

# Industrial Archaeology Review, 1977-1978

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THIS ANNUAL SURVEY of industrial archaeological activities in London is based on the work of GLIAS, the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society. It includes known activities of other organisations in this increasingly popular field, but the author would be grateful for notice of any omissions for inclusion in next year's review.

## Twelve months of good and bad

In September the Government announced "Operation Clean-Up," which will include demolition of empty warehouses, factories and offices with a grant of £2½m to nine London boroughs, seven of which border the Thames. This clearly reflects an accelerating drift of industry. GLIAS had already noticed this trend and particularly in the past year has been trying to obtain at least exterior photographs of undertakings known to be closing. "Operation Clean-Up" also implies that in future there will be less time for bodies to make their case for realistically re-using vacated, but sound, buildings. More alarmingly, there may also be pressure and funds to remove "listed" buildings which have been allowed to decay. Time will tell whether this is a false alarm or whether such sites as the five fine 1802 warehouses along London Dock's north quay, which are in a sorry state after neglect and unfortunate fires, will be affected. (In passing, would Georgian residential property similarly sited close to the centre of London be allowed to rot?)

Silchester Road Baths and Wash-house complex (W.11), probably the capital's most comprehensive such site, is now the subject of a further application for listed building demolition by the Council. A local pressure group, which has produced imaginative plans for a community centre and shops (both needed) has been forced to stand by and watch the effects of an increasing toll of vandalism since a similar application was refused following a public enquiry in 1976.

However, all I.A. news is not gloomy. Kew Bridge Engines Trust has obtained and is now running an 1863 compound rotative beam engine built in Southwark by Easton & Amos, and has restored a steam hammer for use in its workshops; these add to the many attractions of its museum. A few miles away London Transport is making essential

repairs to the ornate 1901 London United Tramways' generating station, (adjacent to Stamford Brook bus garage) rather than demolishing it as originally proposed.

London Hydraulic Power Company ceased pumping in 1977, but their Wapping Pumping Station, together with its equipment, has been "listed". An excellent scheme has been proposed involving its use to pump for a canoe and water recreation centre in the adjacent Shadwell Dock Basin.

In Rotherhithe there are several examples of retention and re-use of buildings around St Mary's Church and the Mayflower public house. The London Borough of Southwark has completed conversion of Hope Sufferance Wharf (which they compulsorily purchased) to provide workshops now occupied by some 40 craftsmen, including potters, silversmiths and knitters. Nearby, 99 Rotherhithe Street is now a theatre with workshops above, and 119, Grice's Granary and Wharf, houses a picture reference library. £25,000 has been raised for restoration of Marc Brunel's pumping house above the original Thames tunnel, now used by tube trains.

## Practical I.A. — site work

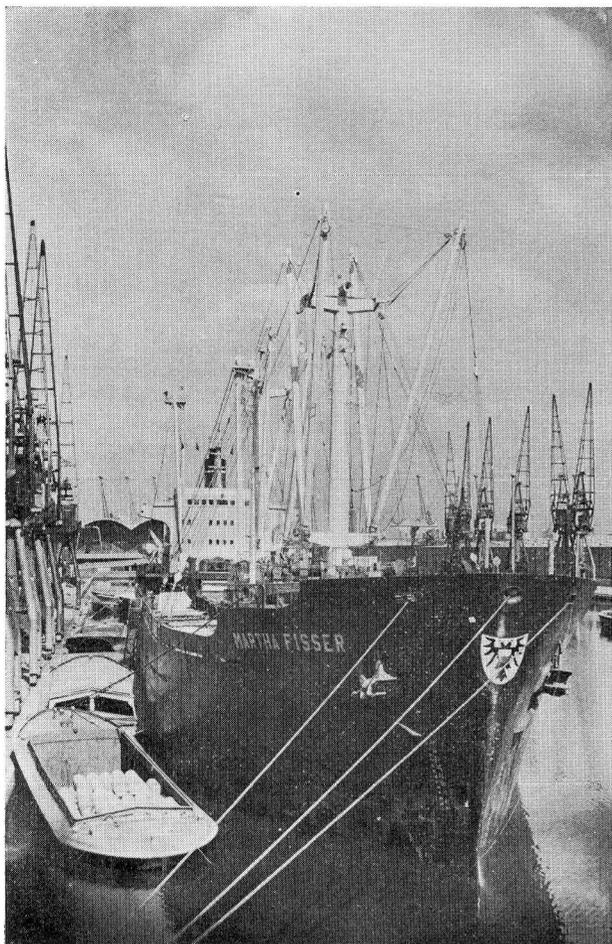
There are ongoing general surveys in many parts of London, but this year's review concentrates on specific sites. In GLIAS work is co-ordinated by the Recording Group Secretary, author of this article.

## Barnet

The 1905 Public Health Laboratory in Colindale might not appear to be I.A. but it was the UK centre for production of vaccination lymph, and a number of purpose-built animal houses remain. Hendon and District Archaeological Society (HADAS) has been surveying the site. HADAS and GLIAS have completed a photographic survey of railway installation in the Borough which are likely to disappear in the Midland line re-signalling and electrification scheme.

## Barking

By far the most complex site tackled by GLIAS in the last year has been Ford's Dagenham blast furnace and coke ovens complex which closed in May. Although installed as a replacement as recently as 1961, the furnace, used for production of



**Fig. 1:** A rapid decline in London's port traffic, with closure of up-river docks and many related firms is a major problem for industrial archaeologists. At twice-reprieved Millwall Dock lighters continue to carry cargo to a few remaining wharves alongside the Thames and Lea Navigation.

pig iron, is surplus to requirements. The large associated coke ovens produced gas for use throughout their motor assembly plant (eg for heating) and by-products for sale as well as coke for the furnace.

### **Bromley**

Maunder's Bakery, 1 Market Square, was measured and photographed, prior to its demolition, by members of the I.A. evening class at Goldsmith's College. Parts of the ornate cast iron oven fronts, made by H Smith & Sons, Lambeth, have been acquired by the Museum of London to add to their collection of items relevant to London's history.

### **Camden**

Camden History Society and GLIAS continued

their joint survey of the Borough's industries; sites included a piano string maker's workshop, a reed organ repairer's, and the former Allison's piano factory in Charlton King's Road, NW5, still partially used by Chappells as a store.

### **Croydon**

Cane Hill Hospital, built in 1883-6, was once largely self-sufficient with its own farm. Initial site work has involved drawing and measuring the original cast iron cow stalls (Musgrave Patent). The Borough's disinfecting station has also been visited, together with the now derelict plant at their Factory Road site which was last used for producing "Tottenham Pudding" animal food. GLIAS and others successfully suggested "listing" a fine factory on South End, built c 1868 for Cooper & Sons, boot and shoe manufacturers, at the time the largest industrial employer in Croydon. The distinctive airport control tower was also "listed" in August.

### **Kensington & Chelsea**

Spillers-French ceased milling flour at their Thameside Chelsea Flour Mills, Lots Road, in June. GLIAS made a photographic record of equipment no longer required; semolina milling continues.

### **Lambeth**

Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee has carried out work involving excavation of a 19th century bread oven behind 20 Lower Marsh. The remains of an 18th century pottery at the south end of Vauxhall Bridge have been excavated by Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society.

### **Merton and Wembley**

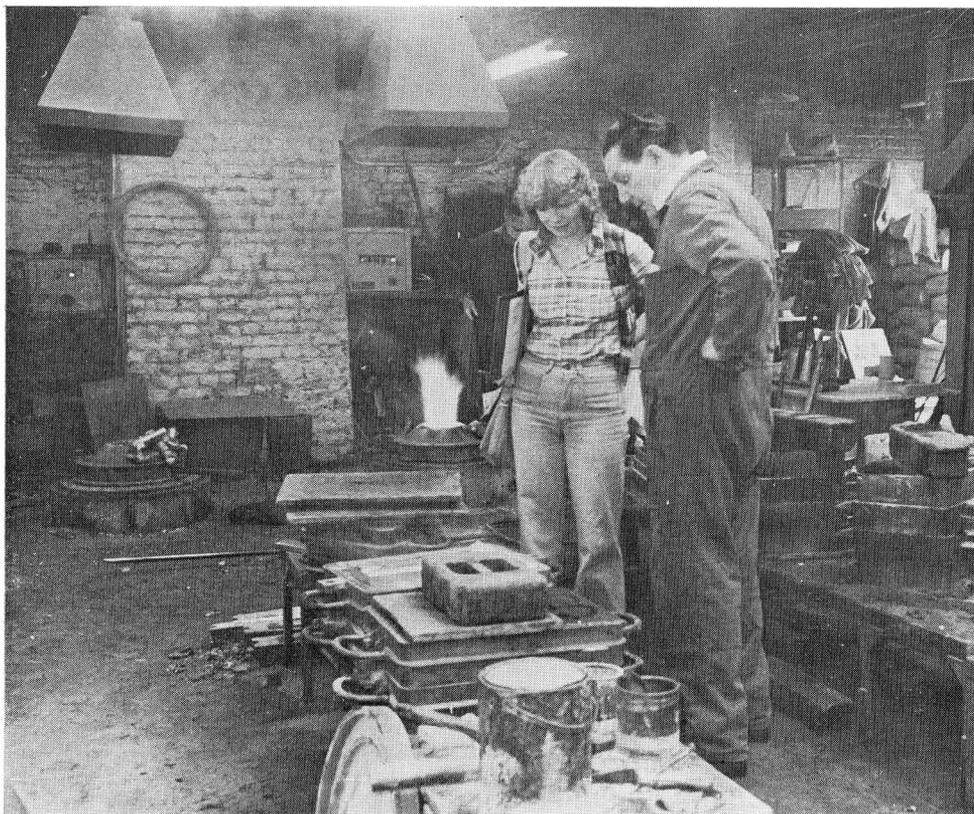
In both these boroughs, refuse destructors erected in the 1930's remain, albeit out of use following changes in the type of domestic rubbish and clean air legislation. Both have been surveyed, the exercise enabling comparison between methods and plant used.

### **Southwark**

Two premises in Mill Street have been visited and photographed: Vogan's split pea, pearl barley and lentil mill, and the nearby former St Saviour's flour mill, latterly used as a normal warehouse. In Peckham, attention was focussed on a non-ferrous foundry, using techniques largely unchanged in the last 80 years, (Fig. 2) whilst in Clink Street a small warehouse was used as a site training exercise.

### **Tower Hamlets and Newham**

P.L.A. plans to close both the Royal and Millwall/West India Docks, later changed to proposals for radical cutting of costs and labour force plus at least partial closure, have made these docks the major priority in site work for the next two years. To date, Poplar railway dock has been stud-



**Fig. 2:** Site recording visits are often fascinating. During an early morning visit to a Peckham foundry one of the staff explains the methods to a GLIAS member.

In the foreground are casting boxes; behind are two oil-fired furnaces set into the floor.

ied, and a photographic survey made of Rank Hovis McDougall's Millwall Flour Mill shortly before closure.

Pressure by several societies failed to stop demolition of 'B' warehouse at St. Katharine Dock, but it is good to see that the Maritime Trust has built up a collection of craft here, including the schooner "Kathleen and May," the steam drifter "Lydia Eva" and the Thames sailing barge "Cumbria", which have joined other interesting vessels already moored in the Dock.

Elsewhere in Tower Hamlets, several blocks of artisans' housing have been demolished, such as Gladstone Buildings (1868), erected by the Industrial Dwellings Company, in Willow Street; the development of this form of housing and its social impact deserves more attention.

### London's Waterways

The Inland Waterways Association's London Branch has set up a group to monitor planning applications, co-operate with local societies and produce plans for disused or threatened navigable arms, basins and wharves. A good example of potential achievements is Portabella Dock, off Ladbroke Grove, which has been converted into a canal cruise boat base and restaurant.

### Tape recording

This is an essential corollary to site work, both in providing facts and in helping to recreate the atmosphere and impressions that only a voice can convey of premises and processes as they were perhaps half a century ago. Many other societies are also involved in this work; GLIAS subjects have included a foreman and former Manager of a now-closed brick works in Enfield, a man who was employed by the RNLI at their Poplar depot in 1929 and a telephone engineer who started work with the Post Office in 1920.

GLIAS has decided to produce a Journal, which will appear in 1979, including site reports which may otherwise have been published separately. Thus the last year has seen only:

VINCENT & SON LTD, CABINET MAKERS, BRICK LANE, LONDON (45p, 30p to members, plus 15p p & p).

WAPPING HYDRAULIC PUMPING STATION, SHADWELL BASIN PROJECT (leaflet, 5p).

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