

## Editorial

Industrial archaeologists might be tempted to feel that all is well in their area of interest.

The appearance of our twenty-seventh annual journal and another busy year of activities is proof enough that BIAS has stood the test of time and continues to promote the cause of industrial archaeology in Avon. On a national scale, many of the objectives of the pioneers of IA have been achieved and our review of the latest volume in the *Civil Engineering Heritage* series shows how other bodies are actively promoting this aspect of our heritage. Indeed, recent revisions of 'Pevsner' include industrial archaeology sites and the three volumes to appear in 1994 in HMSO's *Exploring England's Heritage* series feature monuments to industry, commerce and transport alongside the ancient monuments, churches and country houses that formed the bulk of an earlier generation of such guides. There is good news locally with the restoration of Cleveland Bridge in Bath (see p. ) and repair and restoration, long overdue, is currently in progress at Saltford Brassmill.

On the other hand, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) has recently warned that evidence of Britain's industrial past is being destroyed faster than it can be recorded and that first-grade buildings are being demolished even after being listed for their historic importance (*British Archaeological News*, 18). As examples of this, CBA cite the recent loss of coalmining sites without recording and a county survey that showed the loss since 1966 of 63 per cent of Hertfordshire's paper mills and 78 per cent of its breweries - two of the traditional industries of this county. Locally, there are a number of causes for concern. In Bath, the distinctive industrial chimney in Milk Street has been demolished without any satisfactory awareness of its significance and Victoria Bridge, an early iron suspension bridge that is listed Grade II, has been shown by a recent County of Avon survey to be in urgent need of repair. Essential stabilisation works of Combe Down stone mines as at present proposed would inevitably involve filling of underground areas from which much of Bath's building stone emerged. There is a need to ensure that adequate recording takes place here. In Bristol, the old tobacco bonds continue to fall and the further development of 'Harbourside' is again under consideration. This will affect the future of such sites as the Canons Marsh goods shed and the remains of the old gas works, as featured in *BIAS Journal* 26. Further from the cities, fire has destroyed Greenland Mill and severely damaged Oakhill maltings and the state of Midford Aqueduct on the route of the Somerset Coal Canal gives cause for concern.

There is clearly much to do on the conservation front and a number of initiatives are in hand. We now have an industrial archaeology representative on Bristol City Council's Conservation Advisory Panel and BIAS was represented at the public enquiry on post-fire development of Oakhill maltings. We have recently heard that the developer's application to demolish the largest remaining malthouse has been refused. The work of the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust (AIBT) at Saltford has already been mentioned. AIBT has also commissioned the substantial report *Save the Goods Shed* by Avanti Architects Ltd. of London and is currently organising a structural survey at Midford.

The CBA report mentioned above also stressed that lack of information on IA sites is hindering conservation and recording initiatives. BIAS is currently assisting in the updating of English Heritage site-lists for IA but there is still scope for more local surveys and for detailed work on significant sites. To this end, BIAS Journal intends to publish items of topical concern and is pleased to include an article on the goods shed by Roy Day (p. 37), whose pioneering work on reinforced concrete buildings (*BIAS Journal* 13) first focused attention on the importance of this structure. By the time that *Journal* 27 appears, it is hoped that the Brunel Society will formally hand over - at our AGM - funds that will enable BIAS to offer a prize to encourage further recording, research and publication on our local industrial heritage. We hope that this will encourage members and others to build upon our record in this respect.

Over the next few years a number of pressures will influence the survival of our industrial heritage. In addition to the impact of local government reorganisation -and all that ensues from this change- are pressures coming from continuing technical change, mergers and takeovers and road schemes. Involvement and participation in conservation issues based upon comprehensive and valuable data are essential if BIAS is to build upon past achievements.

A third dimension is also required. BIAS needs a carefully-formulated strategy to guide its efforts. BIAS Committee is currently considering its position on the development of 'Harbourside', as the floating harbour is now labelled. The Committee has asked BIAS President, Professor Angus Buchanan, to look back on his editorial statement in *Journal* 6 (1973) and prepare a fresh set of principles to direct BIAS responses in the debate. This draft appears as our final article -the Committee would welcome members' responses.

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