

# Califat Newcomen Boiler Excavation by LIHS



The boiler was discovered by one of us in 1969 during the examination of the site of Califat Colliery. The area was at that time heavily wooded, with trees of up to six inches in diameter in the immediate vicinity of the boiler. Only the topmost few inches of the boiler were visible in a tangle of saplings and undergrowth, and it was not until considerable site clearance and excavation had taken place that the 'haystack' form was established.

The boiler was set upon a ring of four courses of brickwork, and as there were no traces of a furnace or indeed any signs of a fire, it is assumed that it had been installed as a water storage tank after having served its useful life as a steam raising boiler. This view is supported by several repair patches on the boiler, and the fact that the only remaining connecting pipes were both at low level; although some damage was present at the top, possibly rather recent, there were no signs of any steam outlet.

Full excavation revealed that the boiler was located in the angle between two brick walls on the south and west sides, the maximum height remaining being some seven feet from the base of the boiler foundation which appeared to rest on undisturbed clay. The infill between these walls and the boiler, and around the boiler generally, consisted largely of bricks, mortar, slates and rubble from a demolished building. A sandstone block carrying four iron bolts was built into the west wall at the level of the maximum diameter of the boiler, and some six feet beyond the south wall a second large sandstone block carrying two large iron bolts was set into the ground.

An analysis of a sample of the boiler plate kindly carried out by the National Coal Board showed that the material was of a composition typical of Staffordshire wrought iron.

As the site is open and vulnerable to vandalism, the boiler was removed and presented to Leicester Museum of Technology, where it may still be seen. Our thanks are due to Mr. F. R. Combes of Ravenstone, a local contractor and steam enthusiast, for performing the operation with great care.

Acknowledgements and thanks are also due to the Trustees of the Wyggeston Hospital Trust for permission to excavate the site and to present the boiler to the Museum.

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