

## BIAS NEWS and NOTES

Ordinary membership of BIAS was 154 in November 1971, an increase of 22 over the previous year at the same time, and we are very happy that three firms in the Bristol region have already accepted our arrangements for institutional membership and joined the Society. There has been a full programme of lectures, meetings, excursions, and field parties in the past year. The present course of lectures has been organized by Mrs. Joan Day through the University of Bristol Extra-Mural Board, with the co-operation of Mr. Joe Betty. Mrs. Day also organized, again with the help of Bristol University, the very successful conference on "Brunel in Bristol", held on 19/20 November 1971, the hundred places on which were heavily over-subscribed.

This conference demonstrated that interest in the works of I.K. Brunel is still growing. As far as his monuments in Bristol are concerned, we are glad to note that the immediate pressure has been taken off Old Temple l/leads Station by the refusal of planning permission for the redevelopment of the Temple Gate facade, but the whole building remains in need of attention. The s.s. *Great Britain*, now undergoing repairs in the dry dock where she was built, also gives cause for anxiety because her ultimate home is still the subject of a wrangle between the Project Committee and the City of Bristol. The city has offered a home but refuses to commit itself to the precise situation of this home, and the Project Committee has received alternative offers from London and Portsmouth. It will be a sad day for Bristol if the great ship is ever allowed to leave its ancient harbour, so we must hope that a satisfactory agreement will soon be reached.

Another Brunel relic, the swing bridge at Cumberland Basin, was the object of a panic in February 1971, when a report in the local press (*Evening Post*, 8th February) announced that it would not be sold as scrap because the Port Engineer had decided that it was a genuine Brunel bridge. The disturbing thing about this incident was the fact that the Docks Committee should ever have contemplated the destruction of the bridge, and one is bound to wonder how many of the valuable industrial artefacts in the care of the Committee are now being endangered by the need to make economies in the City Docks. The whole question of redevelopment around the Floating Harbour remains, from the industrial archaeological point of view, very unsatisfactory.

Individuals and small groups of members have done some useful work in the past year. In particular, one

group made a determined effort to record adequately the mill at Bishop Sutton; and Owen Ward and John Cornwell have laboured assiduously to excavate the site of King's Mill in the valley of the River Frome near Oldbury Court. There was probably a mill on this latter site from the fifteenth century until about 1870, working first as a corn mill and then grinding snuff. The site is heavily overgrown, but careful excavation has so far revealed the foundations of various buildings and the main water course. The many-sided Mendip Survey has continued to occupy several members, but it has not progressed sufficiently to justify the large feature article promised for this issue of the Journal. The projected survey of the Floating Harbour has not been pursued, as it has been widely felt that the excellent survey by Grahame Farr which appeared in BIAS Journal 3 met the most pressing need.

The Society has affiliated to the Council for British Archaeology Group XIII, which covers the South West from Land's End to Gloucester. It was felt by the Committee that BIAS should make a contribution to the broader regional and national discussion of industrial archaeology and this seemed a logical first step, especially as the CBA Research Committee on Industrial Archaeology has recently been reconstituted to contain an element of regional representation. Our Vice-Chairman, Mr. Robin Stiles, attended the Group Meeting at Dillington House, Illminster, on 3rd April 1971, when Mr. John Stengelhofen of Cornwall was appointed as the Group representative on the Research Committee. In the same vein of participating in a broader field of interest than just the Bristol region, the Society was well represented at the second Regional Seminar on Industrial Archaeology held this time at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, at the kind invitation of the South East Wales Industrial Archaeological Society on 8th May 1971.

On an even larger scale, several members attended the first "British Conference on Industrial Archaeology" held at Bradford University on 17/19 September 1971. This had grown out of the series of Bath Conferences, at which much of the preliminary discussion of the national organization of industrial archaeology had occurred. The decision to make the conference peripatetic was a great success. Almost a hundred industrial archaeologists went to Bradford from all parts of the country and took part in an excellent programme of talks and discussion, and a most instructive excursion to Halifax, the Worth Valley Light Railway, Bingley Five-Rise Locks, and Saltaire. The conference was organized by the Industrial Archaeology Unit at the University of Bradford. It was decided to meet in 1972

at Strathclyde University, Glasgow, with a co-ordinating committee consisting of Drs. Butt, Diaper, and Buchanan. There is clearly an opportunity here to develop naturally into a national conference body which, together with the greatly improved CBA arrangements for representing local societies and for making preservation recommendations to the appropriate authorities, will provide most of the facilities and functions of a national society for industrial archaeology.

Congratulations to GLIAS, one of our many flourishing sister-societies, on winning the 1971 BBC "Chronicle" Competition in industrial archaeology. They are tackling vigorously the almost overwhelming problems of recording the industrial monuments of the Greater London area, and the prize money will help them in their ambitious preservation projects. Congratulations, also, to our ex-Secretary and founder-member Neil Cossons, who after three years at Liverpool City Museums has now gone as Director to the Ironbridge Gorge Trust Museum with the responsibility for developing the Blist Hill Open-Air Museum and the Coalbrookdale Museum, which gives him one of the biggest industrial archaeological jobs in the country. Amongst his priorities will be that of preserving the Iron Bridge itself, for it is at present in grave danger of collapsing into the River Severn.

John Robinson, another member who moved to Liverpool Museums a couple of years ago, has written a long letter extolling the industrial archaeological charms of his new home region. These include Albert Dock (mentioned as a possible home for the s.s. *Great Britain*), Astley Green colliery winding engine, Nether Alderley watermill near Macclesfield, and various mining and waterways museum projects. John, who is a man of many parts, is also connected with the Royal Navy training vessel in Bristol City Docks, and it was through his good offices that the Society was able to make the splendid launch trip round the Floating Harbour in July 1970, when the *Great Britain* was just home and lying alongside Canon's Marsh wharves. Members visiting Liverpool may like to contact him, and if any more go to live there we may look forward to the formation of a BIAS branch in the rival port!

We have received or otherwise acquired a number of small publications which will probably be of interest to our members. The Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society has produced a 60 page pamphlet: *A Second North Somerset Miscellany* (Bath, 1971, 45 pence): which contains five papers including Ronald Wilcox on eighteenth century breweries in Bath and R.K. Bluhm on "The Somerset coalfield, 1790/1820". Another recent work on Bath is by Colin Maggs: *Bath Tramways* (Oakwood Press, Locomotion Papers No. 52, 1971, 48 pp, 75 pence): an authoritative summary complete with some interesting plates and maps. From Wiltshire comes an excellent illustrated guide, with all the main industrial relics clearly tabulated with grid references and maps: *Industrial Archaeology of Wiltshire*, edited by K.G. Ponting for the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural

History Society and Wiltshire County Council (1971, 28 pp, 25 pence). Michael Chitty, in: *A guide to industrial archaeology in Exeter* (Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group, 1971, 24 pp, 25 pence): has produced a concise duplicated handbook which members visiting that city will find useful to have in their possession. It is the first publication of the active Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group. Finally, your Editor has written a pamphlet for the Bristol Branch of the Historical Society which, in an early form, was presented as a paper to BIAS - R.A. Buchanan: *Nineteenth Century Engineers in the Port of Bristol* (Bristol, 1971, 20 pp, 20 pence).

Our member Mr. S.W.K. Morgan, who gave the Society a stimulating lecture on the zinc and brass industries last year, has written to say:

"There is little doubt that zinc was first produced on a commercial scale in the Western World by William Champion at Warmley. He built a large works there in 1746, and in addition to producing zinc he smelted copper and manufactured and fabricated brass. The Warmley Council, with admirable foresight, has preserved some of the original buildings constructed by Champion. The house he built is now used as the Council Offices. His store with a clock tower is also preserved. He constructed a 5½ acre lake which was used as a reservoir from which he pumped water to operate the stamps and wire-drawing equipment which were used in the works. In the centre of the lake he built a 40 ft. high statue of Neptune, which was constructed from slag from his furnaces. The statue has recently been given to the Council by Mr. John Williams. It was completely overgrown with ivy but has now been stripped. Although the arms and trident are missing the rest is in a good state of preservation. Cracks have been repaired and the statue can now resist the elements. All the work so far has been carried out by voluntary labour and a decision is now awaited from the Council on the further steps they wish to take to preserve the statue permanently. The site is one of historical significance and the statue is an important part of what is left of the work of a great industrial pioneer".

Joan Day has sent us the following fascinating item:

"Last April, an old piece of board was found in a garden shed in Keynsham, which was being cleared for demolition. Although it had been covered with debris of various kinds including an old can of creosote which leaked, the board proved to be a tollboard in surprisingly good condition, containing the details below. The owners of the shed then remembered that it had been stored there hurriedly after the death, in the early 1960's, of Charles Abbott, Keynsham local historian, who is known to have collected a large amount of historical material. The board was promptly donated to the Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society. The Society has since traced a relative of Mr. Abbott who remembers the tollboard, and remembers him talking of it being placed originally at the Twerton Fork Turnpike. K. & S. LHS members intend to clean the board

**BIAS JOURNAL No 4 1971**

under the guidance of Paul Elkin and conservation experts at the City Museum. They would also welcome any advice about the dating of the board, (which they estimate to be from about the 1820's) and the loan of a good photograph of the old toll-house at the Twerton Fork, which could be copied and returned to the owner".

**LADEN WITH COAL**

For every Horse or Beast Drawing any Wagon Wain or Cart or other such Carriage Laden with coal having the Fellies of the wheels of the breadth of 6 inches or upwards at the Bottoms or soles thereof Drawn by not more than two Horses or Beasts ..... 2

Drawn by three or four Horses or Beasts ..... 3

Drawn by more than four Horses or Beasts..... 4

For every Horse or Beast Drawing any Wagon Wain or Cart or other such Carriage Laden with coal having the Fellies of the wheels of less breadth than 4½ inches at the Bottom or soles thereof Drawn by not more than two Horses or Beasts ..... 3

Drawn by three or four Horses or Beasts ..... 4½

Drawn by more than four Horses or Beasts ..... 6

For every Horse or Beast Drawing any Wagon Wain or Cart or other such Carriage Laden with coal having the Fellies of the wheel of the breadth of 4½ inches and less than 6 inches at the bottoms or soles thereof Drawn by not more than two Horses or Beasts ..... 2½

Drawn by three or four Horses or Beasts ..... 3½

Drawn by more than four Horses or Beasts .. 5

For every Horse, Mule or Ass laden or unladen and not drawing ..... 1

For every Drove of Oxen or other neat cattle per score (and so in Proportion for any less number ..... 5

For every Drove of Calves, Swine, Hogs, Sheep or Lambs per score (and so in Proportion for any less number ..... 2½

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OSBOURNES & WARDS  
Clerks to the Commissioners

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