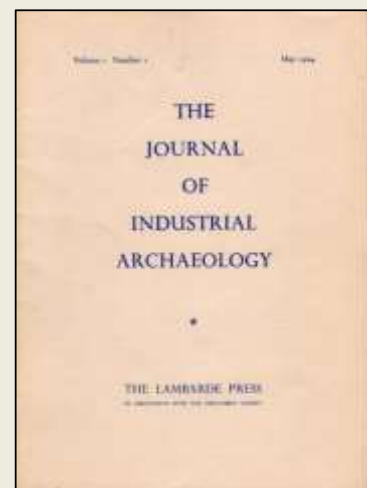
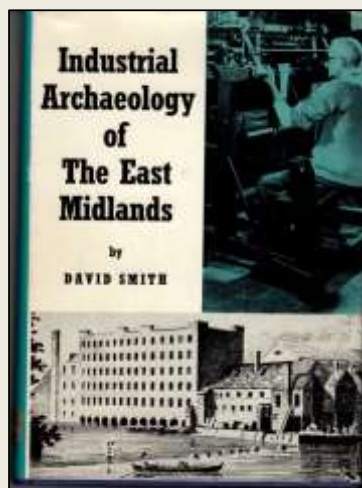
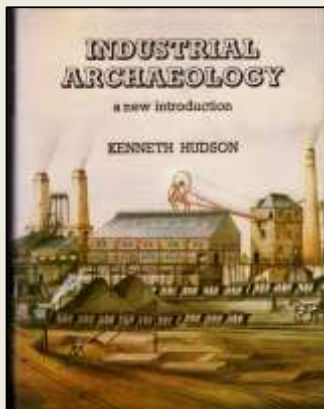
- Gloving; Shirts & collars; Harbours; Foundries



Some other examples of surviving industries. Gloving was still widespread with a number of works in Yeovil, and in Tintinhull, Milborne Port, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Martock, Crewkerne, and Taunton. Shirts and collars were still being made in Taunton, Ilminster and Crewkerne. Taunton at the time had three – Theaks, Van Heusen and Luvisca. Bridgwater Docks had closed by then, but Watchet Harbour was still importing esparto for the paper mill. Rationalisation of railways had occurred, but the Minehead branch had only just closed. The last gasworks, at Minehead, had only closed in 1970. Foundries and engineering works had largely closed but some such as Singers in Frome, Sheldons in Wells, Easton & Johnson in Taunton, were still operating and Bishop Bros in Wellington had only just closed. ROF at Puriton was still producing explosives and still rail served. In passing, I would comment that it is quite common to easily find dates when factories started but much harder to find when they closed.

Books, publications & sources in 1972

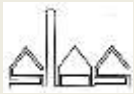
- No HERs, very little listing
- Some seminal books but limited
- Some recent regional studies
- Some recent national journals but few local



Books, publications & sources in 1972. Nowadays we take for granted the ready availability of information, and of course the vast amount on the internet. But 1972 it was different and it's worth reminding ourselves of that. HER not available then. Started as OS Archaeology Branch record cards, became Sites and Monuments Record, then HER. But limited number of industrial sites. Nationally some seminal books eg Stone blocks & iron rails, Bertram Baxter; Quakers in Science & Industry, Arthur Raistrick; Gloucestershire Woollen Mills, Jennifer Tann; plus many railway histories. Only one national account as yet by Kenneth Hudson. Regional studies from late 1960s incl Southern England by Kenneth Hudson and East Midlands. Lots of books on railways though plus some on canals. Also, Journal of Industrial Archaeology started 1964, and things like Railway Magazine which had been going since 1897.

Listing & Scheduling

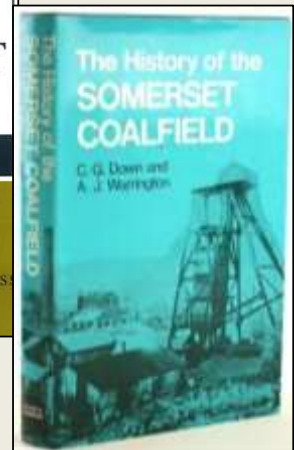
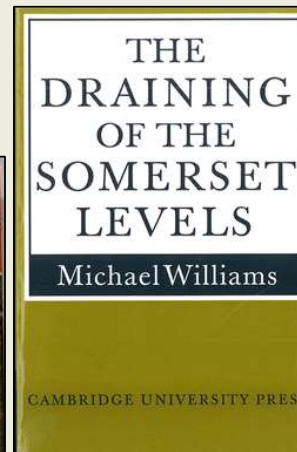
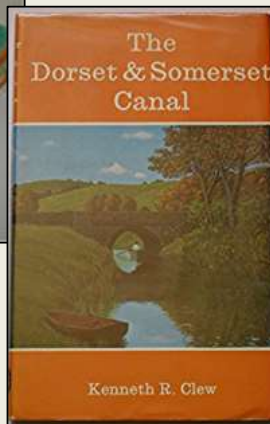
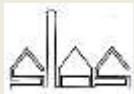
- Few listed or scheduled industrial monuments to begin with although Euston Arch gave an impetus
- Destruction of Firestone building gave another boost



Listing & Scheduling. Selective listing & scheduling of Industrial monuments from 1960s, partly driven by Euston Arch, but very selective. Another burst after demolition of Firestone Building in Brentford in 1980. Led to complete review and accelerated resurvey. But progress still slow. At one stage more modern buildings ie 20th century could not be considered. Locally SIAS involved in campaigns to list eg Parrett Works in 1970s, St Augustine St Shirt factory in 2004

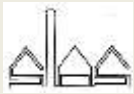
Local IA research – state of play in 1972

- Some agricultural history, company histories
- Handful of very recent books eg WSMR, Somerset Coalfield, Drainage of Levels, Old Mendip
- Very little else



Local IA research – state of play in 1972. Locally there was little information readily available, apart from K Hudsons IA of Southern England mentioned earlier. There had been a flurry of very recent significant books in the one or two years before SIAS formed for example – Robin Atthill's Old Mendip in 1971, Michael Williams' Draining of the Somerset Levels in 1970, The history of the Somerset Coalfield by Down & Warrington in 1971, The Dorset & Somerset Canal by Kenneth Clew in 1971, the 2nd edition of Roger Sellick's West Somerset Mineral Railway in 1970 which contained the additional section on the mines themselves written by Mike Jones, K Ponting's The Woollen industry of S W England in 1971. But you would have looked in vain for many accounts of anything to do with public utilities, engineering, brewing & malting, turnpike roads, milling, brickmaking, quarrying, or potteries.

Some early SIAS projects (1) Chandos Glass Cone, Bridgwater



Finish with some examples of early SIAS projects. Iain and David may well show some more. Chandos Glass Cone. First mentioned as a project in SIAS Bulletin 4 in 1975. The cone was built by the Duke of Chandos in 1725 as part of his investment in commercial and industrial activities in Bridgwater. Glassmaking was not a success, and it was converted to a pottery kiln in the 1730s. Later part of the Northgate Pottery of John Browne which lasted until 1939 although the old glass cone ceased use about 1900. Cone was some 125' high. Was demolished in 1943 – see picture – bricks to foundations of Westonzoyland Airfield. SIAS excavation 1975-77. Then conserved and stabilised by SCC.

Some early SIAS projects (2) Nynehead Lift and Aqueduct



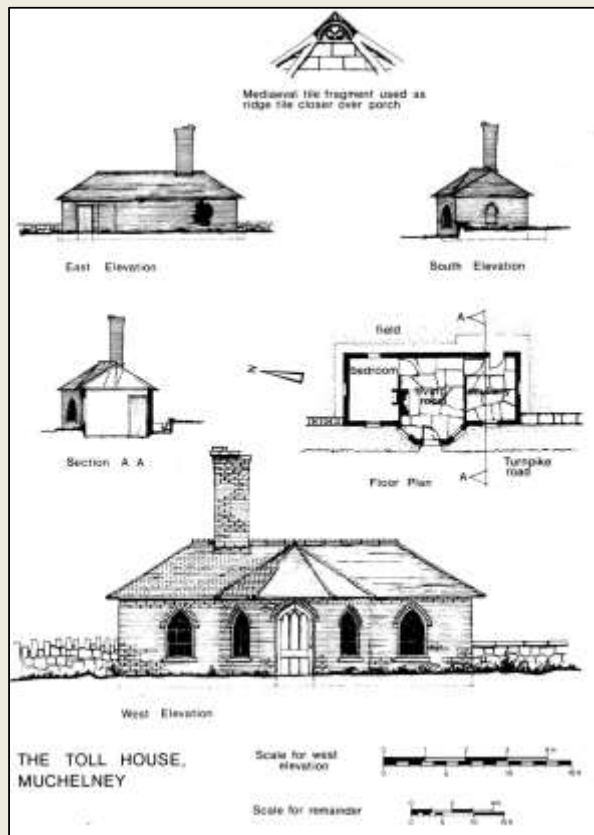
Nynehead canal lift and aqueduct on Grand Western Canal. SIAS has had two goes at this area. A limited excavation and clearance in the early 1970s and a more extensive archaeological investigation and clearance in 2008-11. Top left Nynehead Drive aqueduct being cleared by amongst others Barbara Buchanan and her daughter Kate. Top right is the lift in the early 1970s. Bottom right is the Nynehead Drive aqueduct as it is today after the clearance work of ten years ago.

Some early SIAS projects (3) Sunshine Cider Mills, Chard



Sunshine Cider Mills, Chard. SIAS Newsletter No 1 refers to the waterwheel here being recorded in 1972, using one of the CBA record cards. The mill had started as a butter factory being built about 1896 as a model dairy factory by Earl Poulett. The waterwheel was later used to generate electricity and a governor added. The butter factory lasted until about 1930. It was then used as a cider factory by Sunshine Cider from 1940-1967. Later it was a council depot. Eventually it was sold and became used by a building supplies company. Most buildings were demolished but the underground waterwheel and governor were rescued and re-erected in Chaffcombe in private woodland in 2010. Pictures governor in 1974, top right site in 1986, bottom re-erected wheel in 2010.

Some early SIAS projects (4) Muchelney Tollhouse



Muchelney Tollhouse. Surveyed by SIAS in 1975, used as a 'teaching survey'. In 1975 building was derelict. Survey appeared in Journal 2, 1977, as part of an article about the Langport, Somerton and Castle Cary Turnpike Trust. The photo was taken in 2019.

Aim to follow this up with a Bulletin article on state of knowledge of Somerset IA in 1975 and elaborating on what publications and information were available before SIAS arrived and kick-started much of the research.

Over to Iain and David.