

The talk concluded with information about recent changes in the approach and especially the improvement of amenities, which reflects the influence of the National Trust. Estate buildings include a former corn mill converted to a saw mill at the beginning of the 20th century. The current project is the restoration of the archaeologically very interesting 1717 *New Inn*, which stood at the original crossroads. During part of this activity sheets of old issues of the *Bucks Herald* were discovered under wallpaper. These have been important for dating purposes.

Thursday 13th January 2011

The Aluminium Works at Banbury 1929-2009.

Richard Hartree

This was a comprehensive account of a landmark industry that started with the Northern Aluminium Company and ended in the time of Sapa Profiles. Early on the emphasis was on sheet metal production but after this moved to South Wales output at Banbury was all about extruded bars.

Quite rightly Richard Hartree assumed that most of our members knew little about the key industrial processes. An account of these was one of several themes that included the fascinating story of how money from the banking Gillests and from Banbury Borough Council bridged the gap between the NAC bid for the site and the £12,000 demanded by Mr Lidsey, a local farmer.

Later we were treated to a review of bodies like the Volunteer Fire Brigade and the impact of industrial action especially in the early years.

A section of the talk that aroused a lot of interest concerned the works during the Second World War. Output was especially linked to aircraft (the Spitfire) production and involved female labour more than at any other time. That the work of shifts was so little impeded was due in no small measure to the dummy works on Hardwick Hill, which distracted the Germans.

In every sense of the word the Aluminium Works was a cradle to grave organisation. This was reflected in the audience, which included a number of former employees.

Working at the Ally will live on in the memories of many local folk. With the current reduced importance of manufacturing in the town it is unlikely to be challenged.

Thursday 10th February 2011

Bampton: a Minster-Town in Mediaeval Oxfordshire

Professor John Blair

This was a fascinating, detailed and superbly structured lecture. It started from the premise that Bampton in south-west Oxfordshire is 'one of the Banburys of England' and then evolved around the thesis that its Minster church acted as a powerful stimulus for urban growth. Ironically, despite this trend the town became detached from late mediaeval road patterns and earned the title 'Bampton in the Bush'. Geologically the settlement became rooted to