

Monthly dig report for members of Leicestershire Industrial History Society and Swannington Heritage Trust.

Morning dig with nine LIHS members in attendance.

Engine House near Califat Shaft - Excavation 2006-2016



Following the June dig there had been heavy rain and the winding drum / ventilation fan pit had been flooded with several inches of water. Prior to the July dig the Heritage Trust moved the mound of spoil from the June dig.

During the July dig, several wheelbarrow loads of weeds were removed from the dig site as it was tidied up prior to the festival of archaeology openings. Persistent fairly heavy rain then interrupted the dig and after taking shelter our diggers took the sensible option - an early lunch at the Robin Hood.

Stuart Warburton (whose career was working in museums, including Snibston) is an LIHS member who came to share his expertise with the diggers. His suggestions were:

(A) WINDING DRUM / VENTILATION FAN PIT

1. Floor - The pavement should be left uncovered so that the public can see what it looked like. The bricks appear to be in good condition and should be monitored for signs of deterioration.
2. Walls - the walls should be repointed using a lime mortar as this will not expand and damage the bricks.
3. Black material on some bricks - some of this should be scraped into a plastic bag and analysed by a university archaeology department. This may be the only evidence that a device was installed and operated as it is possible that the complex was abandoned before being used (this echoes comments repeatedly made by Denis Baker during the last couple of years).
4. Pit ends - depending upon the pit use the two ends of the pit could have been closed.

(B) VENTILATION TUNNEL

1. Cover Tunnel - Permanently cover the tunnel to prevent deterioration, ends and key points can show the route.
2. Ventilation Tunnel - The dome shape at the top is typical of ventilation tunnels. The tunnel goes up to a peak then down, again suggesting a ventilation tunnel. A water drainage tunnel would only run downhill. The tunnel may have gone to a stump chimney near the pond.
3. Ventilation Tunnel is an Underground Tunnel - during use it would have been covered over. It would not have been used by miners, even children. Denis has mentioned that it would have been covered in "soil" to prevent the gas from escaping.



Since the July dig the north end of the tunnel from the pit to near the hole near the shaft has been covered so that it can grass over.

It is possible that there is an underground building at the hole (see rake) and parallel trenches (see bricks) should be dug.



Engine House near Alabama shaft - Excavation 1993-1999

There was not any work during this dig.

Miners' Cottages

There was not any work during this dig. Swannington Heritage Trust have cut down the brambles etc next to the cottages.



swannington heritage trust

The Festival of Archaeology

THE Festival of Archaeology is during the last two weeks of July, to find out more about the exciting events in Leicestershire. See www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/whatson/results.

Swannington's interest comprises:

Leicestershire's longest ongoing dig LIVE 2pm to 5pm on Sundays 17th, 24th and 31st July. Leicestershire Industrial History Society, (LIHS) are celebrating 10 years of monthly dig. Visit the Victorian era Califat coal mine and talk with the diggers about their discovery of the engine house, boiler bases, ventilation tunnels, drains and either a winding drum or fan foundation. Discover their plans for the future, the challenges of making progress and why parts of the mine are named after a Romanian City and a Confederates States Ship.

See the amazing transformation of Hough Mill The mill is near the coal mine and during the same visit you can explore the wonderful ongoing restoration of the 200 year old brick windmill that moved villages. See how the derelict shell has been transformed with doors, windows, floors, flour milling equipment and fantail. As well as the usual milling activities for children there will be heritage games available for our visitors.

Walk the Swannington Incline 2pm Saturday 30th July. Walk in the steps of Robert Stephenson on a guided tour of the Swannington Incline at the western end of his 1832 Leicester and

Swannington Railway - the railway that was the catalyst for the expansion of the North West Leicestershire coalfield and the creation of the town of Coalville.

See the outline of the operators' cottages and the winding engine house that could haul an 18 ton load up more than 700 yards of a 1:17 slope. Admire the amazing work of the navvies who moved thousands of tons of material to dig out the cutting and create the embankment at the bottom of the Incline.

Return via historic Swannington village and see where the railway met the road, plus the ill sited booking office that was half a mile from where passengers boarded the train. Booking is required please email chairman@swannington-heritage.co.uk or call 01530 222 833.

LIHS are also leading guided tours of the Glenfield tunnel towards the eastern end of the railway.




Swannington Heritage Trust's Festival of Archaeology event publicity - Whats Around magazine - delivered to homes in Ibstock, Heather, Ravenstone, Packington, Normanton le Heath and Swannington plus areas of Whitwick and Hugglescote.

The Times, Friday, July 22, 2016

NEWS 9



VISITORS WATCH LIVE DIG AT SWANNINGTON

A SPECIAL live dig has enabled visitors to the former Califat coal mine in Swannington to see the progress of the 10 years of monthly excavations.

Visitors from Durham, Leicestershire, Loughborough and nearby villages were able to watch the diggers tidying one end of a winding drum/ventilation fan pit and use the material to cover over a documented ventilation tunnel to preserve it for the future.

The Califat coal mine was named after the Romanian town of Calafat, before the spelling was then changed by the English. In January 1854, the Russian army advanced along the river Danube and laid siege to Calafat which was part of the Ottoman Empire.

The British and French went to the aid of the Turks, landing troops on the Crimean peninsula. During the Crimean war Derbyshire's Florence Nightingale went to nurse the injured. The captured Russian guns were melted down to become the first Victoria Crosses.

Visitors were able to see the two engine house complexes, the miners' cottages that were demolished in 1958 and the 18th century Newcomen boiler. Visitors were also able to see the restoration of 200-year-old Hough Mill.

The Califat Coal Mine and Hough Mill will both be open from 2pm to 5pm on Sunday, July 24 and July 31. For further information, visit http://swannington-heritage.co.uk/swannington_news.html

programme

There is no charge for participants in the scheme, while the Fire and Rescue Service will also provide each young person with their own fire kit to wear during the week - all they need to bring is their lunch.

The course will end with a presentation ceremony where the participants will get the chance to demonstrate the skills they have learnt to their families.

For anyone interest in a place on the Fireskills theme, they are told to contact Alex Taylor, Claire Pope or Helene Sutcliffe on: 016 287 2241 or e-mail: sth@lfrs.org.



Swannington Heritage Trust's Festival of Archaeology event publicity - Coalville Times and probably also the Ashby Times

Attendances so far

We have not counted the number of visitors. Hough Mill has had 40 visitors across the 2 afternoons and it is probable that the dig had a similar number.

Next Dig Dates

Tuesdays 9th August and 13th September. Dig 10am-1pm, optional lunch at the Robin Hood and continue dig until 4pm.