

## Editorial

### Fifteen Years on

With the grand old age of ten years to celebrate in 1977, BIAS members decided to mark the special anniversary of the society. The series of walks with explanatory leaflets that were inaugurated with the idea of involving the public in the industrial heritage of Bristol were planned for just that particular year. We little realised that the venture would be so well supported to warrant BIAS Walkabouts continuing some five years later, with hopes to extend the list of published leaflets still further. But fifteen years on from the formation of the society is as good a time as any to be launching an additional venture in which members can participate. As a society, we have not been as active as we might in systematically recording the sites of our area. Our BIAS Journals have contained a considerable amount of new material resulting from individual members pursuing their own particular interests, and long may this continue, but gaps still remain in the overall scene, We have no up-to-date guide to the area.

In the year that BIAS was formed, Neil Cossons was elected our first secretary but, as Curator of Technology at Bristol City Museum he had already that year compiled a pamphlet entitled *Industrial Monuments in the Mendip, South Cotswold and Bristol Region*, which had been published by the Bristol Archaeological Research Society; it formed a brief guide to our local industrial archaeology. It has long been out of print and gets more out-of-date as the years progress. In the latter part of this last year BIAS committee members decided to launch a project with the main aim of publishing a new guide and, in doing so, to form the groundwork for a systematic record of sites. Neil readily gave permission for his original publication to be used as a basis for the updating scheme which, it is intended, will be produced for the benefit of BIAS members by BIAS members. The November meeting which presented the project to members was greeted with more enthusiasm than had been anticipated and in consequence, there is every hope that the ultimate aims will be realised. Surveys have been started before, in BIAS and other organisations, which have resulted in little of value but it is felt that this present initiative is soundly based and will be well worthwhile. It is up to BIAS members to produce the results and prove it so.

### Proposed Maritime Heritage Centre

*A brief draft, outlining exciting proposals for a National Maritime Heritage Centre in the city docks comes from the city's planning department.*

The centre would be based around the SS Great Britain Project, which is already one of the city's greatest tourist attractions and would provide a magnificent setting for the display of the Hillhouse Collection of nautical models and drawings. There would also facilities for ship renovation and workshops for demonstrating maritime skills and trades. Material from the National Maritime Museum and the City

Council's own maritime collection will complete what is intended to be a great maritime concourse. The first stage of this development consists of a draft planning brief has been published by the City Council \_ explaining that the centre's theme would be the workings of a traditional shipyard. Phase I would be centred on the *SS Great Britain* and would contain several existing features which are to be retained. The most important are the quayside buildings which include the former Great Western Steamship Company Drawing Office. As there will not be sufficient space to display all of the essential exhibits within the existing buildings, some new buildings will have to be erected. The brief identifies two possible locations for these new buildings - one by the SS Great Britain Museum and the other alongside the Great Western Steamship Company Drawing Office. As well as the *SS Great Britain* other historic vessels could be renovated, perhaps in the Graving Dock alongside Albion Dockyard.

One immediate problem is that the large numbers of visitors which are likely to be attracted to the Centre cannot be accommodated by the existing car parking facilities. Thus, within Phase I an area of Wapping Wharf has been identified for a car and coach park . This will be well landscaped and set back from the water's edge in order to permit public pedestrian access to the quayside. It is anticipated that the Centre would need to expand relatively quickly into the area of land currently used as timber yards. Phase II would incorporate facilities for open air display further car parking and some new buildings. This phase would also provide a new vehicle access and the existing access at the north end of Gas Ferry Road would be closed except for occasional servicing. Although the inclusion of the McArthur's warehouse building would be the natural way for the centre to expand eventually, this building serves an important local employment function. The brief, therefore does not include the warehouse as a part of the site but simply refers to it as a possibility for the distant future.

Public comment has been sought on the draft brief and BIAS has responded favourably. For further information and to obtain copies of the brief itself, please contact Mr Graham Parker of the Area Planning Team, City Planning Office, on 26031, extension 603.

### 'Mayflower' Progress Report

*Andy King, from the industrial museum brings the Mayflower project up-to-date:*

Since mentioned in last year's *BIAS Journal* Publication the restoration of the steam tug *Mayflower* has taken ' enormous strides. This has been due to the generosity of volunteers and companies in Bristol and elsewhere. In April, after four weeks preparation, the engine and boiler were removed from the tug for renovation. The engine was stripped down (revealing a hitherto unsuspected piston valve on the high pressure cylinder), and is currently well

on the way to reassembly. This should be completed by March 1933. Although some of the lubricators and other small brass parts stolen by vandals while she was still in Gloucester may prove awkward to find or replace, Meanwhile, the boiler has been stripped down to a basic shell, and seems to be in remarkably good condition; nevertheless considerable finance will be needed to retube and overhaul it.

The ship's telegraph, which had attracted the attention of vandals, was sent to its original makers, Chadbums of Liverpool, who have spent considerable time and effort on our behalf in renovating the instrument at cost price. Many of the plates and other fittings from above and below decks are now ready for re-installing; this (mostly very dull) work has been carried out by Donald Stenner one of our most helpful volunteers. The exterior of the hull above the waterline has now been derusted and painted with a rust retarding paint. This work took six weeks, and its completion is entirely due to the generosity of Mr John Hayes of J F H Plant Services, who loaned a compressor and needle guns to us for this period, free of charge. The next stage must be to dry-dock the tug and free the stern tube and screw, overhaul all the skin fittings, and repaint below the waterline. Once this has been done, work can begin on re-instating all the different components.

Aside from the physical work, great progress has been made in filling out the history of the vessel. A great deal of the research was done during the summer by David Martell, a volunteer on holiday from university; one of the fruits of his labours should be a dissertation on the history of the shipbuilders G K Stothert & Co from their inception in 1844 until 1869 - it would be nice if someone would complete the story to the closure in 1933.

### **Restoration of SS Great Britain. Progress to January 1983.**

*This up-to-date progress report on the restoration project of the SS Great Britain comes from James Richard, our main contact with the Trust.*

This year has witnessed a dramatic change in the appearance of the ship with the installation of a third mast with its top-mast and gaff. The stern aperture has been restored to its original form, involving the installation of a copy of the 1843 soleplate and a new rudder post, and the re-forming of the upper part of the aperture. The reproduction of the 1843 six-bladed propeller has been mounted in position. Only the installation of the balanced rudder remains to complete the restoration of this important part of the ship.

Visitors now have access to almost the entire weatherdeck area and the flying bridge. Right aft the ensign staff stands out beyond the stern of the ship and further forward the wheel, with its cover box for mechanism, adds an important nautical feature. All the fore-castle companion way doors are now in position, and the catheads are being prepared for final installation. Although there is little to be seen on board steady progress continues to be made with the construction of components for the replica engine. The crankshaft, drive chains, cylinder covers and valve chests are among the parts virtually complete. The two main A-frames which will support the crankshaft have been ordered, and preparatory

structural work is in progress on board. The first of two reproduction lifeboats is expected to be delivered shortly Davits for these boats are being prepared.

A major development planned for this year is the structural restoration of the after part of the vessel in preparation for the fitting out of the interior of the promenade deck and dining saloon. Details of the interior layouts, fixtures, fittings and decorations of these compartments are the subject of an ongoing research programme, and readers are invited to write if they have any relevant information to offer about either the SS Great Britain or any Contemporary passenger vessel.

### **New Mills, Kingswood, Wotton-under-Edge**

*Christopher Powell reports on, what seems to be, a very satisfactory development for this fine woollen-mill site after being vacated by Tubbs and Lewis recently.*

The impressive New Mills are the subject of a notable proposal for building re-use. The days seem to be gone when argument about conservation of historic buildings centred on whether or not to conserve. Today the main issue is **how** to do so, and this nearly always means finding the right new user. According to a recent feature in *Architects Journal*, the New Mills proposal is to convert the five-storey block of 1810 into research, development and drawing office space. The user would be Renishaw Electrical Ltd, who are specialist makers of precision metrology and inspection equipment. The designers are Niall Phillips Associates, a Bristol-based group experienced in the technical, financial and administrative problems of conserving historic industrial buildings. Their proposal appears to be an imaginative one which would entail removal of parts of intermediate floors, to create some sizeable interior spaces. The impression is of a sensitive balance between the needs for historical integrity and current utility.

### **Green Park Station**

*Angus Buchanan writes below about two separate conservation issues in which he has had particular interest.*

This year has seen the successful conclusion to the long campaign to save Green Park Station in Bath. When the Somerset & Dorset line closed in March 1966, together with the link to Mangotsfield and the north, it seemed as if no part of this handsome station of 1874 (when it was opened as 'Bath Queen Square Station') would survive. However, after much agitation by BIAS and other conservation groups, and after two public enquiries, a scheme to redevelop the site as a new supermarket for Sainsburys was adopted, and an integral feature of this scheme was the retention of the facade and train shed of the station, using the latter as a car park. The building, immaculately repaired and repainted, was re-opened to the public with the opening of the new store in November 1982. The result is a splendid example of adaptive re-use of a significant industrial building, and should be very encouraging for all industrial archaeologists.

### **Charterhouse Lead Flues**

The remarkable rectangular block of lead flues (really a single channel doubled back on itself eight times) at

Charterhouse on Mendip has received some long overdue attention this year. Somerset County Council, with the assistance of Manpower Services labour and much generous support from the Mendip Society and other interested groups, has undertaken to clear the site of the substantial undergrowth which was damaging the masonry, and to make good some of the deterioration of the mortar. The six month project was completed in July 1982, leaving the flues in better condition than they had been before.

Unfortunately, they have also been left in an exposed and accessible condition which is in some ways more dangerous than that of their previous neglect, because they are more subject to the weather and to the depredations of weekend marauders. This paradoxical situation illustrates very vividly one of the outstanding problems of heritage conservation, namely, that of ensuring that work to preserve a structure does not make it more rather than less vulnerable to erosion.

### **Saltford Brass Mill**

The Saltford Brass Mill Project, having achieved the target for 1982 by completing its initial phase of rescue work in the building, is all set to tackle a further phase in the knowledge that a 50% grant is again on offer from the DoE for the specified programme. The completed work carried out by Acredale Builders on the cracked and bulging walls of the furnace, has assured the future of this important feature described as unique by the DoE. The timber donated and delivered by members of Risca's Oxford House IA Society is now in place and supporting the balance beam which once opened the door of the furnace. The waterwheel repaired by Dorothea Restoration Engineers is now capable of working once again and will be turned regularly at working parties every fourth Saturday of the month. A recent, very welcome gesture of collaboration from a group with rather different interests came from members of the British Aerospace Sub-Aqua Club on a recent mid-winter Sunday morning when they volunteered to investigate and survey the culverts through the building. The well-organised operation, carefully supervised from the safety angle, had several different teams working simultaneously from opposite ends of the building, and with fifteen divers available, were soon able to confirm previous indications that the culverts are in surprisingly good condition. The project is still in need of supplies of old clay pantiles in large or small quantities, and more particularly, small quantities of glass pantiles would be very acceptable. Any trestles and table tops, or folding tables could also be put to very good use. Offers to Joan Day or Frank Grafton please.

### **What's happening at Bristol Industrial Museum?**

*Paul Elkin:* Since it opened in March 1978 the Bristol Industrial Museum on Princes Wharf, has received over 155,000 visitors every Year and has become an established feature of the changed Bristol dockland. The Curator, Paul Elkin admits the museum was established by adapting what his grandmother referred to as 'hot needle and burning thread' measures so the display and presentation of exhibits in the museum has so far been relatively simple. However, a considerable amount of consolidation behind the scenes has gone on in the last two years and for the first time in the history of the City Museum technology collection since it was established in 1964, it is now all properly housed under one roof.

The 'reserve collection' area on the first floor of 'L' shed, the warehouse which accommodates the National Lifeboat Museum on the ground floor is now extremely well-equipped with heavy duty industrial pallet racking and multiple shelf units accommodating not only all the technology collection not on display but many items from other sections of the City Museum as well. This store, like the facilities in the City Museum itself in Queens Road, are considered to be amongst the best equipped and managed of their kind in the country and so are shown off occasionally to the public when organised parties are taken round by the curatorial staff. In the longer term, of course, the major part of these exhibits will be placed on exhibition.

The exhibits on display in the Industrial Museum have been considerably re-arranged in various stages. The superb collection of Bristol built aero-engines generously loaned and sponsored by Rolls Royce Ltd. were given pride of place in our appropriately designed section of the museum, on the first floor opened in 1981. A working Gauge 2 model railway layout with vintage Edwardian commercial models by Bassett Lowke of Northampton was generously presented by Mr Frances Parker in 1980 and a temporary layout located on the first floor has recently been moved to a permanent house near the ground floor entrance to the museum.

Volunteers continue to play an important role in the development of some parts of the museum and its collections, notably the full-size steam railway operation along Princes and Wapping Wharf, the restoration of steam tug *Mayflower* Frances Parker model railway layout and the Rolls- Royce Heritage Trust Aero-Engine Collection. Regular working sessions for volunteers on Wednesday evening from 5.00 pm - 9.00 pm are now well-established and proving popular with a small but growing band of industrial Museum volunteer helpers.

The next main development to take place will be the opening in 1983 of a Maritime Bristol Gallery. Although the word 'maritime' was left out of the museum's title - City of Bristol Industrial, Maritime and Transport Museum would be a bit of a mouthful - the maritime theme, particularly the history of the Port in the last 250 years and the development of the Floating Harbour, Avonmouth Docks and latterly Royal Portbury are considered by the curator to be an essential theme which the museum is intended to present. The City Museum has, over many years, acquired excellent topographical photographic and print collections recording many aspects of the history of the port and its shipping, and the ships model collection, though small compared with those in say the Merseyside, Newcastle or Glasgow museums, is nevertheless well representative of Bristol's maritime tradition.

So, a start was made in the first Maritime England year 1982 on the research, scripting and design of what will be an evocative and exciting Maritime Bristol Gallery scheduled to open towards the end of 1983. The gallery will show many aspects of the port's development commencing with Bristol's 18th century involvement with the slave trade but featuring happier themes such as the great variety of imports and exports, the raw materials and manufacturing industries centred on the port. Brunel course will make an appearance and the shipbuilding and marine engineering work particularly of firms such as G K Stothert and Charles Hill will also be covered in some detail.