

Keith Falconer

## HAER, an Inspiration Across the Atlantic

I seem to have known, and had a fond regard for, HAER all my professional life! When, in 1971, as a fledgling industrial archeologist, I was appointed to conduct Britain's Industrial Monuments Survey I was joined at the University of Bath by Eric DeLony. Eric, funded by a Fulbright scholarship, was on a year's leave from HAER to study industrial archeology in Britain and we were to explore the novel subject together. We attended the first British National Industrial Archaeology conference in Bradford, Yorkshire and traveled the length and breadth of the country looking at the iconic sites such as the Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale furnace, the Forth Rail Bridge, and a host of lesser sites—the stuff of the Industrial Monuments Survey.

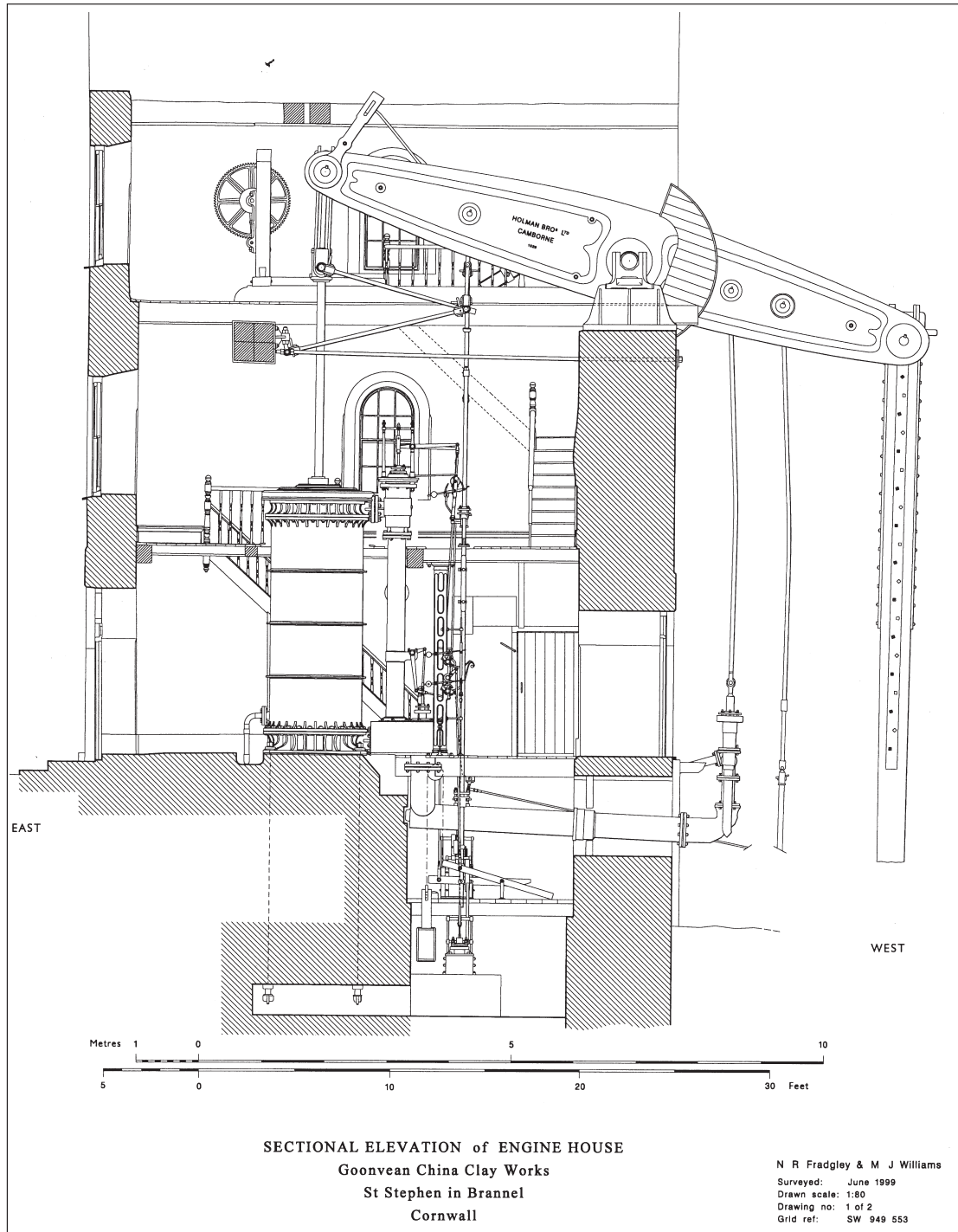
Our host at Bath was the eminent industrial archeologist Dr. R.A. Buchanan who had done so much to set the subject on a national footing and was to be such a good friend of many of the founding fathers of industrial archeology in the United States. Since 1965, Angus Buchanan had managed the National Record of Industrial Monuments (NRIM), a collection of the rather basic Council on British Archaeology (CBA) 8 x 5 inch field cards designed as an aid to the Survey. Originally, the CBA had distributed some 30,000 cards to volunteers around the country in the hope that they would be returned for copying at the University of Bath and the original returned to the fieldworker. Copies would be deposited at the University, with the Survey in Beaconsfield, and with the National Buildings Record in London. The cards were arranged topographically and then by an industrial classification designed by Angus Buchanan.

However, disappointingly few of the cards were returned satisfactorily completed, as the format proved too small to contain much useful information, some were in pencil and some came with photographs attached. The geographical coverage was also very patchy. The state of technology of photocopying at the time was so primitive that many of the flimsy copies were almost illegible and the photographs just a blur, therefore these cards were never to be as useful a national database as had been envisaged. There were exceptions. Some cards were completed in exemplary fashion and contained line drawings, which copied well, and these cards have remained a unique source of historic information of sites often long gone. HAER learnt from the tribulations of the NRIM and was not to make the same mistakes with its record card system. The format was appreciably larger, the cards were completed by trained fieldworkers, and the original cards were retained. HAER also introduced a novel, cross-referencing retrieval system utilizing inventory cards with a pierced surround worked by rods.

At that time, in a typically *ad hoc* British fashion, the results of the Industrial Monuments

*Nineteenth-century peg benches still in use in a Jewellery Quarter workshop in Birmingham, England. Inspired by the work of HAER photographers, this process record photograph is taken in a consciously 'image' fashion—quite different from the traditional architectural record view taken in years gone by. The peg bench in the foreground still has its original gas fittings, and techniques have changed little for two centuries. Photo by English Heritage, 1999.*





A CAD-generated drawing of the Cornish beam engine brought to Goonvean in 1910 to pump Goonvean Clay Works in Cornwall, England. Surveyed using a reflectorless, Total Station EDM theodolite, the information captured electronically and by hand measurement in such an exercise can be manipulated and printed in 2D, at any scale and showing arrangement or detail as required. Drawing by N.R. Fradgley and M.J. Williams for English Heritage, 1999.

Survey were considered by a panel of experts drawn from various government agencies and national museums. In an arbitrary “thumbs up or down” procedure the fate of sites could be determined in a variety of ways. They could be recommended for protection as ancient monuments or historic buildings, they could be recommended for recording or museum preservation or could be consigned to the scrap heap. It was those recommended for recording that concern us here. Recording of historic sites on mainland Britain was the responsibility of the three Royal Commissions for Historic Monuments—one each for England, Scotland and Wales. These Royal Commissions had been founded in 1909 to compile an inventory of the nation’s historic buildings and archeological monuments and for much of their existence had worked to a cut-off date of 1707—of not much relevance to most industrial sites!

By the 1960s, more recent material was being considered, and indeed, on this side of the Atlantic the Commissions in Scotland and Wales were leading the field in industrial recording, though only through the initiative of a few dedicated individuals such as Geoffrey Hay and Douglas Hague. In those two countries the recommendations for drawn recording did not fall on stony ground, but in England a few photographs had to suffice. The Scottish Royal Commission’s magnificent book *Monuments of Industry* was published in 1986 as a celebration of Geoffrey Hay’s pioneer work in this period.

Thus in the 1970s, how I envied the detailed recording of selected sites undertaken by HAER in its summer programs! Fortunately, this situation was to change when Dr. Peter Fowler was appointed Secretary of the English Commission in 1979. One of Peter Fowler’s first acts was to have a Royal Commissioner appointed with specific responsibility for industrial archeology. In the event, Angus Buchanan was to be that Commissioner. The Industrial Monuments Survey and the National Record of Industrial Monuments were soon absorbed into the English Royal Commission and industrial recording surged ahead.

Faced with the vast task of recording an industrial culture that was disappearing before our very eyes, and with no tradition of organizing a cheap skilled workforce through summer programs as HAER does, the English Royal Commission had to explore other ways of effec-

tive recording. At the regional level, it supported surveys conducted by field staff recruited under the banner of the Manpower Services Commission (an unemployment relief scheme), and it collaborated with the local archeological units on thematic surveys of specific building types. In addition to professional academic advice the Commission provided photographic and survey drawing support to these surveys. Some of the surveys were to produce books that have since become classics of industrial archeology—*Liverpool’s Historic Waterfront*, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, *Cotton Mills in Greater Manchester*, *Yorkshire Textile Mills*, and *Workers Housing in West Yorkshire*.

Meanwhile, the Commission itself worked on a national canvas, focusing its resources on buildings threatened by alteration or demolition. With the products of HAER to provide a model to emulate, the Commission undertook the recording of some of the most significant industrial sites in the world—Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury, the first fire-proof iron framed textile mill; Arkwright’s pioneer mills at Cromford; North Mill, Belper, the classic English fire-proof mill; and the magnificent iron framed Stanley Mills in Gloucestershire. This work has been summarized in the issue of *Industrial Archaeology Review* (Vol. XVI, No 1, 1993) dedicated to the Commission’s work on the textile industry. This period was to see the transition from traditional hand survey and drafting techniques to electronic survey and CAD and today laser operated, reflectorless EDM surveys are translated on screen into fine line drawings or even 3D models. The Commission field photographers, inspired by the work of photographers such as HAER’s Jet Lowe, have, over the last decade, also transformed their approach to photographic recording. The very fine, but neutral, recording of elevations and architectural details is now enhanced by adventurous images capturing people and processes.

The merger of the Royal Commission with English Heritage in April 1999 brings together all the main government strands in the documentation and protection of the industrial heritage. In the coming years, under the chairmanship of Sir Neil Cossons, an admirer of HAER and a lifelong friend of Eric DeLony, we can look forward to an exciting portfolio of industrial archeological recording and conservation initiatives.

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