

HISTELEC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Web Site : www.swehs.co.uk

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WEEKEND AWAY IN FOWEY

Because we haven't had any meetings or visits in Cornwall yet, due to the long distances involved for our northerly members. The Committee have decided to try a weekend in a hotel in Fowey, in order to visit various sites of interest there. More details will be given later but put the date in your diary now :- 4th OCT. 1997

WHAT'S THIS PICTURE?

See the supplement attached for further details.



GEORGE EVELEIGH BIOGRAPHY

Following the taped interview of George Eveleigh, (age 94), John Ashton has written it up as a small A4 booklet. George lived in central Bristol when young and started work at 16 with Bristol Corporation Electricity Dept. He rose up through the Drawing Office ranks to become Chief Draughtsman at Head Office before he retired. His anecdotes are fascinating. Copies are available for £1.00. Send your cheque to me made out to SWEHS.

NEXT INTERVIEW?

Noel May. member has suggested that we undertake an interview of a retired person Reg Sutton, who was an engineer at the St. James Street Power Station. Taunton, before it closed. It could have been very interesting, but Reg isn't very co-operative at the moment! Anyone any other ideas?

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTY GROUP

Bill Tincknell. member has written a large book on the history of the Christy Bros encompassing all the aspects of the Group, which he tells me was split into four parts. The book, consisting of 525 pages, includes many photographs and schedules of employees and has been handsomely bound in blue hard-back.

Bill has had the book printed with a limited print-run at his own cost and therefore copies are available from him at £30.00. His address is as follows :-

Southdown, Salcombe Hill Top,
Sidmouth. Devon EX 10 ONY

TELL US WHAT YOU ARE DOING AND WE WILL PRINT IT!

SCIENCE MUSEUM, WROUGHTON

Fascinating, amazing, awesome and even bewildering! These were some of the reaction expressed by members of our Society and those of the Retired Professional Engineer's Club, who combined to make a joint visit to the Science Museum at Wroughton Airfield near Swindon on Saturday 6th July. Nearly 60 persons approximately half from each organisation gathered at the Sally Pussey Pub for lunch, then in convoy, the party journeyed to the nearby Wroughton Airfield.

Our guides explained that the airfield was established in 1939 as an RAF aircraft maintenance unit. Some 10,000 aircraft comprising 62 different types were worked upon by 700 staff. In 1980 the site was taken over by the Science Museum and is now used to store and display national collections of aircraft, road transport and marine engineering.

In two of the hangers we saw a group of airliners that illustrated the technical achievements accomplished between the 1930's and the late 1960's. A De Havilland Dragon Arcadian Biplane, constructed in wood and fabric, which is the oldest surviving British airliner. Also a 1930's Boeing 247, which was the first all-metal monoplane modern airliner. A Comet 4B displayed its style and grace to our members, together with a Hawker Siddley Trident. These will be joined by a Boeing Jumbo-jet 747 by the end of the century. Also various types of rockets and the SRN1, the worlds first hovercraft, were seen.

The final stage of our visit was to the vast hanger L4 of German design. Within this single hanger were housed the Road Transport, Agricultural and Civil Engineering Collections, Members were able to see exhibited examples of tractors, vintage buses, vintage lorries, delivery vans, fire engines, taxis, cars and even bicycles and tricycles. The Agricultural section displayed steam engines used for ploughing, various types of tractors, harvesters, binders, threshers, etc. The Civil Engineering Section included exhibits ranging from excavation machines to steam rollers to caterpillar tractors and the first JCB introduced in the 1950's.

At the end of the tour one felt that any moment a Tannoy system would announce "scramble", but it did not. so we made our way to our cars and embarked on our journey home. An enthralling day, one to be remembered. *Mike Williams*

SWEHS MUSEUM COLLECTION

This Autumn will see some action with the historical artefacts. John Ashton has come up with some designs to improve the displays, involving shelving, side panels and lighting. It is hoped one day to open the small museum to educational visits with the support, maybe, of SWEB?

DEVONPORT DOCKYARD VISIT

It was a delightful late Summer afternoon, when 14 members visited the Dockyard on Saturday 7th September. The Dockyard was first built on what is now the South Yard in 1691.

Very few artefacts of that time now exist. The Officer's Terrace (circa 1695) was one of the finest buildings in any dockyard. It was all but totally destroyed in the Air Raids of 1941. but the north and south end survived and. now restored, is the oldest piece of Naval Architecture in the Country. Although much of the subsequent Georgian dockyard was destroyed, several buildings survive, including part of the 1200ft Ropery. The covered building slip (1775) and a delightful gazebo, recently restored on King's Hill at Point Froward commemorating the visit in 1820 of King George III, all of which we visited. A gruesome sight was the Hangman's Scaffold, still in its original position, where some 180 French prisoners died during the Napoleonic Wars. We all shuddered when our guide suddenly released the trapdoor, whilst we were contemplating the hangman's noose!

Our visit to the Museum was well-timed, since it has recently been refurbished, and a wealth of material from the Victualling Yard added. An hour or so was quite insufficient to learn the history of the Yard and of the Navy, through the many maps, diagrams, ships' models etc. There are virtually no electrical exhibits apart from some interesting old test equipment. Alongside of which is recorded that electricity was first used on a British naval ship in 1874. when an electrical implement was used for firing guns! In 1875 searchlights were fitted, but it was not until 1883 that electricity- was used entirely in an electrical lighting installation on HMS Infexible, including both arc and incandescent lamps. By 1900 some 2000 electric motors had been installed in the ships. The Electrical Department of the Dockyard began in 1903.

Our guide was unable to obtain permission for us to visit the Frigate Complex and the Frequency Changer (from 50-60Hz NATO Standard), and we were disappointed not to see these. As it was, we spent a very interesting 3 hours in a fascinating corner of Plymouth. It is hoped that the future of the Museum and of the interesting buildings of the South Yard will be made secure for posterity and maybe more accessible to the general public in the future. *Ted Luscombe*

DEVONPORT DOCKYARD VISIT

We are sorry to hear that the 20 limit put some people off. We had little choice. I'm afraid!

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED FOR ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

We have all the Minute Books of the old electricity supply companies prior to nationalisation in our Archives. Some of them date back to 1899 and make fascinating reading. Local History groups are borrowing them occasionally. One member borrowed North Somerset Electricity Supply Co books and completed an inventory of main occurrences throughout their history. A very useful archive! We desperately need volunteers to research these in the warmth of your homes, so that ready answers can be given to queries. This particularly applies to the larger archives, such as Brixham, Cornwall Electric Power Company, Salcombe, St. Austell and Weston-super-Mare.

Chris Buck has volunteered to research the Weston books and has agreed to write-up a "potted" history of the Company. Any other volunteers?

NEW MEMBERS WANTED

Please ask your retiring ex-colleagues and friends to join us, we need a bigger membership to be successful. We have decided that new members will only join by personal contact and then find that they enjoy themselves with us.

MEMBERS NEWS

Mike Wreford Everyone knows that Mike is a bit of a historian. But do you know that he and his wife have published three booklets of past photographs of Okehampton. He has a considerable archive of his own and therefore it can be said that he is the major historian for Okehampton.

TEN MONTHS PROGRAMME 1996

SAT. 26th OCTOBER (2.00pm)
EXETER SOWTON MEETING 2.00pm
"FIRST SUPPLIES IN SOUTH WEST"
talk by Peter Lamb then film "Power Comes to Widcombe" Beforehand lunch at the Blue Ball.

TUES.26th NOVEMBER (7.30pm)
BRISTOL FEEDER ROAD MEETING
"COMEDY FILMS" by John Dike from the old Group Engineer's Dinners in 1960's. Also included will be a slides show of photographs from the Archives taken of Bristol & HQ staff. This should be big nostalgia evening. All past participants are invited.
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WED.22nd JANUARY '97 (2.30pm) JT.
MEETING WITH RET. PROF. ENG.
CLUB TALK BY OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR of SWEB - Alan Harrelson
At St.Peter's Hall, Henleaze. Bristol

SAT.25th JANUARY '97 (12.15pm)
ANNUAL WINTER LUNCHEON at the White Hart, Exeter (guest speaker Jim Moir. SWEB PRO) preceded by a conducted tour of Exeter Cathedral.

SAT.22nd MARCH (2.00pm) - AGM +
TALK on the HISTORY OF
APPLIANCES
By Colin Hill at SWEB Taunton Training Centre, Priorswood Road, Taunton. Lunch first at the Merry Monk, West Monkton.

SUN.18th MAY - STREET VISIT -
11.00am CLARK'S SHOE MUSEUM
followed by Sunday Lunch at the Bear Inn, afternoon "free" visit to Clark's Village factory shops.

SAT.21st JUNE
DARTMOOR WALK led by Brian Byng
Lunch at Dartmoor Inn. Merivale Quarry ending with Devon cream tea at Two Bridges Hotel.

SAT.19th JULY - BATH VISIT
NARROW BOAT RIDE to Claverton Pumping Station incl. Lunch at the George, Bathampton.

NEXT EDITION

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