Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Focus

on Industrial Archaeology

No. 105 **June 2026**

SS Shieldhall

The Steamship Shieldhall Charity has received initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its ***"Steamship Shieldhall: towards 2055, the next 10 years"*** project, it has been announced. Made possible thanks to National Lottery players, the project aims to help the historically important heritage vessel continue as an operational, sea-going, passenger carrying steamship, and also play a bigger part in the local community.

Development funding of £202,500 has been awarded by the Heritage Fund to help The Steamship Shieldhall Charity progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant of £1.67m at a later date.

Steamship Shieldhall is Europe's largest operational heritage steamship, and is based at Southampton. Twice flagship of the UK's National Historic Fleet, Shieldhall is of national and international maritime heritage significance and, without this funding from the Heritage Fund, continued operation would be increasingly difficult, with the ship needing to comply with current and future maritime legislation.

The project will enable extensive conservation work to take place on the ship, which is now over 70 years old, including the provision of new fuel tanks, essential hull repairs, anchor chain replacement and electrical wiring renewal. Opportunities will be developed for local community groups and schools/colleges to engage with the ship, allowing even more people to benefit from this unique and historic vessel.

Steamship Shieldhall is wholly run by volunteers, and provides opportunities to get directly involved in all aspects of operating and maintaining an historic ship. In addition to volunteering, another way to support the ship – and experience at first hand its operation – is to book a trip on a public sailing. Details of volunteering opportunities, public sailings and alongside events can be found on the charity website www.ss-shieldhall.co.uk

(Shieldhall Press release 16 March 2026,)

Major breach on Llangollen Canal *(BBC News West Midlands, 22 December 2025)*

A major incident was declared at a Shropshire canal where a giant hole emerged, leaving boats stricken in the cavity or teetering on the edge of the drop. The incident on a stretch of the Llangollen Canal in Whitchurch has been blamed by engineers on an "embankment failure", with its collapse causing water to rush into a nearby field – and the canal bottom to fall away, leaving a trench.

Two narrowboats were said to have sunk into the hole shortly after 04:00 GMT, with one witness estimating it to be 15ft (four metres) deep. Fifty firefighters were deployed to the scene. There are no reports of casualties, according to police. Scott Hurford, area manager at Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, said crews began receiving reports of the collapse at about 04:20 GMT.

"The water... has leaked out of the canal into the surrounding fields," he said. "There are up to 15 people who had to be moved out of the way to safety, and there's a number of canal boats that have been affected – some of those have gone into the field and some are at the bottom of the canal."

Inland Waterways Association bulletin, April 2026

Canal and River Trust has published its initial report into the Llangollen breach at Whitchurch, Shropshire, December 2025. In summary, CRT says:

Prepared by Canal & River Trust engineers, supported by technical experts, the initial report poses an emerging hypothesis for the possible causes of the breach. At this stage the findings suggest the breach was likely caused by a combination of a number of specific physical characteristics in this location, combined with an undetected long-term, deep-seated leak beneath the canal bed, which we believe caused erosion below the canal bed, ultimately resulting in the collapse of the embankment.

"While breaches of this scale remain extremely rare, we are already taking forward a number of recommendations from the investigation in order to ensure we take all action possible to enhance the resilience of canal infrastructure. This includes exploring new and innovative technologies to assist in maintenance, inspection and monitoring regimes."

HAMPSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

(formerly Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group)

Meetings July – December 2026

July 6	**History of Fort Gilkicker** – *Lewis Sharp*
August 3	**The Local Story of the Spitfire**– *Stephen Hoadley*
September 7	**Members' Evening**
October 5	**Schneider Trophy** – *Roger Davies*
November 2	**Annual General Meeting and Chairman's Night**
December 7	**Stuff you don't need to know** – *Trevor Rutter*

Meetings are held monthly on Mondays in the Underhill Centre, St John the Evangelist Church, St John's Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4AF, commencing at 7.45pm

❖ ❖

Annual Conference, East Anglia, 4th – 9th September 2026

The Association is pleased to announce that full details are now available for the Annual Conference in Norwich in September. Conference follows its traditional format starting on Saturday with a day of talks on the Industrial Heritage of the area followed by the presentation of this year's awards and the Conference Dinner.

On Sunday morning there will be our AGM followed by the Rolt Lecture. On Sunday afternoon, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning we have a series of tours and evening talks.

Saturday and evening talks include Drainage and Corn mills, Herrings, Maltings and Electricity supply, East Anglian Railways and a new addition: Film night! The Rolt Lecture focuses on the Heritage of Gas supply.

Visits this year include Agricultural Machinery manufacture, Sewage Pumping, (Historical) Nuclear Bombs, a gasworks and mills of many shapes and sizes.

Full details and booking can be found at: https://industrial-archaeology.org/Conference

❖ ❖

SPAB One Day Conference: 13 June 2026

Caring for Their Future: Recording, Repairing & Researching Mills *(Mike Nevell, April 24, 2026)*

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Mills Section is running a one-day conference on wind and water mills in Britain on 13 June 2026 in Reading, and booking is now open. There will be chaired panel discussions after both the morning and afternoon talks. Refreshments will be available during break times and delegates will have the opportunity to see some of Rex Wailes' drawings on display at the Mills Archive Trust.

Mildred Cookson and Nathanael Hodge from the Mills Archive Trust will share their knowledge on caring for documents and images, and project archivist Hei-Yan Tsui will share some finds from the Rex Wailes collection. Dr Toby Huitson and Duncan McCallum will explore the Mills at Risk theme and the intricacies of listing historic buildings. Justin Coombs will demonstrate his innovative Smartmolen Project, and the conference will also hear from water-mill expert Stephen Bartlett about flood warning and prevention for watermills.

Date: Sat, 13/06/2026: 09,45 – 16.15 Address: 44 Watlington Street, Reading, RG1 4RJ

Price: £50 SPAB Members; £55 Non-Members (packed lunch included in event fees)

Book by Sunday 7 June. To book the conference follow this link:

https://www.spab.org.uk/whats-on/caring-their-future-recording-repairing-researching-mills *(Ctrl + Click)*

HS2 completes bridge slide over Grand Union Canal *(New Civil Engineer, April 2026)*

HS2 engineers from Balfour Beatty Vinci slid a 130m-long, 1,620ton steel bridge into place over the Grand Union Canal between 4 and 5 March using hydraulic jacks and a low friction "skid shoe" technique. The weathering steel viaduct sits on two abutments and two piers either side of the canal. Preparation saw installation of 34 piles up to 30m deep, two concrete piers cast parallel to the waterway and construction of a concrete capped retaining wall on 7m deep sheet piles.

Brunel-designed railway landmarks to be restored *(New Civil Engineer, May 2026)*

Two historic railway structures are set to be renovated. The Grade II listed footbridge in Sydney Gardens, Bath, is the last surviving cast iron footbridge of its kind on the Great Western Main Line. It will undergo grit blasting, steel and masonry repairs, a full repaint and the replacement of its wooden deck.

It was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and built in the early1840s. It is in one of Britain's oldest Georgian pleasure gardens and considered a "rare and revered piece of Victorian engineering history", said Network Rail.

Further along the line, near Corsham, engineers will survey and repair the Grade II listed eastern portal of Box Tunnel. It was also designed by Brunel and is considered one of Britain's most significant early railway tunnels. Dan Parkes, principal portfolio manager for Network Rail, said: "[They] are not just railway structures, they are irreplaceable pieces of Brunel's legacy. Restoring them is both a responsibility and a privilege."

Reports on Meetings, December 2025 to May 2026

Carol Burdekin

Our last meeting of 2025 was on **December 1st**, with a good turnout of about thirty members, not I am sure, because we were having mince pies with our teas and coffees, but because our speaker was our new Chairman, **Jim Beckett**, who was talking about ***Southampton Docks Electric Cranes – Part 1 The Decision***.

Firstly, as Jim was the speaker for the evening, our vice-chairman, Rob Fish, started the evening off with notices from the floor. Keith Andrews reminded everyone of the King Alfred Bus Running Day event on the 1st January 2026, and Barry Duke was able to tell the members that GLIAS will be hosting next year's SERIAC Conference which will be on the 25th April at South Norwood, with more information to follow in the New Year.

Jim then began his talk about Southampton's history with electric cranes by saying that, to start, he needed to tell us a brief history of Southampton Docks to set the scene, so to speak. Beginning back as early as 1803 with the Harbour Act, and those people forming the Harbour Board, a decision was made to knock down the Watergate. The Harbour Board Works Committee was later responsible for extending the Town Quay, building and re-building the Royal Pier and eventually ordering electrically powered dockside cranes, the first of their type anywhere in Britain. The main part of the talk was about how, in 1893, the decision was made to order electric cranes for use on the Town Quay. At the same time large docks were being built on mud land purchased from Southampton Corporation by the Southampton Dock Company, which was later bought out by the London and South Western Railway Company. Jim explained that hydraulic and steam cranes were installed here, because electric cranes were, as yet, untried.

The talk ended with the first test of the first newly installed electric crane, in front of a large crowd of important dignitaries. But the question of whether the right decision had been made by the Harbour Board was left open; to be investigated in part two of Jim's talk.

Southampton has a significant place in the history of electric cranes, as we will find out more about next February when Jim will be back to talk about "Southampton Docks Electric Cranes Part 2". Thanks to Jim for his input into my write-up.

There was no HIAS meeting in January 2026, which, as it turned out, was fortuitous. If you all remember, the weather was cold, icy and some lying snow, so not good conditions for travelling. Consequently, our first meeting of the New Year was the first Monday in **February.** We began with the usual notices, and one sad one, which was to announce the death of Pam Moore, a long-standing member of SUIAG/HIAS whose funeral service is to be held on the 13th February at St Mary's Church, Bishopstoke at 11 am. Ian Harden asked that those who had not already indicated they were attending to kindly do so.

If you also remember, it was our new Chairman, **Jim Beckett**, who was our speaker at our last meeting in December 2025. Jim's subject was "Southampton Docks Electric Cranes – Part 1 The Decision". This evening's talk, also given by Jim, is titled ***Southampton Docks Electric Cranes – Part 2***. Jim began by reminding us of where we were at the end of his first talk, with a photograph of the first ever electric crane installed in the Docks at Town Quay. This was followed by a photograph of the 1840s Radley's Hotel [now the Royal Mail House] where the dignitaries, including the Harbour Board Officials, went to after the ceremony to celebrate.

By the 1890s the Harbour Board needed more cranes, as the first two were successful, and Mr Cleveland, who was not in favour of electric cranes originally, was won over. The Board then acquired 2 x 3-ton cranes, and 1 at 2 tons. A German manufacturer of cranes was considered but in the end the contract went to Stothert & Pitt of Bath. Jim showed us photographs of cranes numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6, but all these additional cranes needed more electricity to run them. Therefore in 1898 the Southampton Electric Lighting & Power Company was taken over by Southampton Corporation Harbour Board to purchase a transformer at a cost of £780. At this stage, a tender was out for the purchase of crane No 7. By the time the purchase of crane No 8, with a capacity of five tons, was purchased, a new Harbour Board was established between 1911 & 1913. This was a significant reorganisation and marked by the Southampton Harbour Act 1913.

Southampton Corporation built a new Generating Station in 1902 and, in 1923, new Harbour Board offices were built. Jim's photograph of 1952 showed a scene of older and newer electric cranes near the train lines. Southampton Docks, which were originally owned by the L.S.W.R., were now owned by Southern Railway, and they inherited 57 Hydraulic cranes which were all gradually replaced with electric cranes. There was also a photograph of Town Quay from 1970, and a 1983 photograph showing the dismantling of some of the older cranes.

The Docks were all about attracting more shipping and repairing the ships. The very large Graving dock was built in 1905 and in 1911 a deep-water dock was built. Trafalgar Dock had a 50-ton electric crane weighing 300 tons, with a maximum reach of 87 feet. Around this time, the White Star Line launched RMS Olympic, the largest liner in the world at the time, but the existing dry dock was 7 feet too short to accommodate it, and had to be enlarged with a 'bow notch'. Because of this, when the Olympic collided with another ship, it had to return to Belfast to be repaired, causing a delay in the launching of the Titanic.

From the 1920s a lot more electricity was being provided, as the need for cranes to load and unload ships was increasing. Jim showed us a 1929 list of how much Southampton Docks were charging ships to use their electric cranes. Whatever cargo was moved had to be paid for, even cats and coffins.

The "New Docks" in Southampton, now known as Western Docks, were constructed between 1927 and 1934. This was a massive project involving the reclamation of 400 acres of land from the River Test, and officially opening in 1934. The associated King George V Graving Dock opened in 1933. This was equipped with a 50-ton crane which, along with almost all the other cranes in Southampton Docks, was built by Stothert and Pitt. The railways were taken into public ownership in 1948. Associated British Ports were fully privatised in 2006 with the container port now owned by DP World, and they are investing £60m in four new cranes.

Jim ended his talk by showing us a 1980 photograph of cranes lined up, but not much in the way of ships waiting to be unloaded. However, by the early 2000s, the attraction of cruising was beginning to take off and since has become very popular. There are now various industrial heritage sites around the country, mostly in dockyards, where we can view preserved vintage cranes and associated memorabilia, the best one in Bristol. Jim finished his talk by quoting a passage from a speech Mr Cleveland made when he addressed the Harbour Board in 1890: -

"You cannot point to any number of docks where electric cranes are at work and Southampton cannot afford to spend thousands of pounds in experiments, for if successful, it would be but a splendid advertisement for the inventor of the electric crane".

Thanks to Jim for his very interesting talk, and for his input into this write-up.

Our talk for **March** was on ***The Restoration of the Wey & Arun Canal***, given by **Richard Shenton**. Richard is a Blue Badge Guide, and lives in Pulborough. He is also a volunteer with the Wey & Arun Canal Trust on their Talks & Presentation Team. The Trust is a registered Charity with an aim to restore the 23 miles of this once abandoned canal, which runs through Surrey and Sussex, and to create "the missing link between Britain's inland waterways and the English Channel". The Trust was formed in 1973, and they celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2023 when they opened their latest restored section in Birtley, just south of Bramley in Surrey. The Trust has circa 3,000 members and, together with their volunteers and staff, have restored significant stretches of the canal, and their "showcase" site is situated at Loxwood in West Sussex. This is where they host "public boat trips from Spring to Autumn, as well as welcoming canoeists and paddleboarders", which Richard was keen to promote, as it brings in much needed revenue.

Richard said that before a canal system was established in Britain, the only means of transporting large cargoes was aboard ships that sailed around the coast to bring goods inland. They were then transferred by horse, or oxen, pulled carts over often muddy, rutted, and unsurfaced roads, which were often impassable in Winter. Richard gave us a brief history of early canal building, along with pictures showing canals being dug out, mainly by Irish navvies, who seem to have been the mainstay of canal construction as they were not only strong, but able to contend with the appalling working conditions at the time. At the time it was said that "every barge carrying 20 tons would save keeping six score [120] horses".

"The Wey & Arun Canal was promoted by the Earl of Egremont in 1810, as the final part of a navigable route from London to Portsmouth without having to go to sea", which was considered an important military factor for obvious reasons, during the Napoleonic Wars. Hence, the Wey & Arun Canal was built between 1813 and 1816, and closed in 1871, and formed part of the inland route between London and Portsmouth. Although, it was ironic that the wars were over before the canal opened in 1816 and, unfortunately, it never achieved economic success either. The costs were high, mainly because the adjoining land owners, mainly farmers, demanded high prices for their land. Ironically, when the canal was closed to commercial traffic, the same land owners and farmers were able to buy back the land at considerably lower costs. The canal was closed commercially in 1869.

Initially, the plan to restore the Wey & Arun Canal was begun in the 1970s, with a small group of enthusiasts who were keen to re-open "London's lost route to the sea". Since then, much progress has been made, including building an aqueduct over the River Lox, and other locks have been restored, and a new one constructed. Richard showed us some photos of the re-opening of the Loxwood Crossing in May 2009, with boats travelling under the road for the first time in almost 140 years.

Richard ended his talk by saying that, although the Trust has a lot of volunteers, it is still a very costly project, and the Drungewick Aqueduct alone cost about £400,000, with the Loxwood Crossing Project costing over £1.85m. This is without the numerous other major projects which are in the pipeline. As an indication, Richard said the cost is estimated at about £100 per inch, and so far, money is raised by donations, bequests, and fund raising. Richard told us all about the trips and other activities visitors can enjoy on the canal, and details of these, plus costs of boat trips can be found on their website www.weyarun.org.uk as well as more information on the history of the canal. An Ordnance Survey map for that area shows the Wey-South Path running either next, or close to, the canal. Thanks to Richard for an interesting talk, which highlighted a good example of what enthusiasts can achieve, when minds are focused on a particular project, and the will is there.

Our speaker for our **April 2026** meeting was **Ruth Kerr** who came along to talk to us about ***Hampshire: Supporting Food & Farming through the Ages***. Ruth has spent much of her career in the museum sector, but these days she works freelance under "Museums & More". She helps museums and other sectors, including farm and countryside learning, to inform people how Hampshire County Council [HCC] supported farming through the ages from Victorian Magic Lantern lectures to currently helping new people get a foot on the farm ladder. In this

talk, Ruth said, she hopes to shed light on the early days of the work of HCC in supporting farming and industry improvements for 130 years.

Ruth began her talk by quoting from John Vince's 1982 book "It has been the lot of the farmworker to be undervalued" and a brief history of early farming methods before the Agriculture Revolution. This momentous change resulted in an unprecedented increase in agriculture production in this country due to the increases in labour and land productivity between the mid-17th century and the late 19th centuries. When we didn't have to produce our own food, Ruth said, we then had more time to do other things.

Concentrating on the role HCC has played over the last 130 years in supporting farming and food production, which has included managing Hampshire's Farm School as well as offering specialised training. One example of this was an historic record from 1903 showing Hampshire Education Committee proving a "Farriery Van" [which was illustrated] or a shoeing van travelling around the county to educate farmers.

HCC's County Farms Service was established in the early 20th century as the County Smallholding Service which, under legislation, was designed to support entry into the farming industry to produce more food, as well as providing ex-servicemen with employment in agriculture. This legislation was then consolidated into the Agriculture Act in 1970, its aim to support new and young entrants into farming. This provided affordable land plus buildings to new farmers under the ownership of the County Council. As farming has a significant start-up capital investment, this objective of helping new entrants into farming still remains a core principle of the County Farms Service today.

Before 1918, HCC bought 12 farms, 2 compulsory purchased, leased 24, and compulsory leased 3. During WW2 the Women's Land Army operated in the area maintaining food production, working alongside traditional farming efforts. Overall there were about 300,000 women working on the land at that time.

HCC has more than 30 equipped farms across some 4,500 acres of land throughout the county, and is "one of the larger providers of council farm opportunities", supporting dairy, arable, horticulture, and livestock. Some farms have farm shops including Compton Down Farm shop, just outside Winchester, New House Farm Shop at Botley, and Worthy Lamb Farm Shop at Kingsworthy. HCC still has a waiting list of people applying to lease their farms.

Teaching people farming is still as important today, as it has always been. Founded at Old Basing in 1899, the Hampshire Farm School moved to its present site in 1914 at Sparsholt just outside Winchester. This was quite challenging at the time, as it was the start of WW1. A further 187 acres were added to its original 251 acres in 1935. Formerly known as Hampshire College of Agriculture, Sparsholt College is a further education and higher education college with a secondary campus in Andover. The college provides courses from sixth form to degree level which now has, and I quote, "generations of Sparsholt alumni continuing to make their mark locally, regionally, and nationally – a lasting human legacy".

Ruth ended her talk by saying that she works for an organisation called The Country Trust, which is a "leading national educational charity connecting children from areas of high social and economic disadvantages with the land that sustains us all". Their aim is to help these children discover the connection between the food they eat, and where it comes from, together with empowering the children to be "confident, curious, and create change in their lives, so that they and society can thrive".

This was a fitting ending to Ruth's fascinating talk on the subject of supporting farming through the ages, and the important part that our own Hampshire County Council has played in it.

Roger Bird came along to our **May** meeting to talk to us about ***New Forest Watermills***. I forgot to ask Roger what his occupation was before retiring, but he did say that for twenty years he had been an historian for Brooklands at Weybridge in Surrey. Brooklands was the "birthplace" of British Motorsport and aviation, as well as being the site of many engineering and technological achievements. If you remember, HIAS members had a very enjoyable day out at Brooklands a few years ago.

Roger began by referring to the earliest sources of power, and listed Man Power, Horse Power, and Water and Wind Power. The Domesday Book which, at the end of the 11th century produced a detailed survey and valuation of landed property in England, listed over 5,000 watermills. Although the New Forest was not that populated, it did have a lot of watermills, and Roger talked about horizontal wheeled mills, looking at several early ones. This included a late Saxon mill at Tamworth in Staffordshire where excavations revealed "the earliest" post-Roman watermill discovered in Britain. Roger showed us a photograph circa 1902 of a Shetland horizontal mill. He also informed us that a vertical wheel mill needed three storeys, and was possibly introduced by the Normans. Roger said that in 1751 John Smeaton [1724-1792] was concerned with the natural powers of wind and water to turn mills, and other machines depending on a circular motion.

Not far from where Roger lives are Ashlett, Beaulieu and Eling mills, all dependent on the tides, which limited them to 5-6 hours of working time. Ashlett Mill is at the end of Ashlett Creek, a tidal inlet of Southampton Water, and is a well-preserved tidal mill being Grade II Listed, built in 1816. Iron Mills such as Langley and Sowley needed a continuous water supply, and could not rely on tides. They also needed charcoal, which was obtained from nearby woods, but a very time-consuming exercise. Roger said that research has indicated that the Cistercians

introduced blast furnace smelting to England, and the dissolution of Beaulieu Abbey in 1538 is the likely reason for the location of the iron works at Sowley, a major iron producing site from the 1590s.

Roger has been able to identify the site of mills no longer standing by using LiDAR mapping, and was asked by one of our members to explain what it was. Roger explained that it is a remote sensing technology that uses pulsed lasers to create high-resolution 3D models of the earth's surface and structures. It can accurately measure elevation capturing detailed terrain models [DTM] or surface models [DSM] that include buildings and trees, often at 25cm to 2m resolution. If you all remember, it was explained to those of us who were not familiar with this new technology by Gareth Owen back in April 2014 when he came along to talk to us about "The New Forest & WW2", and how they used LiDAR to trace the outlines of where the WW2 POW camps were situated.

Roger ended his talk by saying that the three mills nearest to where he lives are Mopley Mill, Langley Iron Mill and Sowley Iron Mill. Sowley Iron Mill, as mentioned, was a significant industrial site in Hampshire located on the south side of Sowley Pond, and was a major iron producing site from the 1590s until about the 1840s.

Many thanks to Roger's presentation on the history of "New Forest Watermills", which resulted from his house move to Mopley, and the discovery of early maps that showed Mopley Mill and Mopley Iron Mill Common. Plus, the possibility that iron smelted in Langley in the 18th century led him to research the understanding of the chemistry of the iron making process, and its feasibility in a rural environment.

❖ ❖

Hampshire Mills Group

Keith Andrews

It was decided that Hampshire Mills Group (HMG) should be closed down at the end of 2025; owing to the ageing membership, limited attendance at meetings, and lack of volunteers for the committee, there was no other practical alternative. It is regrettable that it could not continue.

HMG was formed over 40 years ago by John Silman, Gavin Bowie, John Reynolds, Kevin Stubbs, and others, as a spin-off from Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group (SUIAG). Its aims were to support mill conservation and to establish a body of knowledge and practical expertise about mills and mill history, with particular (but not exclusive) reference to Hampshire.

The group grew from just SUIAG members to include mill owners. There was a quarterly newsletter, which ran to 150 issues, and quarterly meetings, frequently at various mills where the mill and its machinery could be inspected. A set of active members (the 'heavy gang') became involved in repairs and maintenance and other practical things needed at various mills and other water-related sites. There were visits to particular mills beyond Hampshire, and lengthier study tours much further afield.

In 2011 HMG published a gazetteer with mill history over the centuries: this was the 3-volume *The Mills and Millers of Hampshire*. It was extensively based on information collected by Mary and Tony Yoward.

HMG liaised with and supported bodies like *Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust* and *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (Mills Section)* and the *Mills Archive Trust (MAT)*, where HMG's research and archive material has been deposited.

A lengthier article about HMG appears in the *Journal*.

AIA's Restoration Grant Scheme *(IA News, No. 211, Winter 2025)*

Ian West writes: The Association for Industrial Archaeology's Restoration Grant scheme was launched in 2008, funded by the generous donations and legacies from a small number of AIA members. Together with the Gift Aid that we are able to claim from the Government, the total amount of money contributed to the scheme to date is almost £2m. Up to 2025, this has been allocated to 115 projects restoring industrial structures and artefacts. Competition for these grants each year is fierce. The maximum size of these grants was recently increased to £30,000, and in 2025 over £185,000 was awarded to eight projects:

- Aerospace Bristol, for restoration of a Freighter Aircraft
- Kew Bridge Engines Trust, for repairs to Kew Bridge Standpipe Tower
- Chatham Dockyard, for the restoration of a ropewalk side traveller
- Amberley Museum – additional grant to complete the restoration of a steam crane
- Underfall Yard, Bristol, for the restoration of the Yard's hydraulic pumps
- Cheddleton Flint Mill, for repairs to their two calcining kilns and a limekiln
- National Coal Mining Museum, England, for the restoration of a Desco road cutter
- High Mill, Alston, for the restoration of Smeaton's 1767 cornmill

Twyford Waterworks Trust

www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 291720

Ian Harden

A busy 2026 season is well underway with two tours having already taken place in the Spring with others arranged for mid-Summer. The May event over the bank holiday weekend got us off to the customary busy start with 950 visitors passing through the gate over the two days. Enhanced by exhibitors and volunteers, this figure rose impressively to approximately 1,200 courtesy of two MG and Mini Owners Clubs amongst other exhibitors. A large Morgan Car Club contingent is due at the June event if the weather cooperates.

Southern Water has been replacing flooring in the operational areas of the pumping station with the redundant checker plate being made available to the Trust for future re-use. Adjacent to the Diesel House entrance, an infilled pit previously protected by a loose steel plate has been made good with a new heavyweight fixed cover. Close by, work is ongoing to remove redundant water valves, the most intensive elements of which are being arranged clear of our open day season. Also planned accordingly is renewal of the tarmac around the Tea Room which has begun to break up in recent months.

Two new exhibits will be on display soon in the Discovery Zone courtesy of Southern Water. A refurbished single induction regulator and a variable speed AC motor, both produced by Laurence Scott and Electromotors Ltd of Manchester and Norwich, made redundant during an upgrade of the Moorhill Booster Pumping Station near West End, have recently arrived at Twyford. These items of equipment were previously part of the machinery at Moorhill that boosted output from Otterbourne and Twyford on to the local service reservoirs.

Another new exhibit planned soon is a 1930s Godwin wind pump from Thatcham in Berkshire. Donated to the Trust, it represents a rare survivor of a once numerous feature in rural areas and, following restoration, will most likely go on display in the meadow to further enhance the story of water extraction in the local area. Likely to join it is the gate to Southampton's covered reservoir described by Rob Fish in the December 2025 edition of *Focus.* Restoration was complete by the new year and painting will commence once the ongoing research into the correct colours of the coat of arms is concluded.

All departments as usual kept themselves busy during the winter maintenance period, the Steam Team particularly so as one of the door apertures in the boiler mud drum required attention from a coded welder to restore the profile necessary to provide a proper seal when bolted shut. The Internal Combustion Team's time has been given over, amongst other work, to fabricating a new cooling tank for the gas engine on display in the Filter House along with the associated pipework plus a new stand for the tank. The three air receivers for the large Ruston diesel engines meanwhile successfully underwent their bi-annual insurance inspection. In a related matter, the three-yearly Fire Safety check took place in May with just a handful of advisories made.

In February the Industrial Railway volunteers celebrated the completion of the Bolton Fell Lister Blackstone narrow gauge locomotive of 1968, running it around the quarry track for the first time. Their attention then turned to sleeper replacement work in the wagon display area adjacent to the Lime Kilns and replacing the wire fencing at the top of the railway incline in the more substantial post and rail style with a wooden gate added.

Southampton's Royal Pier

Southampton politicians have called for the derelict Royal Pier area to be revamped, saying the structure has been 'left to rack and ruin' and that it is a 'national embarrassment'. An ambitious plan has earmarked it for improvement but this has not yet taken place.

More than three decades after devastating fires reduced it to ruins, New Forest councillor David Harrison launched a blistering attack on the state of the once-famous pier. "As I returned to the UK this week, the sight that greeted me was this pile of ruins in what is the gateway to our once proud country. Goodness knows what the thousands of visitors think, I simply cannot understand why the owners have allowed it to stay like this. It is a prime site, so badly in need of regeneration."

Former Southampton MP Royston Smith also called for action, saying the site could play a major role in transforming the city's waterfront. "I think a regenerated pier would complement the Spitfire project at Mayflower Park. Although I would love to see it restored, I don't think that would be practical or cost effective."

The council said regeneration of the Royal Pier remains a major part of the Southampton Renaissance Vision. The authority said plans include the renewal of Mayflower Park and Royal Pier into a major waterfront destination, with the potential relocation of the Red Funnel vehicle ferry terminal.

Associated British Ports said the site is under shared ownership between ABP, Southampton City Council and the Crown Estate, with ABP owning the neighbouring port land.

(Southern Daily Echo,22 May 2026)

Death of Sir Neil Cossons, 1939 - 2026

Museums + Heritage Advisor, 2 April 2026 https://museumsandheritage.com/advisor/

Sector professionals are paying tribute to Sir Neil Cossons, a museum and heritage sector stalwart who served in many senior roles including as former Science Museum director. Sir Cossons, who died aged 87, became the first Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in 1971. During twelve years in the post he oversaw the preservation of industrial sites throughout the gorge and the transformation of the site. By 1982 he was appointed OBE in recognition of his work at Ironbridge.

Cossons then served as director of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich before, in 1986, being appointed Director of the Science Museum, a position he held until 2000. In 1989 he was made governor of the Royal College of Art and by 1994 was knighted. From 2000–2007 Cossons served as chairman of English Heritage, during which time he oversaw the return of the SS Great Britain to Bristol and the establishment of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. He also held an advisory role on industrial heritage conservation for the government of Japan, receiving the Order of the Rising Sun in recognition of his work.

In 2019, nearly two decades after leaving the Science Museum, he was awarded a Fellowship from the Science Museum Group for his record of promoting Britain's scientific, engineering and industrial heritage.

Sir Ian Blatchford, director and chief executive of the Science Museum said: "Neil had a profound impact on the Science Museum, ushering in an era of change and bringing a strong focus on effective interpretation for visitors, with interactivity at its heart. His legacy can be seen around the museum to this day, and I will be forever grateful for the steadfast friendship and wise counsel which Neil offered throughout my time at the museum."

Association of Independent Museums (AIM) Director Lisa Ollerhead added: "We were saddened to hear this news and extend our deepest sympathies to Sir Neil's family, friends and colleagues. Sir Neil was a true champion of our sector and of independents in particular. AIM and our members are hugely grateful for his many years of generous advice, support and guidance; his legacy is extraordinary. As AIM nears its 50th anniversary next year we will ensure that legacy continues and his considerable role is marked accordingly."

Adriaan Linters, 1951 – 2025

(Angela Smith)

Very few of HIAS's current members were with us in the early 1980s and would remember Adriaan Linters, who studied industrial archaeology in this country and organised his Belgian colleagues to come over in July 1981 when SUIAG arranged various visits for them. Our tram project (then known as Tram 57 Project) has a photo where the visitors are assembled around Southampton Car 38 before the platforms and canopies were removed. Regrettably, your scribe has failed to identify which 30-year- old could be Adriaan. In turn, SUIAG were similarly entertained by Adriaan and members of *Vlaamse Vereniging voor Industriële Archeologie (Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology)* in 1982.

Bob Carr, from the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, wrote the following article in their December newsletter, and is worth copying to recognise the small part which Dr Edwin Course and SUIAG might have played in Adriaan's illustrious career in his home country.

Adriaan Linters died of cancer on 31 May this year (2025). He had intended to visit England in 2023 and be at the AIA conference in Bath but his health precluded this. He had studied industrial archaeology with Angus Buchanan in Bath. Then, an impecunious student, he used to hitchhike to Southampton to hear Edwin Course lecture in the evening. He built up a large collection of books at his house in Kortrijk with the intention that this library would be open to all and sundry who had an interest in industrial archaeology.

Adriaan's impressive Wikipedia entry makes clear that he was highly regarded in Belgium. In recognition of his life's work he received the European Heritage Award in 2019 and in 2024 was awarded the Sarton Medal from Ghent University's Faculty of Engineering for his half-century of dedication to industrial heritage.

I once met Adriaan Linters at St Pancras railway station and we went to see the interior of the then newly refurbished St Pancras hotel which only catered for the seriously rich. I took him to have a cup of coffee and I explained that I could afford to buy him coffee but not much else. The price of coffee there was similar to the price of a modest meal elsewhere! He was very impressed by the Gothic décor, presumably by George Gilbert Scott. Later he referred to 'Holy St Pancras'.

I well remember his kindness when I went to Lille with him to explore the area where TICCIH would be held. We later caught the train to Kortrijk. He was very generous and friendly and this really was a very memorable day with much about flax scratching. I think that was probably the last time I saw him in person but we corresponded fairly often since.

There was one night a week when we would go out and buy chips from the local Kortrijk chip stall. Very much a Belgian speciality as those of us who have been to Belgium will know.

Adriaan Linters was one of the founders of industrial archaeology in Belgium and had been involved in the development and preservation of industrial archaeology since 1971. He was a leading figure in industrial archaeology. He was also a good friend. The death of Adriaan is a personal one.

Obituary for Pamela Moore

Ian Harden



A remarkable era sadly drew to a close during the early hours of this new year when Pam Moore passed away suddenly, though peacefully, due to heart failure. For over four decades she beavered away on administrative and promotional work for numerous groups and organisations, helping to establish the necessary foundations for future success.

Pam was born in Petersfield in June 1952 and, at an early age, her father's employment with Curry's took the family to Fareham where a lifetime association with the town began. Throughout her school years, a love of learning took root, going about things in her own way and at her own pace whenever possible.

Her working life commenced at the Naval Pay and Records Office in Gosport before moving to Portsmouth Dockyard as a Clerical Officer. In the mid-1970s she transferred across to HM Customs and Excise as a VAT Inspector which no doubt seemed a good idea at the time. An unpopular imposition, eventually the stress of the work persuaded her in 1979 to begin a degree in Historical Studies at Portsmouth Polytechnic and the research skills and contacts she acquired would shape the rest of her life, fostered through such bodies as the Society for Nautical Research (South), the Naval Dockyard Society and the Fareham Society to name but a few.

Her interests soon spread around Hampshire, becoming more involved in attempts to either preserve or record the industrial buildings that were in danger of being lost due to redevelopment. She joined several county-based groups, amongst them Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group – later the Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society – in time becoming a member of the Council for the Association for Industrial Archaeology, the AIA.

The Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust was another important vehicle for Pam's work in industrial archaeology, serving as secretary for many years. Along with Phil Turner she was once described as '*rather like the cavalry coming over the hill to save the beleaguered defenders from a fate worse than death … both just quietly got on with what needed to be done,'* as they worked tirelessly to help Whitchurch Silk Mill get back on its feet after County Council funding had ceased and the trading company at Bursledon Brickworks had to be wound up. Together they helped to avert closure of the Trust at that time.

Through the University IA Group, Pam met Dr. Edwin Course, a lecturer at the University who was responsible for getting Twyford Waterworks listed as a scheduled ancient monument in the 1970s. Thus began a lifelong commitment for them both with Pam becoming the longest serving trustee, ensuring that the Trust was always true to its founding aims. Her support, advice and encouragement have been crucial to the Trust's success over the years, augmented by her gentle guidance, wise words and determination.

With increasing health issues restricting her sphere of activity, Twyford Waterworks and Whitchurch Silk Mill have been the two buildings and operations that Pam was to focus on most particularly in later years. She was occasionally able to attend meetings and events, last doing so at the October 2025 Twyford Waterworks Trust AGM. Following a pleasant, though quiet, Christmas, she spent New Year's Eve sending and receiving good wishes to and from family and friends across the world and, having seen the New Year in, she settled down for the night. In her sleep, though, she peacefully called it a day.

Thank you, Pam, for everything.

Pam and SUIAG | HIAS

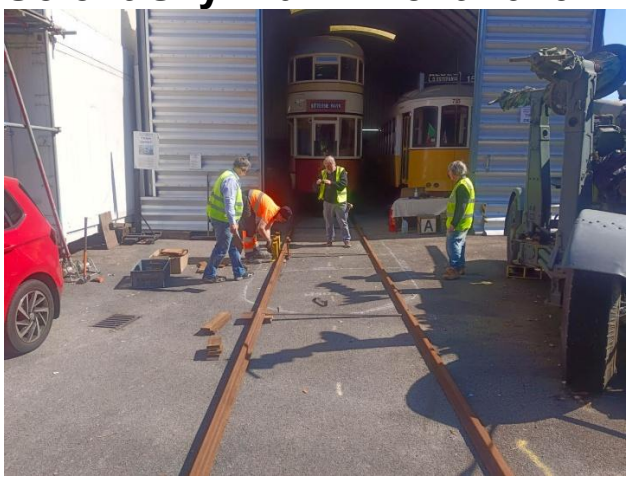
Angela Smith

Pam was appointed Secretary of SUIAG at the 1982 AGM without even having served on the Committee. At the time she was working as editor of the updated *IA Guide to Hampshire & the Isle of Wight* (the green cover) which was published in late 1984. She began writing articles for *Focus*, the first being the Weekend Study Tour (Bath and Avon) for the January 1983 edition. Her first Secretary's Report was July 1983. I really was most grateful to her for helping to fill out the pages of *Focus* during her time, when articles were not as easy to source as they are now.

She became Chairman of SUIAG in November 1993 but continued her *Focus* report under the title of *Pam's Piece*. She was a joint Vice-Chairman from November 1995, retiring from that post and from the Committee at the 1998 AGM but continued with all her other tasks, eventually standing back from SUIAG by the turn of the century to concentrate on Twyford Waterworks, Hampshire Mills Group and more major roles in county and national bodies. She remained a HIAS member to the end.

Solent Sky Tram Event 2026

Saturday and Sunday 9th & 10th May

















Southampton Tram Project

Angela Smith

Apart from last year's exciting action in May when the tram truck was attached under Car 11, work was just pottering on at a gentle pace in the tramshed. As reported in the December *Focus*, attention had been turned to investigating if we could make a working brake for the end facing the tramshed door. When the truck was at Alan Keef Ltd in the spring last year, their engineer had worked on the two 'front' wheels and the brake shoes to ensure that their surfaces met correctly as our wheels were a smaller diameter than the original Porto ones.

So we had the 'Peacock' gearing mechanism which attaches under the front of the platform (photo in December's *Focus*), the brake staff on the platform, a heavy brass handle (always locked away until needed), a heavy chain and part of an original rod which connected the chain to the brake lever between the two wheels. All we needed was a new rod consisting of two sections joined by a threaded coupler, one rod with a spigot to fit into the lever and the other with a stirrup to hook into the chain. But who could we find to manufacture this.

This was solved by volunteer Chris Williams who contacted the company in Eastleigh which had powder-coated the large springs on the truck for us, Solent Powder Finishers Ltd. They were prepared to tackle this unusual request and in mid-March Chris collected it and then there was the 'interesting' task of bolting the heavy gearing under the platform floor, complete with the chain wrapped around it, slot the rod in both ends – and check it. The real test wouldn't come until Car 11 was towed out at the May 9/10 Tram Event … chocks at the ready, as they say!

Meanwhile our electrician, Mike, was installing the light fittings in 11. Since the project began, it has been strip lights suspended in the lower saloon from the copper ceiling rail and by the wiring in the upper saloon, with all manner of wires everywhere. The power would be 550v DC, run through a transformer, so we needed to connect the wires already fitted in the tram decades ago to a socket under the front edge of the platform at the 'back' end to connect to the mains. This has not yet been completed due to Mike unfortunately damaging his achilles tendon and not being able to come, but nevertheless I decided to remove all the strip lights anyway.

Then we had the instruction that track would be needing to be laid for the Event. Due to H&S we couldn't do this ourselves so Alice Basey of Alan Keef Ltd, who came to fit the truck last year, came and with our help laid sufficient track to allow Car 11 to be pulled out in front of the tramshed. This was arranged for April 29th. Due to a slight slope down to a drain, the rail on the 'north' side would need to be elevated to make that track level, so a large quantity of wooden packing pieces were cut and given a couple of coats of protection.

Four volunteers – Paul, Dave, Chris and I – assisted Alice and by lunchtime the rails were laid. Quick lunch. Paul and Dave had to leave so when Alice suggested we carried out an 'unofficial' trial run, it was only Chris and I there, so I manned the brake for the first time while Chris stood by with the chocks. Alice used a pinch bar and then the Tirfor winch, which she had conveniently brought, to pull the tram out. Posed for photos, then back in again which took a bit longer as it was slightly uphill. The following day was the 'official' first run with the Fire Brigade museum's volunteers and their red pickup. One vital thing we had to check is that the trolley pole would actually fit under the door. Yes it did.

Museum Director Alan Jones wanted something theatrical for the roll-out on the first day of the Tram Event so I devised a script as to how we would proceed without any shouting. We did a walk-through before opening and the doors were shut. Pickup was attached at the end of the track, driver said he was ready, a whistle blown at 10.30, doors opened by Paul with Jim Beckett (who we had to borrow as not enough tram volunteers – thanks Jim, hope you enjoyed your moment of fame), I clanged the gong twice and the tram was drawn forward. Chris was at the rear with the winch in case of a problem, plus two people with chocks. And yours truly on the brake, getting all the attention when I was actually doing the least amount of work, and then found myself on the front cover and Page Three (not that sort of page three!) in the Monday's *Southern Daily Echo* after an interview with their reporter. Lord Montagu also visited, with Martin Petch and I spending about half an hour with him.

Tram Photos page 10

1 2
3 4
5 6
7 8

1 April 29th: track-laying day at the tramshed, Solent Sky Museum. *I to r* – Paul Coles *(Chairman, Southampton Tram Project)*; Alice Basey from Alan Keef Ltd, fitting packing pieces under rail; John Beck (photographer); Angela Smith *(Secretary, Southampton Tram Project)*. *(Photo: Dave Perkes)*

2 April 29th: after the 'unofficial' practice at pulling out Car 11. *I to r* – Martin Nolan *(Solent Sky volunteer)*; Angela Smith; Chris Williams *(tram volunteer)*; Alice Basey. *(Photo copyright Angela Smith)*

3 May 9th: Setting up tow by the Fire Brigade Museum's volunteers' pickup prior to opening of event on Saturday. *(Photo: Dave Perkes)*

4 April 30th: after the 'official' first run by members of the Fire Brigade Museum's volunteers' group, along with Paul Coles on the left. *(Photo: Dave Perkes)*

5 May 9th: the ceremonial opening of the tramshed doors at 10.30am by Paul Coles *(left)* and Jim Beckett *(Chairman, Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society, on right)* prior to Car 11 being towed out. *(Photo: Angie Beckett)*

6 May 9th: Angela on brake duty with Alan House *(Chairman of the Fire Brigade volunteers)* guiding the tram to a halt. *(Photo: Angie Beckett)*

7 May 9th: Car 11 in the sunshine. *(Photo: Dave Perkes)*

8 May 9th: Angie Beckett *(Treasurer, HIAS)* at the Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society's stand in front of the S6A Schneider Trophy seaplane in the museum. *(Photo: Jim Beckett)*

The Victorian Society Top Ten Endangered Buildings, April 2026

Griff Rhys Jones revealed the 2026 Top Ten list on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

The Society's President returned to the Today programme for the fourth year in a row to unveil the latest ten buildings and structures across England and Wales to enter our list. Together, they tell a powerful story about the buildings that shaped modern Britain, and the growing threats they now face. Despite their historic and architectural importance, many remain vacant, underused, or trapped in cycles of neglect, with uncertain futures and no clear plans for repair or reuse.

Those below are the only sites which could be described as 'Industrial Heritage'.

Tees Transporter Bridge, Stockton-on-Tees/Middlesbrough

Engineer: G.C. Imbault, constructed by Sir William Arrol and Co Ltd.

The Tees Transporter Bridge has been closed since 2019 owing to safety concerns about the stresses the bridge is under. The issue is the funding required to restore this much-loved structure, which hinges on whether it is considered as heritage or as transport infrastructure, allowing different public funds to support its repair.

Former Strand Railway Station and Railwaymen's Club, Barrow-in-Furness

Grade II, E. G. Paley, 1863.

This was Barrow's first station, built during rapid technological change as the village grew into an industrial port. It soon became outdated, and in 1882 Barrow Central opened to allow through trains. The original dockside station was then used for goods and as a reading room for the Furness Railway employees. The Railwaymen's Club operated there until 2008, closing after a 101-year history. Now owned by an absentee landlord, the building is decaying and in need of restoration and a new purpose.

The remaining eight buildings are:- Hackney Borough Disinfecting Station, London (Grade II, 1901); New Market Buildings, Bridgnorth (Grade II, 1855-1859); Faenol Mausoleum, Pentir, Nr Bangor (Grade II, late 1870s); Oakes School, Huddersfield (Grade II, 1987 extended 1885); Parndon Hall, Harlow (Grade II, 1867); St Michael's Cemetery Chapel, Sheffield (Grade II, 1898); Derby School of Art (Grade II*, 1876 additions 1899); Former Library & Mechanics Institute, Devonport (Grade II, 1843-44).

"Victorian and Edwardian buildings are still being demolished, neglected or altered beyond recognition. We're fighting to protect them, but we can't do it without your support. Joining The Victorian Society is the best way to support the only charity dedicated to saving and celebrating the country's Victorian and Edwardian heritage. It's quick and easy to join. Our members help save endangered heritage and get special access to our talks, tours and trips. You'll enjoy priority booking, free magazines and books, members-only exclusives and updates on the buildings you're helping save. https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/join/ "

AIA e-news bulletin April 2026

National Trust rescue of Ironbridge Museums

We reported in the January 2026 issue of this Bulletin that the National Trust had stepped in to take over all the museums owned by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, with the help of a £9m grant from the UK Government. All the Ironbridge museums sites closed at the beginning of March, to allow for the transfer of the assets and staff, and the introduction of new IT and administrative systems. Forty-seven staff roles were made redundant as part of this process.

(Note from Focus editor:- The largest of the museum sites, Blists Hill Victorian Town, re-opened on May 22nd, along with the Museum of Iron in Coalbrookdale and Furnace Kitchen; Wednesday to Sunday 10.00 to 17.00. Visits must be pre-booked before you arrive. The remaining museums will follow with phased re-openings throughout the rest of the year)

Kempton Steam Museum receives NHLF Grant

The Kempton Steam Museum, to the west of London, has received a £90,000 grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to connect people of all ages with the story of supplying clean water in London, past and present. The grant will enable the Museum to build its capacity to enable it to achieve Museum Accreditation by summer 2026, increase its visitor numbers from the local community and beyond, and manage its volunteers. This increased capacity should help it become more resilient and provide a firmer base for the future.

The crown jewels of the Kempton Museum are the two triple-expansion steam engines that were that were built by Worthington Simpson in Newark-on-Trent and commissioned in 1929. The engines were each capable of pumping up to 86 million litres of drinking water per day to reservoirs in North London for the supply of fresh water to the city. They ceased operation in 1980. One, named Sir William Prescott, has been restored and is fully operational and is the world's largest triple-expansion steam engine. The other, an exact replica, is currently being restored to operational order by volunteers.

News items from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Southampton's Old Bond Store for sale: The Grade II listed Old Bond Store on Back of the Walls in the city centre was being marketed by Savills in February to let or as freehold as a restaurant, hospitality or leisure space. It is thought to date back to the 1800s and originally served as a distillery. An investment of over £1m in 2019 converted the warehouse into a private members' club. The property has three floors under a pitched slate roof and still retains its original features including exposed brick and industrial metal works. It was originally built as a bond store to be linked to the Southampton to Salisbury Canal, which was never completed. *(Southern Daily Echo, 5 February 2026)*

(As a point of historical interest, the rear of the building was alongside what was the moat of the original old town, on Canal Walk, which would have become the southern link of the canal – Ed.)

Plans for historic salt barns turned down: The New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) has refused an application to turn a pair of waterfront barns at Lymington into holiday lets. A report to the NPA's planning committee said potential flood risk would create an "unacceptable risk" to life. The Grade II-listed barns are the only surviving buildings that were involved in the production of salt hundreds of years ago. *(Southern Daily Echo, 24 March 2026)*

Plans for watermill to be split in two: A planning application has been submitted to the New Forest National Park Authority to turn Efford Mill, in Hordle near Lymington, into two separate homes – the Mill and the Mill House. The owner says the size and complexity of the building is difficult for her to maintain. She plans to continue living in the Mill House while members of her family will live in The Mill. It is a Grade II listed building and would only be split internally. The application states that splitting the property will help raise money to repair and restore the old mill workings, to "protect and highlight its history" as it has been used for milling for over 840 years. *(Southern Daily Echo, 4 April 2026)*

Former mill could become 400 homes: A site formerly home to a historic paper mill could be transformed into a 400-home development under new plans. The proposal includes 32 acres of green infrastructure on the Overton Paper Mill site in Hampshire. Portals had been producing banknote and security paper for more than 300 years and opened the Overton site in 1922. It closed the business in July 2022 after its contract with De La Rue ended. *(BBC News Hampshire & Isle of Wight, 12 April 2026)*

WWII airfields heritage centre opens to visitors: The heritage centre dedicated to the memory of the twelve New Forest airfields in the Second World War has reopened for the 2026 season. The centre in Mosquito Way, Bransgore, is run by the volunteers of the Friends of New Forest Airfields Association. It is open every Sunday until October. Chairman Sam Ruddy said: "The heritage centre tells the story of each of the twelve New Forest airfields and the vital role that they played in the Allied victory in 1944-1945". The airfields include Christchurch, Hurn, Lymington, Beaulieu, Calshot, Stoney Cross, Ibsley and Holmsley South, where the airfields' memorial is located. A service is held there every year. *(Southern Daily Echo, 8 April 2026)*

Permission granted to turn movie location into holiday let: The Landmark Trust has been given the go-ahead to transform an old RAF watch tower at the former RAF Ibsley, near Ringwood in the New Forest, into a holiday let. The airfield appears in the 1942 *'The First of the Few'* film about R J Mitchell who designed the Spitfire. Mitchell is played by Leslie Howard, who was killed later in the war when his aircraft was shot down, possibly because the Germans mistakenly thought that Winston Churchill was among the passengers. Plans to convert the control tower into a short-term holiday let with four bedrooms and a roof terrace have been approved by New Forest District Council, which reported that the building has been derelict for some time and is in a very poor state of repair. Work is likely to start later this year. *(Southern Daily Echo, 20 April 2026)*

'Gutted' as vandals trash historic village building: East Boldre Village Hall in the New Forest was targeted in what has been called a "wholly unfair" act of vandalism, with windows smashed, cables cut and pipes damaged, leaving parts of the building flooded. Items were stolen, including tools. The damage is believed to have taken place overnight between April 15 and April 16, with builders arriving on site to continue the refurbishment and discovering the extent of the destruction. The hall is the only surviving First World War building in the New Forest and has played a wide range of community roles over the past century, now serving as a versatile community space. Volunteer and Chairman Mike Husband said he believes the damage was too deliberate to have been carried out by children as the fire alarm cables had been cut, which is really expensive cabling right by the wall. More than £450,000 had been raised for the refurbishment with a further £35,000 required for internal fitting out. Further fundraising has been set up to cover this extra cost. *(Southern Daily Echo, 23 April 2026)*

Community raises £2.7k to help save historic windmill: A community fundraising campaign to help save Bursledon Windmill has raised more than £2,700 as volunteers prepared to welcome visitors back for a special open day on Tuesday, May 19. The volunteer-led appeal originally aimed to raise £200 for basic maintenance equipment including a new wheelbarrow and broom, but support from the local community pushed donations to more than ten times the target. The windmill remains temporarily shut while its long-term future is reviewed by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust. Volunteers have continued maintaining the grounds and preserving the site while new funding opportunities are explored. There was a previous report that the Trust filed a dilapidation claim against Hampshire County Council, alleging failure to meet repair obligations to restore the site to a good condition. *(Southern Daily Echo, 25 April and 15 May 2026)*

Miscellaneous news items from around the UK

BBC News North East and Cumbria

Buses saved after charity loses home *(11 February 2026)*

The Northern National Restoration Group (NNRG) was made "homeless" after losing its depot when the building – the former Sunderland Corporation Tramways power station in Houghton-le-Spring – was sold to new owners in December. The Group was unable to secure funds to buy the building and feared its fleet of nine buses, some up to 43 years old, faced being stripped for parts if a new home was not found. However, NNRG has donated three heritage vehicles to sites in Cumbria, West Midlands and the South coast, while the remaining six have gone into storage. The charity ran open days and day trips for care home residents and people with autism.

Ex-RAF site has 'exceptional wildlife potential' *(18 February 2026)*

Watchtree Nature Reserve in Great Orton, Cumbria, has purchased the former RAF Great Orton Airfield, including its Grade II listed World War 2 watchtower, for £150,000. The Reserve is a 205-acre, man-made site established in 2001 after livestock were buried there during the foot-and-mouth outbreak. The purchase of the adjacent 8.2 acres of land was completed in January using contingency funds. The charity said the watchtower was of 'rare national importance' having previously supported wartime operations linked to RAF Silloth. Despite decades of exposure, the building remains structurally sound, with original brickwork and concrete still in good condition. Across the surrounding land, remnants of RAF activity endure, including concrete aprons and pathways that have since become havens for specialist wildflowers and insects.

Historic mining museum to reopen to public *(1 March 2026)*

Haig Colliery Mining Museum in Kells, Whitehaven, in Cumbria, closed in 2016 amid financial difficulties and has been empty since. The site was purchased in February by Conservative councillor Mike Johnson who said parts of it need to be renovated. He said his father had worked in open-cast mining and wanted to ensure the children of today understand what our forefathers did. The colliery was operational from 1916 to 1986 and is the site of Cumbria's last deep coal mine. The site was converted into a volunteer-run museum in 1997 and became a scheduled monument in 1998. One of the two steam engines was returned to working order and artefacts were on display. It closed under insolvency measures and Mr Johnson said it needs to be a multi-use building.

Border-spanning viaduct restoration complete *(14 March 2026)*

Repairs to secure the long-term future of one of the most distinctive structures spanning the England-Scotland border has been completed. Riddings Viaduct was built in 1864 on the branch line between Carlisle and Langholm in Dumfries & Galloway, but fell into disrepair when the line closed in 1967. The viaduct's southern half is in England with its northern portion in Scotland, which presented National Highways with unique challenges carrying out the repairs. It has listed status in both nations. Restoration work included filling gaps in the stonework, fixing damaged sections and restoring railings along the bridge's edges, using material matching the original to preserve its appearance.

Woodland transformed on site of former coal mine *(19 March 2026)*

A woodland trail, built on the site of a former coal mine, has opened following a four-year restoration project. Walkmill Community Woodland, near Whitehaven in Cumbria, was planted in the 1990s but had "largely inaccessible footpaths" and "very little" wetland habitat. The West Cumbria Rivers Trust has since installed seven ponds, resurfaced walkways and reshaped 280 metres of the River Keekle. A memorial feature has also been built to celebrate the area's mining history, where visitors can see the outline of the old mine shafts as they would have appeared about 136 years ago.

Midlands

Plans submitted to turn former mill into homes *(BBC News Derbyshire, 10 January 2026)*

A former 1902 mill in Long Eaton could be turned into new homes. A developer submitted the plans to Erewash Borough Council to revamp Bridge Mills into 80 apartments. The three-storey former lace factory building is by the Erewash Canal and features a 100ft high brick chimney. It was built for Long Eaton Bridge Mills Co. Ltd. and is understood to have been the last multi-storey tenement factory to be built in England.

Belper Mills redevelopment plans *(BBC News Derbyshire, 17 February 2026)*

Development plans for the historic mills in Belper, which form part of a Unesco World Heritage Site, are set to take a step forward when proposals to convert to flats, shop space, restaurant or café, office space and space for a museum were put forward to Amber Valley Borough Council with a recommendation for approval. The mills, forming part of the Derwent Valley Mills, have stood largely derelict for decades and are in poor condition. An application to the government's Brownfield Housing Fund was being made by the developer, First Investments Real Estate Management. The application to the Council's Planners was unanimously approved. A number of heritage and local public bodies, including Historic England and Derbyshire County Council, were consulted on the plans, many noting in their feedback that the public benefit of the site being brought back into use outweighed the potential harm caused to its heritage character. It is thought that it will take four to five years for the Grade II East Mill conversion to be completed with work on the site still likely to be about a year away because of a number of planning conditions. Repairs to the Grade I listed North Mill will make up part of the early works.

Arrest after fire tears through historic mill *(BBC News Stoke & Staffordshire, 28 March 2026)*

Leek's historic The Big Mill, a Grade II listed building in Mill Street, was engulfed in a major fire where six fire service crews battled the blaze at its height. Part of the mill will have to be demolished as it had been left structurally unsound, and the worry is that it could collapse. People in the area reported the derelict building appeared "completely burned out" by 11pm. The six-storey building, which has a bell tower, dates back to 1860 and is one of the earliest mill buildings of its scale in the town. It was last used as a mill in the 1980s and then home to a pine manufacturer and workshop, but has been derelict since 2007. It had been bought by a development company with an application to convert the site to 55 flats. An 18-year-old man was arrested and held in custody on "suspicion of arson with recklessness as to whether life was endangered".

North West

Sankey Canal restoration society adopts Earlestown station *(St Helen's Star, 7 February 2026)*

A local canal restoration society has been given the opportunity to revamp Earlestown Railway Station through the Northern Community Station Adoption Scheme. The group, which restores and brings life back to the areas around the Sankey Canal have adopted the station as part of the scheme, in the hopes of restoring it to its former glory. Speaking about the adoption of the historic site, a Sankey Canal Restoration Society spokesperson said: "Earlestown is a special place where canal and railway histories come together. The 1757 Sankey Canal flowed beneath the iconic Sankey Valley 'Nine Arches' Viaduct, marking the moment one transport revolution gave way to another. The five-platform triangular station is on the legendary 1830 Liverpool & Manchester Railway. It became the world's first railway junction in 1831 as the meeting point of three separate company lines and it will be a star of the L&M 200th Anniversary celebrations in 2030."

"Earlestown Station will now become part of our Task Team calendar and we're looking forward to involving local people and community groups in activities later this year." Forming part of the group's Task Team calendar, the volunteers will introduce biodiversity projects, community activities, heritage displays, and artwork to the station as well as gardening and maintaining the appearance of the site. A spokesperson for Northern Railway said: "The Sankey Canal Restoration Society brings huge passion, local knowledge and a real sense of pride in Earlestown's unique place in transport history, and that enthusiasm will make a visible difference for everyone who uses the station going forwards. We'd love to see more local groups come forward to adopt their station. Whether your interest is history, art, nature or simply making your station a better place, there's a real opportunity to shape it for the future through Northern's Community Station Adoption scheme."

Liverpool waterfront museums receive £19m government funding

Liverpool's International Slavery Museum and Maritime Museum have received £19 million from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Public Bodies Infrastructure Fund for their redevelopment. The funding supports the transformation of both museums as part of National Museums Liverpool's Waterfront Transformation Project, re-imagining the area between Royal Albert Dock and Mann Island. The Maritime Museum opened in 1986 as part of the revitalisation of the Albert Dock. The International Slavery Museum opened in 2007, evolving from a basement gallery to a museum. A new entrance for the International Slavery Museum is planned. The Maritime Museum will see regeneration enabling it to show a more comprehensive vision of Liverpool's maritime story. A new entrance is planned, with new galleries exploring conflict, global connections and migration. The Titanic and Liverpool gallery will also be revitalised. The International Slavery Museum will become home to the National Centre for Teaching Black History. The redeveloped second floor of the Dr Martin Luther King Jr Building will be dedicated to the centre's learning outputs.

Museums minister Baroness Twycross added: "Liverpool's historic waterfront is such an iconic part of our national heritage, and I look forward to this investment bolstering these museums' position at the forefront of historic engagement and education." Ralph Appelbaum Associates is leading on exhibition design for both museums. The project will include new galleries and shared spaces for community uses, research, learning and events. Both museums are now closed for redevelopment and are due to reopen in 2029. The project has also received £6.9 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, £200,000 from the Wolfson Foundation, and funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, philanthropic trusts and foundations, and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

West Country

Pier washes away and railway sea wall crumbles in storm *(BBC News Devon, 24 January 2026)*

Storm Ingrid had lashed Devon and Cornwall overnight and Teignmouth Pier suffered a battering from "wild waves" which damaged part of its 1867 Grand Pier, washing away the end. Prior to the storm, part of the historic family-owned pier was open to the public and was home to an arcade. Teignmouth's mayor said: "It has lost part of the pier structure itself, that has dissolved and gone away into the sea. It's an old pier and it was needing some attention and I suppose age and wear and tear has taken its toll. It has survived many weather conditions as well as world wars. It's sad when you look at it now to see some of it now missing." Elsewhere Network Rail issued a black alert on Friday, its highest warning, as 12ft waves hit the sea wall at Dawlish and GWR suspended trains between Exeter St Davids and Plymouth. Part of the sea wall protecting the railway line had crumbled with a

local resident commenting that the wall at either end had gone. There was a strip about 80ft to 90ft where the wall had been demolished and tons of debris on the line. A further report by BBC News Cornwall on 4th February after Storm Chandra caused damage to tracks said dive teams who needed to check submerged structures were unable to go out due to the sea conditions.

Rare glimpse of historic bridge *(BBC News Gloucestershire, 11March 2026)*

Dramatic rain and low tides have uncovered parts of a railway bridge that was demolished after a disaster in which five men died. The Severn Railway Bridge, which spanned the river between Sharpness and Lydney, was torn down after two barges disastrously struck the bridge in 1960. While parts of the structure are always visible at low tide, heavy rain during exceptionally low tides have washed away sediment, allowing Sharpness Lifeboat Station volunteers to explore the bridge during a rescue training session. Crew member Luke Grinstead said it was "just fantastic" to have the opportunity to visit the remains of the bridge, which was built in the 1870s.

Toll booth recycled to preserve a 'piece of history' *(BBC News Cornwall, 21 March 2026)*

An old toll booth has been given a new lease of life by a football club to keep a piece of local history in the community. The booth was donated by Tamar Crossings to Saltash United Football Club, who will refurbish and re-purpose it as a new ticket office. Tamar Crossings said the football club already had one of the older-style bridge booths from when they were last upgraded about 20 years ago, which prompted the idea of bringing the booths "together once again".

Steve Rimmer, the bridge's engineering manager, said donating the booth to the football club would help "preserve a small piece of Tamar Bridge history". Wayne Hambly, whose company sponsors the club, built a concrete base and later installed the booth at the ground.

He said the blue booth was iconic as "everyone remembers them from the bridge" and that it belonged at the ground to match the one previously donated. Tamar Crossings said the booth's new home at the football club would help keep a small but meaningful piece of Tamar Bridge history within the local community".

The booth now sits prominently at the front entrance of Saltash United's Kimberley Stadium.

The £3m race to save polar explorer Shackleton's villa *(BBC News, 31 December 2025)*

Work is under way on a South Atlantic island to preserve a key building in the story of polar explorer Ernest Shackleton. Shackleton famously reached the whaling station of Stromness on South Georgia in 1916 after spending 18 months stranded on Antarctica with his crew. The now-dilapidated Stromness Manager's Villa was used as a base by Shackleton while he orchestrated the rescue of his men.

The Dundee-based South Georgia Heritage Trust have been working to stabilise the structure, with plans to create a digital "twin" of the building for people around the world to see it. A 2022 survey found the building was very close to collapse. Alison Neil, chief executive of the South Georgia Heritage Trust, said that the reason for that is rotting timbers. "It is an old-fashioned version of a flat-pack house. They would have been brought down from Norway on ships and then assembled on the island."

The Trust raised more than £3m to send a team to South Georgia. They arrived in October and have been working on stabilising the structure. Alison said: "It's in the middle of a whaling station that's full of asbestos, dangerous debris, and is not accessible to the public. Our plan is not to open it up to the public, our plan is to maintain it for the future."

Shackleton's extraordinary story of survival has fascinated and inspired people for more than a century. His most famous mission was his plan to cross Antarctica through the South Pole on board his ship the *Endurance*. *Endurance* became trapped in ice, his crew abandoned ship which was crushed and sank, crossed on to floating ice and when the ice broke up they navigated three lifeboats through the treacherous Southern Ocean and landed on Elephant Island, where they decided they were going to live until they could be saved. In April 1916 Shackleton took five crew members in a small lifeboat, the *James Caird*, in search of help for the others. They travelled over 807 miles of ocean before reaching the island of South Georgia. Leaving three of the men behind, Shackleton and his two companions trekked across the island for three days until they reached Stromness whaling station.*

They immediately started to organise the rescue of the rest of their crew with the help of the whalers.

In the coming weeks, digital specialists will go to South Georgia to scan the structure. Alison said: "They are going to capture everything that lets us decide, at some point, how we are going to make this accessible to people. It will definitely be available on our website, for example. But we might also want to create a version where people can put a headset on and actually experience walking in to the room as it would have been in 1916."

Work to restore the villa to its original condition began last month.

[* Your editor has enhanced the original text which fails to record that the crew rowed to Elephant Island (possibly being edited out of the original article?). Shackleton's lifeboat, the *James Caird*, also not mentioned in the article, can be found at Dulwich College in South London. We visited Stromness twice where visitors are kept well clear of the asbestos whaling station buildings, which is unlike at Grytviken where all the building structures have been removed leaving just the machinery on display to wander around. On the second occasion we walked to the cliff face to the waterfall down which they descended, that was solid ice in Shackleton's trek. Amazing men!].

Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

(formerly Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group)
(Registered Charity No. 276898)
Web site: www.hias.org.uk

Honorary President: Bill White, 98 Forest Hills Drive, Townhill Park, Southampton, SO18 2FY

Officers:
Hon. Chairman: Jim Beckett, 14 Pennard Way, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 4NJ
email: *jim.beckett@talktalk,net*
Hon. Vice-Chairman: Rob Fish, 14 Wiltshire Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 3EZ
email: *robertfish@robertfish.net*
Hon. General Secretary: Carol Burdekin, 10 St Michael's Gardens, Winchester, SO23 9JD
e-mail: *hiassec@gmail.com*
Hon. Treasurer: Angie Beckett, 14 Pennard Way, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 4NJ
email: *angelabeckett@talktalk.net*

Committee:
Keith Andrews *(Membership Secretary)*, 13 Ashley Close, Harestock, Winchester, Hampshire, SO22 6LR
email: *hpdn.ka@ntlworld.com*
Barry Duke *(SERIAC representative)* 86A Roman Way, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9RQ
email: *barry-duke@sky.com*
Angela Smith *('Focus' newsletter)* 3 Stag Gates, Blackfield, Southampton, SO45 1SR
email: *Lnigel.smith@btinternet.com*
Eleanor Yates *(Publications/Displays)*
email: *eleanor.yates@ntlworld.com*

DVD Library: Rob Fish (details above)

HIAS Insurance terms – Please note:
Members are not covered for Personal Accident but are covered for third party liability

CONTACTS FOR ASSOCIATED GROUPS

The Solent Steam Packet Ltd (S.S. Shieldhall): Craig Hesketh *membership@ss-shieldhall.co.uk*
Southampton Tram Project: Angela Smith – see above *www.facebook.com/Tram57Project/*
Twyford Waterworks Trust: *www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk*
Contact - Ian Harden, 31 Melville Close, Lordswood, Southampton, SO16 8DE

'End of an era' as last tin ore from mill smelted

(BBC News Cornwall, 3 March 2026)



As he pours pure tin into specially designed ingot moulds, Clifford Rice fears a Cornish tradition is coming to an end. He has been smelting Cornish tin for 45 years, most recently in a shed at the Wheal Jane Laboratory site. But, on a grey February day, Rice fired up the furnace for the final time as he used the last of a batch of tin-rich ore from Tolgus Mill, near Redruth.

"This is special," the laboratory director said. "For the time being, as far as I'm aware, there is nothing left to smelt now, so it is the end of an era."

Smelting uses concentrated heat and is the step between mining raw ore and creating a usable metal. Smelting tin in Cornwall is a method that has been used for centuries. But the Wheal Jane laboratory furnace is being decommissioned and the shed will become a bat house.

In 1870, Cornwall was the premier tin mining field in the world and the county once boasted 2,000 tin mines. Clifford said: "It's unlikely that smelting will be done commercially in this county again." The final batch of Cornwall Gold's Tolgus tin came from concentrate produced in 2014 and it was used in jewellery after smelting.

Mike Taylor, managing director of Cornwall Gold and Tolgus Tin, said it was "a great example of how Cornish mining businesses are still working together". "But we haven't actually processed tin here for about 15 years now," he said. However, he said he was confident it would happen again in the future, "probably in the medium term - the next 10 to 15 years".

He said the mill was now in need of restoration work and a percentage of the sale price of the jewellery made from the final batch of tin would be used to fund it. Back at Wheal Jane, Clifford Rice said that, if the mill did produce tin again, the furnace would be long gone, but he would gladly rekindle his skills.

"It is sad," he said. "Tin has always been part of my life."

Tail-enders

Carpet Museum reopens after £50,000 lifeline *(BBC News Hereford & Worcester, 14 February 2026)*

Following the news in December's *Focus* that Kidderminster's Carpet Museum was suddenly closed due to financial pressures, an announcement was made in February that it would reopen its doors. After talks with Wyre Forest District Council and Kidderminster Town Council, the museum secured a £50,000 funding boost to reopen for four days over the half-term. The Chairman of the Carpet Museum Trust said that the councils have come round to supporting the museum, so they are willing to provide it with funds which will enable it to open the museum for the rest of the year and probably next year.

New carriages for Saltburn Tramway *(Heritage Railway, Issue 342, February/March 2026)*

Carriages on the award-winning Grade II-listed Saltburn Cliff Tramway are being replaced aspart of a major upgrade by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. The two carriages were removed by crane on January 15 after more than 15 years of service, transporting an estimated 2.5million passengers. The new vehicles, complete with bigger stained glass windows, will be built off-site and installed in the coming months ahead of the tourist season. A new hydraulic brake system and buffer system will also be installed as part of the upgrade.

Restoration work for Eling Tide Mill *(Southern Daily Echo, 4 March 2026)*

New Forest District Council (NFDC) has agreed to fund major restoration at the Grade-II listed Eling Tide Mill. It forms part of a wider attraction known as the Eling Experience which includes a visitor centre and a café. Plans to carry out extra work were announced by Eling councillor Richard Young, who has made the mill's future one of his priorities. He said: "I am delighted to have played my part of helping to guarantee phased investment of £750,000 by NFDC over the next two years which is planned to deliver essential improvements." This new programme of works will focus on the building fabric, including repairs to roofing, windows and flooring to ensure structural integrity and protect the historic asset.

But not for Hythe Pier *(Southern Daily Echo, various dates)*

Meanwhile, a few miles south of Eling, the same authority appears to have no interest in the fate of the pier and ferry at Hythe. The Hythe Ferry was suspended in August 2024 after damage was found to its pontoon and supporting structure. The Hythe and Southampton Ferry Company, which operated the passenger link to the Town Quay in Southampton, was taken over by the Isle of Wight ferry firm Red Funnel in 2023. In December 2025, Red Funnel was acquired by investment firm Njord Partners, who have concluded they "aren't best suited" to operate the Hythe service moving forward.

In February The Hythe and Southampton Ferry Company set about actively seeking a new owner who shares their vision to restore, modernise and unlock the full potential of this historic route. Corrosion in the pontoon discovered in 2024 was found to have increased at a faster rate than initially thought and it was later revealed the pontoon could not be fixed, with a replacement costing £250,000.

The ferry company leases the pier itself from local private owner, parish councillor Ashleigh Mutimear-Macmillan who, aiming to preserve the structure, purchased it in November 2024. After repairs, the pier was opened for pedestrians on April 2nd.

On April 9th The Hythe and Southampton Ferry Company announced that it would be going into voluntary liquidation. A financial services company listed the assets for sale including the ferry itself, a pontoon, and walkway that links the pontoon to the independently-owned pier.

On a brighter note, since its reopening in April, there has been a steady footfall of people taking the opportunity to take in some sea air as well as exercise. The pier is open Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10am to 4pm, with a £1 toll which will be invested in the pier's future. The train, although under restoration by a volunteer group, is not yet operational. Councillor Malcolm Wade commented that the ferry route is part of the new King Charles III Coastal Walk … which means a long diversion via Redbridge into the city centre.

My thanks to the contributors for items used in this issue. Other articles have been extracted from websites, magazines, regional newspapers, and especially the BBC News 'red button text'. The next *Focus* is planned for December 2026, so the final deadline will be the November AGM meeting, please, if you want to pass items in person. My contact details can be found on the previous page.

Angela Smith