

# HISTELEC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Web Site : [www.swehs.co.uk](http://www.swehs.co.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> EDITION

FEBRUARY 1996

## NEWSLETTER

It has been decided to produce a newsletter at approximately four times a year to keep members informed of Society activities. This is aimed particularly at members not wishing to join in the social activities. We hope you like the idea and will participate by writing notes or sketches from your past.

## SUCCESS OF FIRST ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The first luncheon was held on 27<sup>th</sup> January at the White Hart at Exeter when 42 members and partners/friends attended with 30 venturing down the City's mediaeval Underground Passages beforehand. If that wasn't a challenging enough experience, then the snowy weather was with only two couples being deterred. This was the biggest turnout in the short history of the Club and bodes well for the future events. We were guided through the Passages expertly with detailed explanations on their relationship with the original castle above which is no more. The food at the White Hart was good and certainly everyone was in good spirits. A great day!

## NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

John Haynes of Falmouth, Vice-Chairman, was present at Exeter. He is making very good progress after two abdominal operations in 1995. Since then he has had to endure many sessions of treatment, and has weathered these with stoicism. It was good to see him tuck into our three course meal with enthusiasm. He is busily preparing his talk on "Cornwall Electric Power Company" to be presented at Taunton on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1996 after the AGM.

Cedric Blackett from Exeter has written two articles on electricity history. "BCED Arc Lighting System" and "Early Communications

with BCED".(BCED - Bristol Corporation Electricity Department). Peter Lamb is hoping to get these published in the BIAS Journal, an annual magazine of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society.

David Gledhill of Taunton has written a seven page article on "Gas Engines and Waterwheels in Somerset Power Stations". It contains details of generator prime movers at Bridgwater, Burnham, Chard, Minehead, Wedmore and Fox's Tonedale Factory, Wellington and Waterwheel installations at Dulverton and Porlock. It has been published by the Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society, of which he is a member also, in their December 1995 Bulletin. A copy has been added to the Archives.

## MUSEUM COLLECTION

Good progress is being made with restoring the historical artefacts at our Redland, Bristol, premises. Peter Bulley has taken on this onerous task and Mike Williams is labelling the items with a little help from Peter Lamb's computer. Members still meet there on the first Thursday of every month from 10.00am to 12.30pm. Anyone is welcome, including the subsequent visit to the nearby Cambridge Arms for lunch.

## LYNMOUTH ELECTRICITY WORKS

Bill Harris, who gave us a very interesting talk in October on "Hydro Electricity in Devon" at our Plymouth meeting, has written to us with a copy of an article on the above published locally in North Devon. You may be aware that we adopted an engraving of Lynmouth Hydro Electric Installation as our letter heading logo since it was the first installation of its kind in the South West. In view of this, we believe that it will be of great interest to all and the article is reproduced with this newsletter.

## **OLD GENERATING STATION SITES**

Following a request from Lancaster University we have prepared a list of known sites where electricity generation has taken place in the past in the South West. The aim is to note any old buildings associated with generation, which may still exist and thence to secure them for posterity if it is thought worthwhile. David Gledhill has made a great contribution to this for Somerset.

## **QUIET REVOLUTION**

The BBC 2 Timewatch programme, as above, screened in October 1995, described the electrical revolution in the home. S.W. Elect. Archives made a valuable contribution to the programme with historical material, some of which was about the EAW. They required witnesses and Peter Lamb's Mother Tessa Lamb (Gerry Lamb's widow and SWEB pensioner) was volunteered, since she had been Secretary of Plymouth EAW in 1929 and Chairman of Bristol EAW in the 1950's. A television crew subsequently descended upon her Bristol flat to film for a morning. A challenging experience!

Excerpts will be shown after John Haynes talk at the AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

## **ARCHIVAL ACQUISITION**

Recently a fascinating advertising poster has been handed in for the Archive by Steve Tole. Where did he get it? Judging by the sketches alongside of a man and his wife, it probably dates from the 50's, it reads as follows:-  
"GENTLEMEN!

DON'T LET HARD  
WORK KILL YOUR WIFE  
LET ELECTRICITY DO IT!"

Also received are the "Memoirs" of Mr. LeBearn from Plymouth, who started in the industry in 1947 at Plympton St.Mary Undertaking. Some features of his experiences will be featured in the next newsletter.

## **TAPED INTERVIEWS**

Your Committee has decided to interview very old electricity employees using a tape recorder, in order to capture some of the personal recollections of yesteryear. John Redgrove and John Ashton have had their first effort at this interesting exercise. They have been to see George Eveleigh, ex- Chief Draughtsman of SWEB H O, who started with BCED in 1920.

A type written script is to be prepared of the highlights, excerpts of which will be appear in the next edition.

## **BRISTOL MEETINGS**

We have had complaints that we are not having meetings/visits in the Bristol area. This is valid since of the 87 members, 38 are living in the Bristol region. We are intending to rectify this deficiency by having joint meetings/visits with the Retired Professional Engineers Club of Bristol, the Chairman of which is Mike Hield, one of our members. The first of these will be the visit to the reserve collection of the Science Museum at Wroughton, near Swindon in July.

## **SIX MONTHS PROGRAMME 1996**

**SAT.23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH (2.00pm) AGM** followed by slide talk by John Haynes on "Cornwall Electric Power Company" Followed by excerpts from "Quiet Revolution" at SWEB Taunton Training Centre Meet at Merrie Monk, Monkton Heathfield near the Training Centre at 12.00 before.

**SUN.5<sup>th</sup> MAY (2.00pm) VISIT to  
COLDHARBOUR MILL WORKING  
WOOL MUSEUM**, Uffculme, Cullompton, Devon. Meet at Old Cottage Pub at 12.00 before near Tiverton Motorway M5 Junction no.27

**SAT. 6<sup>th</sup> JULY (2.00pm) SCIENCE  
MUSEUM, WROUGHTON** Joint with Retired Prof. Engineers' Club Meet at Sally Pussey Pub at 12.00 before near Motorway M4 junction no. 16

**SAT 7<sup>th</sup> SEPT.(2.00pm) DEVONPORT  
DOCKYARD MUSEUM** Visit The Old South Yard, Museum and Frigate Complex. Meet at The Lounge Pub 12.00 before

**SAT. 26<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER (2.00pm)  
EXETER MEETING** - undecided yet

## **NEXT EDITION**

It is the intention to produce this newsletter every two or three months, depending upon material available. Please send information/letters to Peter Lamb at 35 Station Road, Backwell, Bristol BS19 3NH or telephone him on 01275 463160