

# HISTELEC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

No. 7

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## 100<sup>th</sup> MEMBER ENROLLED

A hearty welcome is accorded the many new members, who have joined in the last six months, the most recent being Keith Morgan, Ivor Bowditch and Brian Jordan, who is our 100<sup>th</sup> member. Great news!!

## A MILESTONE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIETY

The weekend at Fowey, commencing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, was a terrific success and therefore a milestone in the development of the Society. This is not an idle boast, since we had 43 people attending of which 42 stayed at the Fowey Hotel.

For those who did not make it, most of us arrived late on the Friday afternoon and joined in a picture quiz arranged by Barrie Phillips. We sat down to Dinner at 7.00pm the food at the hotel being excellent. After dinner we were entertained by Mike Wreford and a presentation of a "fun" chain of office to the chairman John Haynes. On the Saturday we embarked on an all day conducted tour of English China Clays St. Austell complexes viewing the process from extraction to the finished product. Our guide was Mr. Ivor Bowditch, Community & Public Relations Manager. He was extremely knowledgeable giving off-the-cuff information continuously throughout the day. (He had had a meeting only a few days before with one of our members. Eric Edmonds representing the Trevthick Society) We also visited a Crossley diesel driven generating plant (5MW) at Drinnick, an old beam engine at Parkandillack and small hydroelectric station (250kW) at Ponto Mill We were told that the old St. Austell Electric Supply Company power station, which had been situated nearby, had been demolished

Those less interested in modern industry or industrial archaeology went to another historic setting at the Lost Gardens of Heligan and had a great day out. Some stayed an extra day and went to both, very crafty! On Saturday evening Barrie had arranged an entertainer, who could be described as a Cornish singer with a few yarns thrown in. On Sunday morning we had a delightful steam boat trip up and around the Fowey

Estuary. The weather was very kind to us with strong sunshine during the boat trip. We were all surprised by the huge size of the china clay docks up stream as we were delighted by the beauty of the estuary.

David Hutton, Vice-chairman, thanked Barrie for the superb arrangements of the weekend all of which appeared to go smoothly. Everyone was extremely pleased with the choice of hotel, which is situated in an idyllic setting with most bedrooms having super sea views.

*Peter Lamb*

## CAIRNS ROAD HOLD-UP

We have now had a letter from Glen Kundert, SWEB's Communications Manager, telling us officially of the deferment of the renovation of the second room at Cairns Road. All deferrable expenditure has been halted, due to high cost to SWEB of the Windfall Tax. We have been told to apply again at the start of the next financial year i.e. April 1998.

## TRANSATLANTIC CABLES

Barrie Phillips has again put pen to paper after considerable research and given us a superb supplement, which is attached. Thank you to Barrie on behalf of everyone

## SWELA APPLICATION

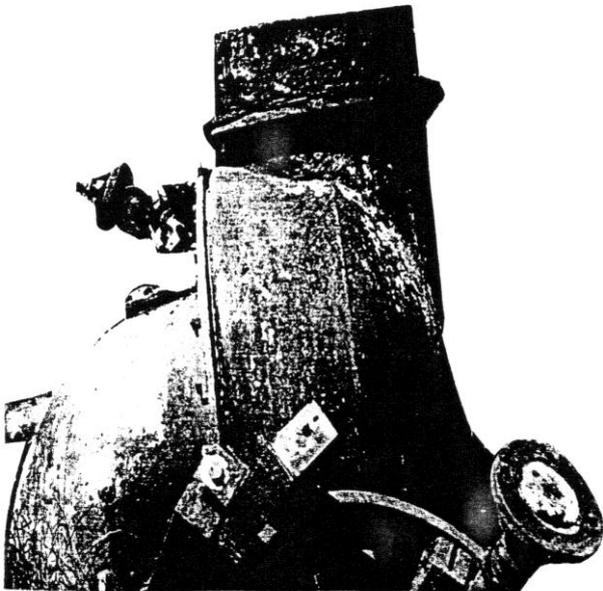
Following changes in the rules of South Western Electricity Leisure Association, we have reapplied. We were originally turned down. The advantages of being affiliated are the possibilities of insurance cover and some money for the development of Cairns Road being available.

## FINCH FOUNDRY AT STICKLEPATH

In mentioning the above in the last edition, the editor omitted to give you the punchline!! The National Trust is keen to preserve the old Hay, Maryon and Co.Ltd. water turbine, which has been rusting away at the Finch Foundry for some time. (The turbine was coupled to a Brush 12kW 230volt single phase alternator). It would make an interesting educational exhibit alongside the Foundry. The Trust have no

money for this work, but it could make an interesting Project for a team of four or five volunteers, who are happy to roll up their sleeves for a few weeks in 1998.

### **FINCH FOUNDRY WATER TURBINE**



So far there are three members keen to take on this project near Okehampton - if you would like to join them, please ring me on **01392 860529**.

*Barrie Phillips*

### **VISIT TO BRISTOL INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM (BIM)**

Having negotiated the complexities of the Cumberland Basin road system, made more tortuous by the operation of the swing bridges at the time of our arrival (we all made it!), a party of 35 members gathered at the Pump House Inn for lunch in a room reserved for us prior to the BIM visit. Someone suggested that we should walk the 1 1/2 miles to the Museum, but this was dismissed due to the vagaries of the weather

Andy King, the Museum Director, met our party on the quayside outside the Museum and outlined the extent of the external exhibits and activities. He pointed out various features of the view of Bristol that could be seen from our standpoint opposite the confluence of the River Frome and the original route of the River Avon. He explained the reasons for the rise and fall of Bristol as a port, which was once second in size and activity to the Port of London in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Before entering the Museum, we were shown all the cranes, railway and boats, maintained by the Museum, some of which operated during the Summer months.

Inside the Museum, Andy King explained that Bristol had been a "self supporting city" containing even conceivable manufacturing industry, some supporting each other. Typical of these industries was the tobacco industry, where Wills required not only machines to manufacture cigarettes etc but also paper, cardboard, packets, boxes and printing. These firms included Mardon, Son & Hall, Brecknoll, Dolman & Rogers, St. Annes Board Mills, Thrissels and so on. A similar story surrounded the chocolate industry.

We were shown the workshops where various artefacts were renovated, maintained and preserved. The problems of this, was explained, including the degradation of materials such as rubber, bakelite and plastics. In order to give "hands-on" experience associated with printing, members of the public could on certain days use old machinery to print paper bags etc.

Our party was then taken into the large top floor of the Reserve Collection. What an Aladdin's Cave opened up before us. Items stored included model ships, model aeroplanes, motor bikes, old machines used in the boot & shoe trade, horse drawn carriages, farm wagons, a considerable number of steam engines (including one Bellis & Morcomb) and so on. The sheer quantity of items stored was staggering. Eventually we were persuaded to transfer our interest to the main exhibits in the Museum.

These include displays relating to the Port of Bristol, the Bristol Aeroplane Company, the Bristol Bus Company and road transport.

As the afternoon turned to early evening, museum staff could be seen persuading inquisitive Society members to leave I am certain we overstayed our welcome and equally certain that this was what Andy King expected!

*Mike Williams*

### **BRISTOL CONFERENCE ROOMS**

The Conference Rooms at Feeder Road will no longer be available to us after 1<sup>st</sup> January due to the sale of the Avonbank Offices Eventually we hope to have our Bristol meetings at our Cairns Road premises when the work is complete on the second room

### **JUNIOR LIFE SKILLS**

Bristol members were involved in a SWEB stand at a children's seminar/course on the above topic organised by the Bristol City Council. The stand at the University Halls of Residence at Stoke Bishop, which we were told was designed by Mike Cockram (but he denies it!!) and was contrived to challenge the youngster in their safety knowledge. We have indicated that we would like to do the same next year as everyone involved considered it to be very worthwhile. With more time a wider tranche of members will be sought.

## **MEMBERS NEWS**

David Whitehead is giving a talk to the Retired Professional Engineers Club on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March at St. Peter's Hall. Henleaze on his decryption experiences at Bletchley Park during the War, it is entitled "Bombes Hit Shark. Colossus Netted Fish". Wow, what a title!!

Eric Edmonds is pretty active in Cornwall's industrial history. He has recently given some of his collection to the Society's Archive. Many thanks. Eric.

David Legg who is our honorary auditor, has had a mild heart attack, but is doing well.

John Redgrove's wife Maureen has been very seriously ill, but is now making a recovery. We wish her well.

## **IRONBRIDGE**

With the success of the Fowey weekend ringing in their ears, some members have suggested that we do it again in 1999 i.e. have a weekend away. The hot favourite is Ironbridge Museum in Shropshire. There are about five sites in the Severn Valley at Ironbridge associated with what is described as the start of the Industrial Revolution. If you like the idea or are opposed to it or even have a better idea, please let your committee members know your views over the next few months

## **ARCHIVES**

Graham Warburton has completed the archiving of the Central Construction Dept. (CCD) Records. Thanks to Graham.

Paul Hulbert is arranging to gain some publicity for the Society associated with a formal acknowledgement of the hand-over on permanent loan of our film archives to the South West Film Archive at Plymouth. Also we have been asked to agree a formal contract for the use of the material for commercial use

## **SOUTH WEST FILM ARCHIVE**

Have you ever heard of this?' Both Paul Hulbert and Peter Lamb have visited their premises at the Foot & Bowden Building in Plymouth. It is quite a large archive enjoying controlled conditions of both temperature and humidity.

Did you know that they were set up as a trust to look after the film archive of South West Television when they lost their franchise over three years ago. They are very enterprising, since they are fortunate to have persuaded BBC at Plymouth to store films and videos with them and are able to offer them for commercial use with the BBC's permission. They are the only archive in the Country with access to BBC films.

## **WEST COUNTRY TV**

We have been approached by the above TV Company to provide films and other archive material for a programme about the history of the West Country. Watch this space!

## **CANCELLED MEETING**

Did you realise that the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. which was deferred to 1998 due to holiday commitments, would have had to have been cancelled any way due to Princess Diana's Funeral. Who has the command of the crystal ball?

## **DIARY NOTE**

### **SAT.24<sup>th</sup> JAN. 1998 ANNUAL LUNCHEON**

St. Olaves Court Hotel. Exeter at 12 noon  
Guest speaker. Robert Symons. SWEB's new Operations Director

### **SAT. 21<sup>st</sup> MAR. AGM & TALK at Taunton**

After AGM. "Civil War & Rebellion" slide/talk by Roger Eckersley (Stirring 17<sup>th</sup> Century events).

### **SAT. 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL SLIDE/TALK at Bristol**

"Early Days of Helicopter Flying" by Sox Hosegood to be held in the Fox & Goose. Barrow Gurney on the A38 with lunch there beforehand Afterwards a visit will be made to the SWEB Helicopter Unit at Lulsgate.

### **Sun. 17<sup>th</sup> Mav BOAT TRIP ON THE DART**

Meet 10.30am Totnes. boat to Dartmouth for lunch followed by a trip across to Kingswear to catch steam train to Paignton and thence Western National Bus back to Totnes.

### **Sat. 11<sup>th</sup> July VISIT BLAGDON P/S**

Lunch at the New Inn, Blagdon, followed by a conducted tour of the Pumping Station including a fascinating Water Museum, trout pond etc.

### **Sat. 26<sup>th</sup> Sent. LISTENING TO SATELLITES**

Talk by Geoffrey Perry at 2.15pm at SWEB. Sowton Offices. Lunch beforehand at the Blue Ball Inn. Sandygate near the Exeter Motorway junction.

### **Sat. 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. MAGIC LANTERN SHOW**

2.15pm Aztec West Offices of SWEB. Original Victorian slides and projecting lanterns with nostalgic views of the West Country.

## **NEXT EDITION**

Please send information, articles, photographs or letters to Peter Lamb at 35 Station Road. Backwell. Bristol BS48 3NH or telephone him on 01275 463160