

HISTELEC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Web Site : www.swehs.co.uk

No. 5

APRIL 1997

EXPANSION AT CAIRNS ROAD

Great news! We are very fortunate to have been offered the second spare switch-room at Cairns Road Redland Bristol for the expansion of our activities. This second room will also enable us to gain access to the toilet and kitchen, which will make for a less spartan existence for all concerned.

Your Committee have debated the proposed expansion and have decided that the new room will be used as a Reception/Lecture Room with a limited number of the larger exhibits, creating a Visitor Centre. School parties would be encouraged to visit and hear talks by members.

It is planned that the second room will be complete by July, since Keith Windsor is keen for us to open to the public as part of SWEB's contribution to the Engineering Council's Campaign "Year of Engineering Success" YES for short!

NEW COMMITTEE FOR 1997/98 At the AGM on Saturday 22nd March at Taunton, very little change took place in the your committees. John Redgrove retired after three years on the Main Committee. His place has been taken by John Gale, also John Ferrier joined the South Subcommittee. Thanks are given to John Redgrove for his support in founding the club and for his many ideas, including this newsletter, during its formative years.

NEW OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

MAIN COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN: John Haynes
V --CHAIRMAN: David Hutton
SECRETARY: Peter Lamb
TREASURER : Clive Goodman
MEMBERS : Chris Buck. John Gale
Mike Williams

SOUTH SUB-COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN: Barrie Phillips
MEMBERS : Roger Christy, John Ferrier
Ted Luscombe. Mike Wreford

See over for further report on the talk by Colin Hill

FASCINATING SUPPLEMENT

I hope readers will find the supplement this time of great interest. One of our members. Bill Harris, put your Secretary in touch with Lt.Cmdr Peter Richardson RN Rtd.. of Totnes, who has obviously spent many years researching the tin mines of Devon and East Cornwall.

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY STUDY

We have been sending details of old generating sites in the SW to the above University for some years. Recently they have been in contact again requesting more up-to-date information about the hydro-scheme sites, a study for English Heritage. Peter Richardson's information has been passed to them.

JIM MOIR LEAVES SWEB

The Society is very sorry to hear that Jim Moir SWEB's PRO has left for a job with the NHS in Leeds. Over the last few years he has been a tower of strength for the Society. He has been for ever supportive and optimistic with our expanding activities. We will miss him. The American. Glen Kundert. who has been shadowing Jim. will be taking over his role.

FOWEY WEEKEND GO-AHEAD

It is very heartening to find that 30 people so far have signed up for the Fowey Weekend (3/4 Oct), which ensures the go-ahead. The South Subcommittee are planning a super time involving a conducted tour around English China Clays, a visit to the Lost Garden of Heligan. a Sunday boat trip, dinners and entertainment to name but a few of the activities.

Contact Barrie Phillips if you wish to join us Tel : 01392 860529

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Since the New Year, we are pleased to welcome into the Society :- Alan Hooper, Harry Nabb, Barry Riley and Brian Williams. Here's hoping they will enjoy our many events as Diary Notes at newsletter end.

ELECTRICAL INTEREST IN THE USA

by Colin Hill (member)

I have recently completed a 4000mile trip across the USA in a coach. Whilst most passengers were snoozing the miles away, I was observing some very strange (in our eyes) electrical systems!

Transmission lines came in all shapes and sizes, but were mostly wood pole even for very long HV lines. Also much in evidence were tubular steel towers with arms sprouting at all angles and some carrying many lines in several different voltages. Where tee-offs were provided, it was not unusual to see these connected mid-span.

Between some towns the highways were lined with advertising boards and a line was provided down each side of the highway apparently for the sole purpose of illuminating these signs, each with its own pole mounted transformer. It was a pity the countryside could only be seen through the signs! In smaller towns all the distribution was overhead and the roads behind the buildings ran between the poles which carried electricity, telephone and cable TV together with all their transformers, switch-gear and other control equipment. The sky was in places barely visible!

All supplies seemed to be metered with open air equipment. On corners of blocks were lines of meters for businesses, signs lighting and so on. They looked very vulnerable to vandalism, but none was evident. In DIY Stores the electrical equipment seemed very strange. All 110v flat pin plugs with some very peculiar adapters, 2, 3, 4 and up to 6 way-being common. There were also some funny looking adapters with loose earth leads. The variety of lamps, night-lights, timers and other gadgets was enormous, but the prices seemed similar to ours. Most Americans seemed appalled that our domestic supplies were at a "killer" 230v - "he-man stuff"!!

REVIEW OF HARRELSON MEETING

On Wednesday 22nd January, members of SWEHS joined with members of the Bristol Retired Professional Engineer's Club at Henleaze to hear a talk by SWEB's Operations Director. Alan Harrelson, entitled "Engineering Customer Satisfaction". Alan explained that one of their major objectives in the development of SW Electricity was the improvement of customer satisfaction. To that end SWEB is refining existing techniques and building on them to reduce outage times both planned and unplanned, improving the reliability of the system and developing better communications with customers.

Some examples were given, a single phone number on which SWEB could be contacted, the caller then being directed to the right department to deal with his/her enquiry: continuing the replacement/ upgrading of the light 11kV lines to improve system performance and the introduction of "Hot Glove" working technique to extend live line working on the 11kV system. He showed some slides to illustrate the method and equipment used and said that the procedure was to be used at 11kV but that work in America has shown it to be feasible at voltages up to 33kV. Alan claimed that SWEB's response to the recent storms in late 1996 showed an improved performance.

There followed a lively question and answer session in which Alan was pressed on SWEB's response to various problems and in particular how they were planning to keep or improve their share of the market when greater freedom of choice of suppliers was introduced. Alan felt that SWEB would be able to cope by offering good service and reliability with a competitive tariff. David Hutton gave a humorous vote of thanks to Alan.

John Gale

REVIEW- ANNUAL LUNCHEON AT EXETER

The annual Luncheon was again a huge success at the White Hart, Exeter with 38 members and friends attending. Also 30 people took advantage of the delightful and interesting conducted tour of Exeter Cathedral. The food at the Hotel was very-good, although the service could have been better.

The company was good of course as was Jim Moir's after-luncheon speech. He started with an amusing anecdote. In July '95 our PR Company faxed SWEB with the message "We will fight them on the beaches", but by August we had thrown in the towel. He mixed his presentation of light hearted comments with the serious business of projecting SWEB's new public image of a caring, committed and first class service organisation. He said that his job is easier with the new management, as they are more keen to participate in the media, Gale Klappa being a graduate in Communications. However the highlight of his comments came when he presented a cheque for £1000 to pay for the display materials for the Cairns Road Museum.

DEATH OF GORDON DRAY

It is with sadness that the Society notes the death of one of its founder members, Gordon Dray of Silverton, near Exeter. Prior to his retirement Gordon was a Wayleave Officer with SWEB's Exeter District and was a well-known (if not always welcome) to many of the County's farms. St.Peter's

Chapel at Exeter and Devon Crematorium was packed with family and friends for the service on 7th February 1997. It was very much a celebration of Gordon's life, with an ex-colleague's most appropriate reminiscences of Gordon's zest for living and enthusiasm for everything he did. Gordon loved the West Country and family holidays in the Isles of Stilly became an annual pilgrimage. He was a keen motorist with many a colleague being driven safely by him to their destination. With the passing of Gordon we have lost a most kind and colourful friend.

Barrie Phillips

ARC LAMPS IN BRISTOL

Peter Lamb and the late Cedric Blackett have had articles published in the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society BIAS Annual Journal. Attempts were made to get Cedric's article accepted last year, but we failed. Cedric died in October 1996 so it is sad that he will not have been able to see his article published. You will get the opportunity to read these in a future supplement to Histelec News.

SALFORD BRASS MILL, NEAR BATH

Recently members of the Society have been involved by the Bristol Archaeological Society in finding out more details about a small Ediswan DC generator installed in the 1920's and coupled to an existing water-wheel. Also Mike Williams has been able to obtain a second-hand meter for their use as a sub-meter from the adjacent private house.

ARCHIVES

1. JOHN GALE has agreed to be Assistant Archivist

2. ATLANTA EXHIBITION

In the Autumn of 1996. SWEB's new PR man, Glen Kundert (then assisting Jim Moir) visited the Archive and chose photographs for use at a permanent exhibition at Atlanta. He was mainly interested in pictures of blitz damage during the War in Bristol, but he also took some older shots as well. All the photos were copied for use in the USA not wishing to release our originals.

3. FILMS

Our 28 films have now been deposited with the SW Film Archive at Plymouth (who are supported by the local TV companies including the BBC) and they have sent video copies for our retention and use. They are interesting to see. We will have to have some meetings in the future when we can show some of the very old ones of the 1950's.

4. VIDEOS

We have taken possession of 76 videos from SWEB's HO Library, which we will be able to use if we ever get involved in entertaining the public.

5. BRAUNTON

Received from Braunlon Museum three photographs for our Archives of Braunton's old generating station commissioned in 1911. They show a 100hp oil engine with a 62.5kW Crompton dynamo.

PHILLIP'S TESTER

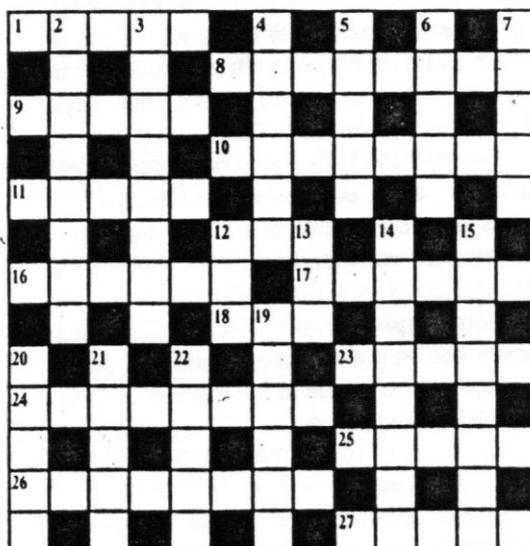
Barrie Phillips has set you all a crossword puzzle, the answers will appear in the next issue

ACROSS

- 1 Precedes insulator failure (5)
- 8 Vary (8)
- 9 Useful with heavy current (5)
- 10 Send (8)
- 11 Starts here (5)
- 12 There's one for everything (3)
- 16 Used for a plumber or a bandsman (6)
- 17 Topical measurement (6)
- 18 When a motor starts (3)
- 23 Necessary with long reports (5)
- 24 He preferred AC (8)
- 25 Not final (5)
- 26 The matchless fuel (8)
- 27 Some cards are! (5)

DOWN

- 2 Improves efficiency (8)
- 3 Copper does this well (8)
- 4 Means of improvement (6)
- 5 Their ratio determines voltage (5)
- 6 Not X-rays (5)
- 7 Victorian impro\iser (5)
- 12 Danger (3)
- 13 Voltage operated safety valve
- 14 Wide view (8)
- 15 Max when Z source = Z load (8)
- 19 Often helps find faults (6)
- 20 Electric K9 clock! (5)
- 21 Cause of most O/H faults (5)
- 22 The general mass (5)



DURLEY PARK CONTROL CENTRE -THE END OF THE ROAD

The National Grid Control Centre at Durley Park, Keynsham closed recently with the work being transferred to the new National Control Centre at Wokingham. Member. Roger Hughes, who is investigating the possible saving of any items of historical interest, was there at the end.

On the 5th March 150 of the 250 people who at some time worked at Durley Park met for a buffet lunch to "celebrate" the final closure of the Bristol Grid Control centre. Durley Park House was acquired by the British Electricity Authority in 1951 as an Emergency Control Centre to replace the one situated in St. Stephen's Place in the centre of Bristol. In 1957 Durley Park became the main Area Control Centre replacing the original Control Room at Oakfield Road, which had been opened by the CEB in 1934. This controlled the 132kV grid system stretching from Hayle to Haverfordwest in the West to High Wycombe and Chichester in the East and Gloucester and Oxford to the South Coast. The Control Room evolved over the years to be responsible for the 400kV and 275kV Supergrid systems covering the South Wales, South Western and Southern Electricity areas.

In September last year the NGC National Control Centre at Wokingham took over system control from the Bristol Control Centre, ending not only 39 years of system control from Durley Park, but 62 years of Grid System Management from Bristol. At its peak about 160 people were employed at Keynsham, including the Telecommunications Section of the old South Western Region. The process of transfer will be completed later this year with the closure of St. Albans and Leeds Centres.

The gathering included many retired members as well as those who at some time in their career had worked at Durley Park before going out into the wider world of the ESI. Also present were those who had followed their old job to the new world of Wokingham and who had been crucial in transferring system experience from the Area Control Centres to the new Centre. As can be imagined everyone wallowed in an orgy of nostalgia as characters and events were remembered. Following short talks by present and past members, the final farewell was marked by the cutting of a large cake decorated with the NGC trade-mark. An exhibition of photographs, drawings and memorabilia was staged and it is hoped that much of the material can be passed to the SWEHS for safe keeping at Cairns Road Archive.

Roger Hughes

HISTORY OF ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

After the AGM on Saturday 22nd March. Colin Hill (member) gave us a very interesting talk illustrated by 200 slides drawn from many museums he had visited and appliances he has collected. He explained that he is a compulsive collector of old appliances particularly at bargain prices. Colin, a Yorkshireman. had come all the way from Huddersfield to where he had retired from Nuclear Electric at Hinkley Point.

He started by detailing the early history of appliance use, followed by some fascinating slides of appliances, involving the audience in dating some of the rarer items. With some before-and-after shots of some old appliances, which initially looked past recovery, he showed us just how to refurbish many of them. With many anecdotes of appliance acquisitions, Colin enabled to keep us entertained for an hour and half with no trouble at all.

RULES OF THE SOCIETY

The rules approved at the AGM in March 1996 were distributed to the members present at the recent 1997 AGM. Those who were not there and would like a copy, would they contact the Secretary.

DIARY NOTE

TUES.22nd APRIL - BRISTOL MEETING "AROUND BRISTOL BY TRAM"

Slide/talk at Feeder Road by Peter Davey at 7.30pm

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 followed by a two hour amble, ending with a Devon cream tea at Two Bridges Hotel.

SUN.20th JULY - BATH VISIT - 11.00am NARROW BOAT RIDE to Claverton Pumping Station incl. Lunch at the George. Bathampton

SAT, 6th SEPT. - EXETER MEETING "LISTENING TO SATELLITES"

Slide/talk at Sowton by Geoffrey Perry at 2.00pm

NEXT EDITION

This newsletter is produced every three or four months, depending upon material available. Please send information, articles, photographs or letters to Peter Lamb at 35 Station Road, Backwell, Bristol BS19 3NH or telephone him on 01275 463160.

