

HISTELEC NEWS !

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH WESTERN ELECTRICITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

No. 14

APRIL 2000

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

We made it without too much of a problem and things seem to be just the same as it was before, contrary to the media pundits.

However we only had one reply for "The Man of the Millennium". Harry Cardy suggested Basil de Ferranti. See overleaf for Harry's reasoning.

AGM AT TAUNTON 18th MARCH 2000

At the recent Annual General Meeting, the whole of the existing committee were voted in for a further term with no changes :-

Chairman : Barrie Phillips
Vice-chairman : John Gale
Treasurer : Clive Goodman
Secretary : Peter Lamb
Committee : Chris Buck, Paul Hulbert, David Hutton, David Peacock, Mike Williams
South Sub-Committee
Chairman : Roger Christy (also Main Committee)
Committee : John Ferrier, Ted Luscombe, Mike Wreford

Afterwards Roger Eckersley gave a fascinating talk on "Somerset's Industrial Archaeology"

ANNUAL LUNCHEON APOLOGY

Based upon previous years we had expected 40 members and guests and made plans that could accommodate 50, but by the closing date the numbers had reached 66!! Fortunately the hotel were able to help by changing our venue from the Topaz Room to the Garden Restaurant.

I am sorry that we had to turn away some late applications and also apologies that the Castle visit with 61 participants was more crowded than we intended.

Barrie Phillips

WEEKEND AWAY

At the last Committee Meeting Chris Buck volunteered to take on the task of organising the Weekend Away in October 2001 ably helped by David Hutton and Mike Williams. It is hoped to find a hotel in the Portmadoc area. The tentative dates are 5th/6th/7th October 2001. Please put these in your forward diary.

STANLEY STEWARD OBITUARY

Stanley Steward, the first Chairman of SWEB, died in October at the age of 95. He was Chairman from 1948 to 1955, when he became Managing Director of Lancashire Dynamo, later becoming Chairman. Still later he left to become Head of BEAMA. He was always nostalgic about his time at SWEB, considering his time here in the West Country to be very rewarding. His wife Phyllis died shortly afterwards, but they both managed to celebrate their 70th Wedding Anniversary.

MEMBERS NEWS

John Haynes & John Heath have had a meeting at Exeter to plan their talk to the Society in May. This was said by one John "You just sit there requesting this and that while others beaver away on your behalf"!!! "The Isles of Scilly Electrification" should be a fascinating talk.

Peter Collard would like to pass on the news of John Detheridge, who is not a member but had a heart attack in February. He is home now and OK, but would like calls from old friends.

Sequel to SWEB POCKET POWER STATIONS

As is usual, from my experience, the role of CCD is generally played down. CCD not only carried out the site works, but the Drawing Office also prepared all the construction drawings, certainly for the first three stations - Princetown, Lynton and Porlock and maybe Roseland also.

Mention should also be made of Hal Langford, who with Cyril Waller spent much time in the CCD Drawing Office at the design stage. The Princetown installation was drawn by the NJC Draughtsman, who came to CCD from the Woolaway Company. The others were handled by Arnold Goodwin, who later emigrated to South Australia. The Archives (CCD Photographic) include one album devoted to these installations.

No mention was made of the need to double the fuel storage capacity during the mid 60's. This occurred when the Lynton generator almost ran out of fuel, when massive snow-drifts isolated the area, a super human effort eventually getting a tanker through just in time.

Graham Warburton

(Thanks to Graham for this additional information, Ed.)

ANNUAL LUNCHEON REVIEW

SATURDAY 29 JANUARY 2000

On a very wild and windy day 66 members and guests gathered at Tiverton for the Annual Winter Lunch and Visit. The day started with a conducted tour of Tiverton Castle the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon. Fortunately a lesser number (61) met in the library cum lounge of the most recent part of the castle for coffee and biscuits, but nevertheless we needed to be split into two groups for an explanation of the history and a tour of the castle.

My half of the party was taken by Mrs Gordon, who outlined the history of the castle from its origins as a wooden structure in the 11th century, through the enlargement and rebuilding in stone in the 14th century; its subsequent decline, and conversion into a dwelling house over the latter two hundred years. Mrs. Gordon outlined how their family had become involved in acquiring a very rundown and dilapidated "pile" and the work they had undertaken to restore the house and the remaining ruins of the mediaeval castle. All the work had been privately financed and their tussles with the Planners as to what they could do to a Grade 1 listed building seemed endless.

We were then taken on a conducted tour of the ground floor of the house, admiring some of the restoration work the Gordons had done. In particular a fine new staircase built in oak to match its predecessor caught my eye. Outside to look at the remains of the ruins of the mediaeval castle on a bluff overlooking the valley of the Exe was interesting if very windy. Then into the restored part of the old castle, again with excellent restoration work with interesting relics, including armour, firearms, and the star turn, an original 'brass monkey' and an explanation of the modern usage of the name.

The castle is well worth a visit and the owners deserve support in the conservation work they are undertaking. It is open 14.30 to 17.30 Sundays to Thursdays during July and August.

Lunch was taken at the Tiverton Hotel, where we had the attractively arranged Garden Restaurant to ourselves. After lunch, we were given an illustrated talk on "Old Tiverton" by Alan Voce, who had been previously Curator of Tiverton Museum. He showed us a fine set of slides of photographs of the buildings in Tiverton and outlined their history. He also told us of the work being undertaken to refurbish the Museum with the help of money from the Lottery Fund.

It was my second winter lunch with the SWEHS and I understand the best attended so far. A thoroughly enjoyable day despite the buffeting those of us received returning north on M5.

Roger Hughes

REVIEW OF VISIT TO SS GREAT BRITAIN ETC

On 27 November an enthusiastic group of us investigated Bristol's nautical past. First we were taken on a detailed

tour of Brunel's ship the SS Great Britain. Our guide Bob Evans described one of the first integrated transport systems – in 1843 you could buy a single ticket, which took you all the way - Paddington Station to New York.

Built originally for 360 transatlantic passengers, the Great Britain was converted to take 750 passengers on the Australia run (she carried the first ever English cricket team to tour Down Under!), and later at the time of the Indian Mutiny she was transformed again to take 1600 travellers. It then became a coal and wheat freighter before being wrecked in the Falkland Islands.

The Great Britain was at the cutting edge of technology, with a 15 ft 6in diameter propeller driven by a vast 1500 HP engine which had four cylinders, each of 88 inches diameter with a six foot stroke. The passengers' fresh water for drinking was condensed from the boiler. Built of iron plates from Ironbridge, she had five full-depth watertight bulkheads.

The Great Britain Project has submitted a Millennium Grant bid to restore the area around the dock to become a Victorian shipyard again. In contrast we then visited the replica of Cabot's 1497 ship the Matthew, which in 1997 recreated his epic voyage to Newfoundland. In the afternoon Rodney North, who crewed on the Matthew, described the historical setting for the original voyage – the keen competition between Spain, Portugal and England being the "Space Race" of the time. He went on to talk about the building of the replica and the 500th anniversary voyage itself.

During the day we were also able to investigate Bristol's Floating Harbour, with lunch at the Pump House Inn, and admire the Create Centre, a prize-winning conversion of an old tobacco warehouse into conference and exhibition space.

Paul Hulbert

MAN OF THE MILLENNIUM -Basil de Ferranti

(In the last edition, Members were asked to name the greatest inventor/invention of the Industrial Revolution. Only one person responded. Shame!!)

Harry Cardy says that Ferranti proved that high voltage AC could be distributed over long distances safely and efficiently. He manufactured the first high voltage AC system, which ran from his Deptford Generating Station to the middle of London. This was a very ingenious system, consisting of two copper tubes, one inside the other, paper insulated and placed in a steel pipe twelve feet long. It then had hot wax forced through the pipe to eliminate any voids. Just imagine how many joints would have been required - one every twelve feet!! This was an underground system working at 10kV; the highest anywhere at that time.

FERRANTI cont. Ferranti also proved that high voltage AC could be very efficiently lowered to a safe level through a transformer. Transformers have a very high efficiency level about 99%. Whereas DC generators or

rotary convertors are at their best only about 80% efficient.???

Therefore by his inventiveness electricity AC distribution quickly expanded not only in this Country but also throughout the World. Industry as a whole must have saved millions by his efforts.
Harry Cardy

NOT JUST STAMPS

....at Bath Postal Museum as Paul Hulbert found out

In Bath recently with time to kill, I decided to pay a visit to the Postal Museum. I thought it would be all philately and envelopes, but I couldn't be more wrong. Instead I found a fascinating history of letter writing and postal services from 2000 BC to the present day.

Did you know, for example, that the expression "a feather in your cap" comes from Roman Imperial messengers' headwear? Or that in Germany butchers often ran the local postal services because they were the shopkeepers, who visited the main towns most often?

One room is devoted to the history of airmail - the first airmail flight over 100 miles was from Bath to London in 1912. A jigsaw of the Mercury and Maia seaplanes particularly caught my eye. The Mercury rode piggy-back on top of the Maia, reminiscent of the Space Shuttle's test launches from a jumbo jet. In a spectacular flight in 1938 the two aircraft took off from England, and after refuelling in Ireland they set out into the Atlantic. The two craft then separated and Mercury continued alone to complete its transatlantic crossing.

The museum also houses visiting exhibitions. The current display - until early June - traces the course of the Boer War, with uniforms, models, soldiers' letters, postcards and cartoons of the time. The museum is in Broad Street, only about 300 yards from the Roman Baths. The building was the Bath post office from 1829 to 1854. The museum is open throughout the year:-

Mon-Sat 11am to 5pm, Sundays 2pm to 5pm.

Paul Hulbert

Picture attached: Short Mayo Composite in flight.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Members may be interested to know that one of our leading computer buffs, Marcus Palmen, is creating a Web-site for the Society. It is intended to make available

the extent of our Archives and Marcus is keen to illustrate the latest Histelec News. I will keep you posted.

Following the January Notice inviting members to advise the Secretary of their e-mail addresses, we have 21 as follows :-

Richard Avery	richardmavery@supanet.net
Ted Clapton	tanda@claptonat.fsnet.co.uk
Peter Collard	collard@11royking.fsnet.co.uk
John Coneybear	quinton@ukgateway.net
Chris Eker	eker@tatush.demon.co.uk
John Ferrier	johnferrier@falmouth.freemove.co.uk
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BRISTOL AERO COLLECTION

I recently visited the Bristol Aero Collection at RAF Kemble, near Cirencester. Like our own collection, this is run by a team of enthusiasts. Entering the hanger, I was immediately struck by the range of artefacts - aircraft, missiles, vintage buses and much more.

A Bristol Bloodhound missile, raised to the firing position, dominates the centre of the collection. However there are many smaller displays, which are just as interesting - for example the panel about the air raid on Filton in September 1940, complete with an unexploded bomb (disarmed of course!)

A real Polaris nose-cone is a recent acquisition, the outer surface being made of laminated spruce - did you realise that our submarines used to fire wooden missiles? Also a display covers the air ferry service for cars, using Bristol freighters with clamshell doors, which used to fly from Lydd in Kent to Le Touquet in France - the fare in 1958 was just £7. (*Peter Lamb remembers it well!*) I was particularly interested in a balance-type Centre of Gravity calculator for loading a Horsa glider correctly with troops and equipment - my father-in-law landed in France on D-Day in a Horsa.

The Bristol Aero Collection can be visited on public open days, and group tours can be catered for by special BRISTOL AERO cont. arrangement. The volunteers have a long-term aim to move the collection to Filton. Have you visited an unusual historical collection or site recently? Perhaps you'd like to write a short item for Histelec News and send it to PeterLamb. *Paul Hulbert*

HENRY FORD -THE "ELECTRICAL" ENGINEER

Did you know that Henry was an electrical engineer as a young man? Well he worked for Thomas Edison in Detroit tending steam engines in the Edison generating stations, so that I am stretching the truth a little. He would best be described as a mechanical engineer.

Henry Ford was born on a farm at Dearborn near Detroit in 1863. By the age of 19 he took a liking to tinkering with farm machinery, which then included small steam engines. He became a demonstrator and repairman for Westinghouse travelling around the countryside with a bag of tools to operate and service the company's machines. He returned to his father's farm for two years, until he saw in Detroit a German engine powered by gasoline (i.e. petrol) designed by Nikolaus Otto and Gottlieb Daimler. He felt it was the sort of engine, which could be adapted on wheels.

Following this revelation, he went back in the City, working for the Edison Illuminating Company as a mechanical engineer in 1891. He was so successful in maintaining the generation plant that he was promoted and given a certain amount of freedom to use the Edison Workshops. Within a few years, the first cars had been demonstrated, usually credited to the Germans, Daimler and Benz. In Detroit, the Duryea brothers produced their model, which was only produced in limited quantity.

Henry Ford used the Edison workshops to build his first gasoline engine from scrap metal, probably steam engine parts. He became obsessed with producing an engine, which he could race. His first car was called the quadricycle in 1896. With the success gained in racing it, the Detroit Automobile Company was formed in 1899. This failed due to Henry not providing a car to manufacture. A second attempt was made in 1901, which also failed, due to same problem. He was more keen on racing, than providing the designs for a production model. The third company, the Ford Motor Company was formed in 1903 around his third model known as the "Model A". He was then aged 40 years!

His success this time was largely due to his partners and his formula to produce the cheapest and most reliable car for the masses using production line techniques, whereas his opponents were producing expensive up-market cars for the wealthy.

Peter Lamb

SMILE ?

A smile costs nothing, but creates much. It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give. It happens in a flash and the memory of it sometimes lasts for ever, none as so rich they can get along without it and none so poor, but both are richer for its benefits. It creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in a business, and is the countersign of friends. It is the rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad and nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is no

earthly good to anybody, until it is given away. Nobody needs a smile, so much as those who have none left to give. **Try it everyday !**

PROGRAMME -put dates in your diary

YEAR 2000

*Thurs.6th Apr. Bristol Get-together – 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sat. 15th Apr. VISIT UNDERFALL YARD, BRISTOL

Old Workshop of Bristol's City Docks with lunch at the Pumphouse Pub beforehand

*Thurs.4th May Bristol Get-together – 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sat. 20th May "ISLES OF SCILLY ELECTRIFICATION" TALK BY TWO JOHNNIES

at Exeter - joint talk by John Haynes and John Heath
Venue - Riverside Christian Centre, Okehampton Street

*Thur.1st Jun. Bristol Get-together 12.15pm lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sun. 25th Jun. VISIT GLEN HYDRO-SCHEME and LYNMOUTH & LYNTON CLIFF RAILWAY

Guided tour and talk by Ken Oxenham

*Thur.6th July Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

*Thur.3rd Aug. Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

*Thur.7th Sep. Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sat. 30th Sept. VISIT HINKLEY NUCLEAR POWER STATION

Including pub lunch at Cannington

*Thur.5th Oct. Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sat.28th Oct. "SOUTH WEST WINDFARMS"

Talk by John Coneybear at Exeter

*Thur.2nd Nov. Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

Sat.25th Nov. "SECRETS BEHIND FACES - STREET FURNITURE" talk by Julian Lea-Jones

At Bristol venue to be decided

*Thur.7th Dec. Bristol Get-together 12.15 lunch
Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road*

NEXT EDITION

Please send information, articles, photographs or letters to Peter Lamb at 35 Station Road, Backwell, Bristol BS48 3NH or telephone on 01275 463160 or e-mail me on lambpandv@talk21.com

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