

Industrial and Early Modern

Industrial and Early Modern Period –Breakout Session-Welsh Archaeological Research Agenda Review-Bangor University-16.09.10.

Present:

Stephen Hughes (Chair), Peter Wakelin, Dafydd Gwyn, Susan Fielding (Minutes), Kathy Laws, Samantha Williams, Emily La Trobe Bateman, Jeff Spencer, Kate Roberts, Neil Maylan & John Latham.

Suggestions were made for additions to the industrial period agenda review's Bibliography. The Southeast Wales Industrial Ironworks Landscapes Project has been carried out by Richard Roberts on behalf of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust in the Heads of the Valleys area, and there are five reports available on-line which look at the ironworks in the context of the industrial landscape including the quarries, water supplies etc. Stephen Hughes had already noted that this was an omission and would add it to the Bibliography.

Current work on reviewing the Ceredigion Metal Mines Surveys carried-out under the auspices of the Uplands Archaeology Initiative, by Robert Protheroe Jones for the Dyfed Archaeological Trust was noted.

The wealth of remains on speculative sites which failed and were abandoned was noted. It was thought that this could be considered a theme which could be followed through. These sites, and others of the Industrial & Modern Period might be considered an economic activity rather than as 'Industrial Archaeology' and highlighted the danger of ignoring the place of Social, Economic and Commercial Buildings within the discipline and period of Industrial Archaeology. There was a need to include public and institutional buildings within the Research Agenda for this period.

The question was raised of how to make the research agenda relevant to developer-funded archaeology so that it could be used to justify future work, not just on the industrial sites but for associated buildings, and for the smaller sites as well as the large complexes. This was of particular concern for the conservation and planning officers who saw that these sites are the most at risk within the planning process, and are trying to implement more recording of industrial sites, but who needed the authority of a higher level contextual or strategic document. The discovery of the extensive remains of the high profile Upper Bank Copperworks site at Swansea had affected development control, both in terms of creating a recognition of what may survive below sites developed in the 1950s and 60s, and for making developers far more wary of the potential archaeological costs and implications of developments on former industrial sites.

Linked to this was a wider threat due to the fact that remains from this period are still not recognised, or perceived, as being of value because they are from the

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recent past. Many university courses still do not cover Industrial or Modern Archaeology, and it was suggested had been overlooked by Cadw in their strategic reviews. The research agenda therefore needs to be made more relevant to a wider public whose appreciation of the period has been enhanced, and interest sparked, by projects such as the 'Coal House' television series.

One area where such recognition is particularly important is in the retrieval and archiving of plans and documents relating to industrial sites, some of which are still working, which were still being destroyed in large quantities by those who did not understand their value. The RCAHMW has made particular effort in this area with limited success, both from owners of such collections and from archivists who do not always appreciate their importance.

One area where progress has been made is through the Cadw Urban Characterisation works which has focused so far on many industrial towns, and which have been very well received. This methodology could have a much wider use and be further developed to particular types of town.

Many of these towns have also been the subject of Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes, where unfortunately money for recording does not appear to have been built into the project and the focus appeared to centre around conservation without adequate interpretation of how the context of settlements and buildings had arisen.

It was considered that part of the problem stems from the fact that there was a relative lack of specialists in this area working in Wales, and that there needed to be a more coherent approach between those who are studying the documents relating to the socio-economic issues of the industrial period and those who are recording and interpreting the sites themselves.

A question was also raised concerning the use of the term 'Workers Housing' and how we look at the domestic activity within the home in relation to traditional male/female roles. The evidence for domestic activity needed to introduce the role of the women within Industrial Archaeology, but it needed to be made clear that there was not a case made for separate 'Industrial' and 'Domestic' categorisation but that everything was held together by the central role of the economy.

Another strong theme which needs to be followed as part of the agenda is that of retail trade and the growth of consumerism. It was questioned how effective archaeological study could be in taking this forward as, although the documentary study implicit within any such project would be valuable, it would be difficult to find individual sites earlier than the 1930s which could be surveyed and taken forward to awaken public interest.

There was recognised the difficulty in balancing one research priority against another within this period; most of the built landscape of Wales dates to the 19th and 20th century and the sheer quantity and variety of sites can be seen as overwhelming. How could we combat this – do we try to create specific 'hooks' for

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research priorities and sites which are either the most significant sites internationally or most 'at risk', or do we accept that we have to try and cover everything, and if so how do we deal with the resource implications? It is particularly important to recognise that industrial Archaeology has moved on from the 'techo-geek' study of industrial processing sites, and this must be developed further, inspiring the idea of Wales as a promoting and leading nation.

How should the rural landscape be dealt with – agriculture was removed from the 2005 paper, but there was a general feeling that this should be reinstated, but with a wider remit of horticulture, parks and gardens archaeology and designed landscapes including those of planned towns. Again there was the problem of it being such a large subject to take on, for instance with farm buildings, and the resource implications that any such study would involve.

Another theme needs to be developed around further work on military remains and their support networks.

'*Threat*' has to be seen as being the main driver for the framework of this period because so much is still standing and recognition of their value is so poor. There must therefore be an emphasis on developer-funded recording leading to research and more of a fight to improve the status of sites and buildings of this period with the scheduling and listing process. Professional archaeological communities need to build stronger links with specialist interest voluntary and community groups and enable them to carry out their own surveys. In general, however, it was felt that the priorities set out in 2005 needed to stay the same.