

EDITORIAL

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With this the 21st issue of BIAS Journal it is perhaps appropriate to look back and consider what long term impact the Society and its publications may have had to the local scene - have we 'come of age'?

BIAS officially came into existence in 1967, growing out of the three previous years series of Extra-Mural Lectures on Industrial Archaeology run at Bristol Folk House by Dr.s Angus Buchanan and Neil Cossons. The world was very different then with the many Industrial relics that had (largely by accident and lack of investment) managed to survive post-war redevelopment, suddenly disappearing at an alarmingly increasing rate.

Those were the heady pioneering days of trace, photograph, measure, interpret, record, record, record - for tomorrow it may well not be there. The membership was small in numbers but keen to be up and doing something positive for the cause. Virtually the whole membership could be anticipated to turn out on special days such as to record milestones and other turnpike relics. Since then the membership list has grown more than six-fold, but like many similar bodies, the actual number of practical participants has in fact fallen.

So what has been lost and what has been saved? Even as short a time as only sixteen years ago there was a very real risk that the Floating Harbour was to be carved-up with road crossings, and large portions, including the whole of the Feeder Canal, infilled. Temple Meads Old Station was most certainly doomed, and all that BIAS could then reasonably hope for was to get the facade preserved and set back as a feature when the road was widened; the multi-carriageway road was 'King'.

Before the bubble burst many and grievous were the casualties, including Fuller's Coachworks, Redcliff Shot Tower and vital links in the City Docks Rail network - how much easier it would now be for the Avon Metro if the City Fathers at that time had only a little more fore-thought. Even the SS Great Britain had been welcomed by them with almost total apathy, but paradoxically then saved it from being shipped off again to Liverpool or other more welcoming port by

insisting on very high insurance in case it sank and blocked the Horseshoe Bend on the way out!

You would not think it from the present Planners enthusings that if their predecessors had but only had their own way there would now be no tourist 'Honey Pots' in the central area of Bristol, other than a somewhat isolated and twee King Street - no Watershed, no Water Carnivals, no Wine Fairs, no Lifeboat Museum, no Industrial Museum, no Tall Ships, no Harbour Ferry, and probably no Lloyds Bank H.Q.

But let us be charitable to those who have repented, and trust that BIAS and its membership has in some measure helped them to see the light. There are still unfortunate signs of back-sliding to the old less enlightened ways - like trying to get the Sand Boats from out of the City Docks just in case it offends the new dockside residents, who in any case are probably all out during the working day trying to earn enough to afford their enormous Mortgages, so shout "Halleluia" - and keep your powder dry!

Having put my totally autocratic views to the test in the Editorial of the previous issue of this Journal, I have not received one single protest, either verbal or in letter form, at the deliberate exclusion of Book Reviews from amongst these pages. I can only conclude therefore that my view was not so idiosyncratic as I had thought, and I can now therefore claim the support of democracy instead.

There is also some measure of rough justice in this, in that a new book has just been published 'Studies in the Business History of Bristol' in which I can find no reference at all to BIAS Journal, which is a pity as certain errors in the introductory chapter 'Industrial Change' might well have been more readily avoided - but I must say no more on this, or be fairly accused of failing to live up to my own dictum.