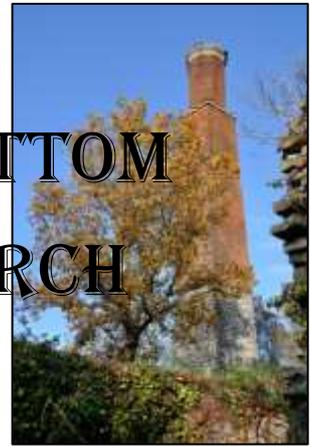


FRIENDS OF BRANDY BOTTOM COLLIERY, PUCKLECHURCH

Newsletter N° 7, May 2015



There was progress during February to May 2015, with all the scheduled work on both the top and the bottom of the chimney being completed. However we have discovered that the top 6 feet of brickwork needs repointing on the outside. More structures have been uncovered in the areas of the East Flue, Pumping Shaft crossover and Fan Ducts.

Progress: March – May 2015

(Photos 1-26 will be found in the last section of the newsletter)

CWS Landscaping returned at the end of February, and repointed the stonework on the outside of the top of the chimney. This was paid for by a grant from Historic England, as the relevant part of English Heritage is now known. The photo on the right was taken when they had almost finished. Photos 1-3 shows how work has progressed over time, taken from near the storage container. Photos 4-8, which were



taken by the mason, C Skelton, in November 2014, show various stages in the rebuilding of the top and the casting of the concrete reinforcing ring. As is always the case with Brandy Bottom, another job surfaces as soon as one is finished. The pointing of the brickwork at the top of the chimney appeared to be in good condition when viewed from the ground. That was not found to be the case on closer inspection, and the top 6 feet will have to be repointed at a later date.

Work continued in the Old Boiler House, and the bracing beam (photo on right) was installed in April. The beam buttresses the north-east wall (on the left) against the heapstead (on the right), and will help to strengthen the wall against the pressure from the waste material in the batch. The beam has been bricked into the base of the chimney, completing the rebuild of that area. Photo 9 shows the beam being manhandled into place, while photo 10 is a view of the finished base of the chimney.



The path along the base of the north-west wall of the New Pit heapstead ramp has been cleared to the end of the ramp, improving access to the

heapstead. This turned up the fragment of porcelain shown in photo 22. The two crossed swords and 'Founded 165?' suggest the item was made by the Bristol Pottery, which was founded in 1652, This, however, requires further research as there is some dispute about it. The iron padlock seen in photo 23 was also uncovered in this area.

Vegetation was removed from the corner of the New Boiler Area above the East Flue. Both of the metal rods seen in photo 12 were fitted with a metal band, as seen in photo 14. The way the bases of the rods are secured to the wall, seen in close-up in photo 13, suggests they were holding down whatever fitted into the bands. Those are almost square, measuring 13" across the inside of the plain sides and 12½" across the sides with holes.

Attention has also turned back to the area around the fan engine bed, where some more of the building has been uncovered. The concrete floor and what may be a doorway have been located at what appears to be the eastern corner of the building (photo right).



More of the Pumping Shaft crossover was cleared of vegetation and spoil (photo 17), uncovering a platform on the northern side of the central wall (photo below right). What its function was, and why the bricks were so neatly placed, is another of Brandy Bottom's little mysteries. Photo 15 shows the Cornish Engine House end of the cleared platform, which is floored with pennant stone slabs. Buried in the covering spoil were several artefacts, including an oil can and a 6" high bucket (photo 16). There is no apparent way



of accessing the platform, other than the current method of clambering over the central brick wall which can be seen in the left of the photo above. No doubt the actual route has been lost over time.

Pansies were planted (photo 18) around from the half headgear pulley lying on the western side of the cycle path after the nettles were cleared (photo 19). There is a 4" diameter maker's mark (photo 20) on the rim of the wheel, which has been traced by one volunteer to that used by Thompson & Southwick, Tamworth. A subsequent internet search turned up a copy of a brochure produced by the company around the 1950s or 1960s. This is located on a local history website of the area (<http://historyofbelgrave.weebly.com>). The brochure showed workers laying out the spokes of a headgear pulley wheel prior to casting the rim around them. While the pulley is part of the Ancient

Monument schedule, it was actually brought on site by Sustrans from South Wales and is much larger than the wheels that were used at Brandy Bottom.

The excess waterproof membrane on the roof of the Horizontal Engine House has been removed. Photo 21 was taken as this was being done. The areas around the corner drains have still to be finished.

A group of Bristol University students came to Brandy Bottom in February as part of a tour of archaeological sites in the area.

Research by the SGMRG has turned up some historical information on Brandy Bottom, mainly in the form of newspaper report on accidents and coroners' enquiries. A report on Parkfield in an October 1868 issue of *The Mining Journal* mentions in passing that Brandy Bottom produced about 60 tons/day from the 'Top Series' (sic). By comparison Parkfield was said to be producing 120 tons/day from the Top Seam, together with 140 tons/day from the Hard Seam and 300 tons/day from the Hollybush. There is not enough information in the article to account for the difference in tonnages. The report also suggests that there will be more information on Brandy Bottom in old issues of *The Mining Journal*. One of the fatal accident reports gives the casualty's age as 73, and that one worker giving evidence to the coroner came from Mangotsfield and another from Soundwell.

An account of progress at Brandy Bottom, with photographs, can be seen on the AIBT's website, together with copies of all previous newsletters.

Future Work Parties

Dates of proposed work parties for the remainder of 2015 are:

Wed 03, Sat 13 Jun; Wed 01, Sat 11 Jul; Sat 01, Wed 12, Sat 29 Aug; Wed 09, Sat 26 Sep; Wed 07, Sat 17 Oct; Wed 04, Sat 14 Nov; Sat 05 Dec.

Please note that these dates may be altered at short notice. Newcomers are advised to first make contact via the AIBT's email address of info@aibt.org.

Photographs



Photo 1 – The top of the chimney in January 2014 before any work started...



Photo 2 – ...the top with the reinforcing concrete ring in place in February 2015, but before repointing started...



Photo 3 – ...and the top in March 2015 once the masonry section had been repointed.



Photo 6 – Making the foundations for the cast concrete ring. © C Skelton, 2014.



Photo 4 – Top of the chimney in the early stages of the work, with the Vertical Engine House at the top of the picture. © C Skelton 2014.



Photo 7 – Casting the concrete ring in situ. © C Skelton, 2014.



Photo 5 – Rebuilding the top of the chimney. © C Skelton, 2014.

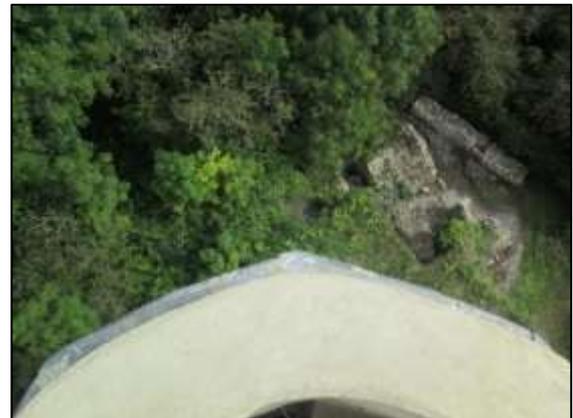


Photo 8 – Finished ring from above, with the lead flashing just visible on the outside edge and the Vertical Engine House towards the top right corner. © C Skelton, 2014.



Photo 9 – Manhandling the bracing beam into place in the Old Boiler House.



Photo 10 – The finished rebuild of the base of the chimney, with the bracing beam in place.



Photo 11 – Clearing the spoil from above the East Flue.



Photo 12 – Cleared area above East Flue. Both metal rods were threaded through a 'square' band, seen in close-up in photo 14.



Photo 13 – Close-up of the bracket seen next to the scale in photo 12.



Photo 14 – Close-up of metal band found fitted to the rods above the East Flue.



Photo 15 – Cornish Engine House end of the platform above the Pumping Shaft crossover.



Photo 18 – Pansies planted around the hub of the headgear pulley.



Photo 16 – 6" high bucket and oil can found in the spoil covering the platform above the Pumping Shaft crossover.



Photo 19 – Clearing the nettles from around the western half of the headgear pulley.



Photo 17 – Clearing the area of the Pumping Shaft Crossover. The figure on the right is standing on the shaft capping.



Photo 20 – 4" dia maker's mark on rim of headgear pulley wheel. TS stands for Thompson & Southwick, Tamworth



Photo 21 – Trimming the excess waterproof membrane on the roof of the Horizontal Engine House.



Photo 24 – Primulas growing along the cycle path near the mine.



Photo 22 – Fragment of porcelain found along base of north-west wall of New Pit heapstead. (cm scale)



Photo 25 – Speckled Wood butterfly near base of Old Pit heapstead ramp.



Photo 23 – Iron padlock found along base of north-west wall of New Pit heapstead. (cm scale)



Photo 26 – Wildflower growing alongside the cycle path near the mine.

Unless otherwise attributed, all photos are by R Whitworth (© 2014, 2015). Size is indicated by either a yellow/black 30 cm, or a white cm scale.