

# Industrial Archaeology

## Review 1976-77

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THIS IS the second summary of industrial archaeological activity in London, and complements the annual round-up of archaeological excavations. It is based on the work of GLIAS, the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, but does also include known activities of other organisations in the field. The author would be grateful for notice of any omissions.

### The Year — Success and Failure

Economic recession has been a dubious blessing; whilst the rate of development has decreased, there has been a rapid decline in many industries, with closure quickly followed by the selling of equipment and machinery. Members of GLIAS and other societies have been attempting to record those industries—some long established—which are fast disappearing. This may take the form of photographs, drawings, documents and personal reminiscences. Sites are varied, from massive warehouses to the often-neglected specialist workshops.

On a general note, several events have made the year memorable. At Kew Bridge, the weekend steaming of two beam engines has proved a popular

attraction, and work continues on the remaining beam engines and the "Bull" engine (further details from the Kew Bridge Engines Trust).

During the year GLIAS has been actively pressing for retention of major industrial buildings in the Capital. Representations were made at public enquiries concerning Silchester Road Baths, W11, and Addington Well, Croydon, the Minister subsequently refusing consent to demolish the baths. It was, however, a major blow to hear the decision that demolition of the Addington Well Pumping Station (TQ 370 627) could proceed, and that the equipment (two beam engines, Cornish boilers and steam powered overhead crane) will be dispersed. The offers of good homes for them is at least a consolation.

GLIAS has made several proposals for the inclusion of significant buildings on statutory lists, and has also opposed plans for further demolition at St. Katherine Docks; if carried out, this would remove the last of the original warehouses, and thus the dock's *raison d'être*.

In Rotherhithe Conservation Area several warehouses and former mills have been, or are planned to

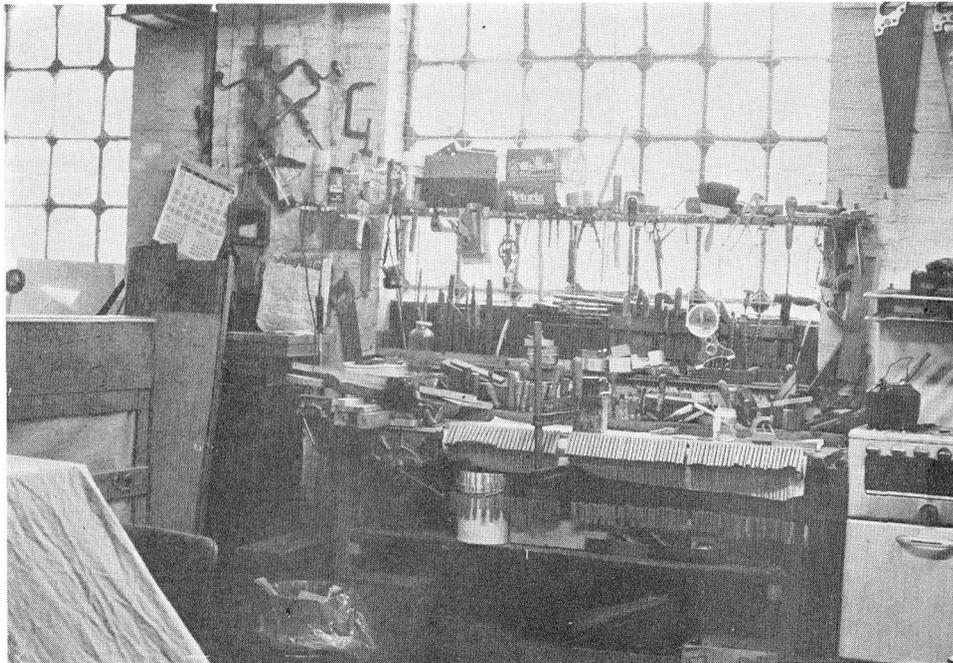


Fig. 1: Small craft workshops such as this are often overlooked even by local historians. This photograph shows a piano repairer's in Camden. Note piano actions hanging on edge of bench and tools; also glue pot on gas stove (right) and dust sheets covering pianos (left). The bench is at the window for maximum light.

be, converted into craftsmen's workshops, artists' and theatre studios, etc. — a realistic way to both retain attractive industrial buildings that have outlived their intended use, and provide needed accommodation. The adjacent Brunel Thames Tunnel pump house surround has been landscaped.

On a sad note, the London Hydraulic Power Company in June ceased pumping water through their extensive underground mains to customers, a move reflecting serious loss of business due to firms closing in central London and dockland. GLIAS is to publish a history of the Company.

### **Practical I.A. — Sites and Surveys**

Surveys are in progress in many areas of London, the most extensive being that carried out by the I.A. evening class at Goldsmiths' College, which covers the south-eastern boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Lewisham and Greenwich (SELIA). A comprehensive survey of Islington is being made jointly by GLIAS and the Islington History Society, whilst GLIAS and Hendon & District Archaeological Society are tackling the borough of Barnet. Croydon, Tower Hamlets and Southwark are also being surveyed in detail.

Site work in the whole of Greater London is co-ordinated by the GLIAS Recording Group Secretary (the author of this article) through a network of borough and area contacts. As a matter of urgency, work has been concentrated in the inner boroughs, as the summary of major projects below shows.

### **Camden**

Two surveys are being carried out jointly by Camden History Society and GLIAS. The Transport Survey has recently included Kings Cross Goods Depot, with a fine 1853 grain warehouse, coal drops, stables, the identifiable remains of the temporary 1850 passenger terminus that preceded Kings Cross station, part of the potato market and several goods sheds.

The second survey covers all other industrial sites, concentrating at present on the piano industry; among premises investigated are the former works of Collard & Collard in Oval Way, NW1, unusual in being almost circular with 22 sides to give maximum light on intricate assembly work, Chappells in Belmont Street, NW1, where a sloping floor assisted flow line production, Brinsmeads in Perren Street, NW5, and several workshops which still manufacture piano parts and do repairs.

### **Hammersmith**

The former refuse destructor at Wood Lane, W12, will continue to receive attention, not least because the removal of metalwork makes the details of operation difficult to understand. The same problem applies to its intended successor, the HYGANIC plant that converted rubbish to manure from the



**Fig. 2: Mill Street, Southwark, which is fairly typical of the industrial sites which GLIAS is tackling; the 120ft chimney is part of an 1880's flour mill.**

mid-1930's until 1946, when its closure necessitated return to service of the destructor. Several former employees on the site have been interviewed.

### **Southwark**

Watkins, Watkins & Co. Ltd., bookbinders, of Cowan Street, SE17 closed during the summer. GLIAS were allowed to carry out a full photographic survey of the varied equipment, which dated from the 1870's to 1960's. The firm specialised in binding bibles.

The major detailed look at Hibernia Wharf, Montague Close, SE1, behind Southwark Cathedral, finished with the rumble of demolition overhead as the last cellar was recorded! Part of the complex, the 1838 warehouse, has now been razed, but the

1850's portions survive precariously.

### **Tower Hamlets**

An emergency visit to the former RNLI repair workshops at Broomfield Street, E14, found evidence of past usage in the form of a small dock leading to the Limehouse Cut, and thence the Thames. During the last 40 years the premises had been used as a food depot, first by the CWS and then by a spice miller.

The massive goods shed at Commercial Road, surveyed 1975/6, has now been demolished, but not the engine house on Hooper Street, E1, which supplied hydraulic power for the many cranes, capstans and hoists. This building, with the accumulators remaining and sites of boilers and engines easily identified, has now also been surveyed, as has an adjacent warehouse which appears to predate the railway. This was used as part of the site's storage facilities, and contains an interesting use of cast iron for the floors and beams, as well as for the vertical columns.

Free Trade Wharf, The Highway, E1, has been given an appreciation survey, note being taken particularly of the former East India Company warehouses, still with original walls and roofs, although internally rebuilt.

### **Other Sites**

Vary in location from a brick works in Enfield to Aspdin's kiln at Northfleet, the oldest (1843) cement kiln in the country; work on the latter has been carried out by the Goldsmiths' Group.

### **Publications**

GLIAS is very much aware that surveys are of

no use unless findings are published. The past year has seen publication of three reports, two walks and a four-page leaflet.

**TOWER BRIDGE WORKSHOPS**, a report describing the workshops that were used for the maintenance of the machinery at Tower Bridge (50p\*)

**WALTON LODGE LAUNDRY, THE STORY OF AN ENTERPRISE**, which shows scenes from 1904/8 and gives the history of a firm which still flourishes in Coldharbour Lane, SW9. (50p\*)

**W. A. CRIPS & SONS, BERMONDSEY'S LAST CHAINSMITHS**, a surviving engineering and smiths workshop with belt driven machinery in SE16. (\*65p)

**INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY WALKS IN LONDON** (5p each\*)

No. 1 : Waterloo to London Bridge.

No. 2 : Blackfriars to Tower Bridge

**A HOP MERCHANT'S WAREHOUSE, 24 MELIOR STREET, SE1.** (12p\*)

\*When ordering, 15p p&p should be added for each report, and 8p for each walk or leaflet.

### **Contacts in GLIAS**

Copies of publications and general information : Adrian Tayler, Publicity Officer, 28 Tower Hamlets Road, E17.

Details of site and recording work : David G. Thomas, Recording Group Secretary, 4 Heyford Avenue, SW8.

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## **S. L. A. E. C. Excavations at Harper Row, Southwark.**

**TRIAL TRENCHES** were cut by machine to assess the archaeological potential of the area around Dickens Square and Ralph Street, off Harper Road. While important information regarding the earlier topography of the district was revealed only one area looked interesting enough archaeologically to warrant more detailed study. Because of limited room on the site an area only 27m by 2.5m was excavated and unfortunately the western end of this had been heavily disturbed by pits and drains dug during the 19th and 20th centuries, however earlier deposits survived to the east. The three main features found were a series of equally spaced 17th century gullies, a late Roman ditch, and a late Roman inhumation.

The thirteen gullies were either cut for some agricultural purpose, such as bedding trenches for salad vegetables or, more likely, as foundation trenches for wooden 'tenter' frames on which cloth was stretched and dried after the fulling process. Two 18th century maps of Southwark show fields marked "tenter grounds" at approximately the position of the excavation.

The ditch, which runs almost the whole length of the excavation, is provisionally dated to the 4th century on coin and pottery evidence. As there is no measurable slope along

the length of the ditch it is probably a land boundary rather than a drainage ditch. Immediately to the north, and on the same east-west alignment, was a skeleton of a young male, aged about 20 and about 5ft. 8ins. tall. The presence of a number of iron nails around the burial suggests that he was interred in a wooden coffin. A packing of chalk around the body, presumably in imitation of the plaster burials found elsewhere in Britain, suggests that this burial is also of 4th century date. This form of burial, together with the east-west alignment, could indicate a Christian interment. However the corroded hob nails under the one surviving foot probably signifies that the body was buried with his boots on, a trait not normally associated with Christian burials.

A number of Roman skeletons were noted to the north of the site during past building operations but none were scientifically excavated or examined. It is possible that the ditch is part of the southern boundary of a Roman cemetery, and so it is hoped to excavate in the near future an area to the north which at present is used as an allotment.

MARTIN DEAN