

HISTELEC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Web Site : www.swehs.co.uk

No. 4

JAN. 1997

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL

The Society was started in March 1994, so we are entering our third year of operation. It has been an interesting year with good attendances at our meetings and visits, but our membership has fallen slightly, due mainly through people being disappointed at the small number of meetings in their particular locations. Of course we are trying to spread ourselves throughout the South West. Not easy to do, but we need to have some meetings in Bristol to support our growing membership there.

Let it be a good New Year for all our members and their families.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Since the Bristol Film Evening we have some new recruits - Leon Bass(Taunton). Peter Collard . John Coneybeare. Steve Lanham. Roger Neck, David Peacock Keith Richards, (all of Bristol). Bill Harris (Newport). David Swain (Exeter), John Carter (Saltash). They are most welcome and we look forward to seeing them at some of the coming events.

THE SW GRID SYSTEM IN 1930

See the supplement for a 1930 newspaper cutting from the Western Morning News and Mercury dated the 15th January. John Haynes found this when researching the history of the Falmouth undertaking. It is a fascinating archive. A diagram of the circuitry involved is included with the design of the pylon used.

AVONMOUTH DOCKS

Recently we supplied some information for the Engineering Director of the newly privatised Bristol Port Company for an IEE Talk. This resulted in our acquisition of a copy of an engraving of the opening of Avonmouth Docks in 1877. showing what maybe a small generating station. It is known that the Docks had a generating station prior to Bristol's first public supply in 1893.

SWEHS MUSEUM COLLECTION

The redesign of the display of historical artefacts at Cairns Road has taken a leap forward with the construction of display shelving by John Ashton. Peter Bulley and Mike Williams. They have been working there for mam days and the improved displays are nearing completion.

REVIEW OF EXETER MEETING

On the 26th Oct. 35 members gathered to hear Peter Lamb give a slide talk on "The First Supplies in the South West", which covered the period from 1880's to 1910, which covered the whole of SWEB territory, from the first supply at Taunton in 1886 and including the many early supplies in Devon, Somerset, Bristol and Cornwall. 70 slides were shown of historical photographs, some of which had been recently acquired from Mike Wreford and the Mevagissey Museum.

After the talk some old films from the Archives were shown using a hired projector, since the sound on the Society's own projector did not work. (John Dike is attempting to repair it) The most interesting film shown was "Power Comes to Widecombe", which started off by showing what it was like to live in a village without electricity - fascinating! Believed to be filmed 1964. Widecombe was one of the later rural development supplies to be given, due to the difficulties of getting lines across Dartmoor and the event was quite a high profile at the time.

COMEDY FILM EVENING, AVONBANK

What a great success was the 60s nostalgic film evening on 26th November, which attracted 75 SWEB personnel (many now retired) to a nostalgic film evening at the Manager's Dining Room. Feeder Road, Bristol. They had come to see John Dike's old classic films after a period of 30 years and they were not disappointed. Old

Comedy Film Evening Review continued

friends and colleagues travelled from far and wide to be present and such outposts as Taunton. Exeter and West Cornwall were represented.

To start the evening. Peter Lamb showed 60 slides of photographs selected from the Bristol & HQ Archives only, covering a period of 50 years. These began with an ARP action stud}' at Cairns Road, Bristol of a young group of steel helmeted staff including Cedric Blackett, Arthur Green and George Eveleigh. The chronological sequence of slides, which followed included familiar faces from the past among them being Stanley Steward, P.M. Wilson, Len Irons, Hubert Bearcroft, Len Locker and a stern faced Cliff Brazier. John Dike had kindly converted the photographs into slides for us.

After the break, John Dike, using two old-fashioned projectors to give that authentic 60's feel, presented his four classic films "The Great Power Game", "The Great Power Failure", "Open Plan" and the "The Ghost of Redland". The films starred many of the engineers present and much witty repartee ensued. The films had an aura of Monty Python about them, but in fact pre-date the TV sketches. One of the films also predicted the future with a GAS flag flying on top of SWEB HQ Electricity-House! John Dike's presentation ended with an unfinished film featuring a surly Mike Williams stalking a contented David Hutton through the sleazy streets of Bristol - any ideas for a finish?

It would be impossible to mention all those present, but some well-known personalities included Charles Isherwood, Stirling Gilchrist, Leon Bass, John Spiller and Deryk Goldsworthy. Charles Isherwood, who started the Dinners all those years ago, rounded off the evening with a call for all those present to join the Society, which would enable everyone to meet at future events like this. *JWH*

DEVON/CORNWALL PHOTOS WANTED

Following the success of the Comedy Film & Slide Show at Bristol, we could do the same for Devon and Cornwall, but we would need more photos in the Archives. Please send photos of people over the last 60 years to Peter Lamb to include in the Archive..

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED FOR ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

In the last edition, we asked for volunteers to research our archives, only one person has come forward so far. Please think about this.

ARCHIVIST WANTED

An assistant archivist to Peter Lamb is required. An inventory is required to be made of the Archive, so that we may tell other people what we have got in it. At the moment, most of this is in Peter's head!

MEMBERS NEWS

Did you know that we have some keen bowlers amongst us John Heath, Graham Warburton and now Leon Bass. Have we other bowlers out there? Jack Vickery has sent in a photograph of the Bristol Mains Dept circa 1937. It includes 36 people such as Martin Pike. Eric Rathbone and many others.

DEATH OF CEDRIC BLACKETT

Sadly we have lost one of our keen members. He had written two articles for us "Arc Lighting System in Bristol" and "Early Communications in Bristol". It is anticipated that the first mentioned article will be included in the January edition of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Journal (annual) and also as a supplement to this newsletter later in the year.

Cedric started in the electricity supply industry with BCED in the 1930 s rising to be District Engineer with SWEB in Bristol and latterly DM. Exeter, from which post he retired.

GEORGE EVELEIGH BIOGRAPHY

Eight copies of the booklet by John Ashton have been sold to date. It has proved to be a superb archive for the Society. Copies are still available for £1.00. Send your cheque to Give Goodman at Aztec West made out to SWEHS.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTY GROUP

Bill Tincknell. member, has written a large book (525 pages) on the history of the Christy Bros. Copies are still available from him at £30.00. His address is as follows :-
Southdown. Salcombe Hill Top,
Sidmouth,
Devon EX 10 0NY
Tel : 013925 516102

Details were given in the last edition, if you require more information, we suggest telephoning Bill.

NEXT EDITION

This newsletter is produced 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.