

THE BATH CONFERENCE

The City of Bath occupies a special place in the history of the **AIA**, stated Conference Chairman Angus Buchanan in his welcome to delegates at this year's conference, since it was as a result of activities and meetings in the Bath area that the Association was formed in 1973. It was appropriate, therefore, that the Association should return 'home' for its fifteenth annual conference, having visited most other parts of the country during the intervening period.

Since 1974 Bath has been in the County of Avon, and in an introduction to the industrial archaeology of this 'new' county, Joan Day pointed to the great diversity of industry in the area since the Roman's first came to Bath to take the waters and exploit the minerals on the Mendip Hills. A very significant stone industry had grown from the early eighteenth century onwards, whilst the neighbouring City of Bristol had many industries related to its activities as a port. Both cities had formerly had plentiful supplies of local coal, and both had been profoundly influenced by transport developments in the nineteenth century. One industry which moved out of Bristol, and later flourished in East Somerset and West Wiltshire, was the West Country woollen industry, which was the subject of an excellent contribution by Ken Rogers, the Wiltshire County Archivist. His knowledge of the Trowbridge area is unrivalled, and he has written extensively on his subject.

Many of the faster-flowing tributaries of the Seven and Avon provided ideal sites for water-mills, expertly described by mill-owner and operator Martin Watts of the SPAB. Perhaps the finest mill site in the area, he concluded, is the Albert Mill at Keynsham, which is thankfully undergoing restoration at last after more than a



Preserved 1902 Glenfield and Kennedy Beam Engine at Bristol Waterworks Company's Blagdon Pumping Station.

decade of abortive schemes and local anxiety. The little-known engineering industry of Bath and Bristol, pre-1850, was the subject of a stimulating talk by Hugh Torrens, who had some harsh words to say about local hero I K Brunel's influence on the previously successful firm of Acramans of Bristol. Engineering enterprise had been carried on by Bath firms like Stothert & Pitt, and the inventiveness of local men like Joseph Day, pioneer of the two-stroke engine, provided us with hope for the future. One local 'success story', the rescuing of the SS *Great Britain* and its subsequent restoration, now well-advanced, occupied the last of the Saturday morning sessions, and served as an appetiser to those due to visit the vessel later in the day.

Unfortunately, just as the excursions were about to get under way, the heavens opened, and everyone received a thorough drenching before departing for the underground stone mines near Corsham, Bristol City Docks or Devises and other sites on the Kennet & Avon Canal.

The theme of Sunday morning's Rolt Lecture by Angus Buchanan was 'The Lives of the Engineers', a study of the way in which engineering

biographers have always looked to the same engineers for inspiration, and the full text will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Industrial Archaeology Review*. By sheer co-incidence, both awards presented at the Conference went to water-powered beam pumps, the Dorothea Award for conservation going to the Mellangriffith Pump, and the President's Conference Award going to Claverton Pumphouse on the Kennet & Avon Canal.

Bath 1987 was an enjoyable and successful conference, and the Association records its thanks to Joan Day and Owen Ward and their helpers for all the work that went into making it a success. There was a record number of members' contributions, an excellent range of displays and bookstalls, and a full pre-conference programme encompassing such varied topics as Bristol's water supply, Mendip lead and numerous other sites in the Bath and Bristol regions.

Don't forget the 1988 conference in Swansea 9-11 September, with a full programme of local visits after the conference from 12-16 September. Make a note in your diary now!

John Powell



At the source of the River Chew, at Chewton Mendip, from whence comes water for the City of Bristol, Conference Organiser Joan Day points out some of the features.

EVENTS

EXETER'S INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

After the article in a previous Bulletin concerning the Haven Road electricity generating station in Exeter, members may like to know that the future use of these premises has been assured by an announcement that they are to be the future home of the International Sailing Craft Association, the charity which runs the Exeter Maritime Museum. As well as office accommodation, boat workshop space will be provided for the Museum.

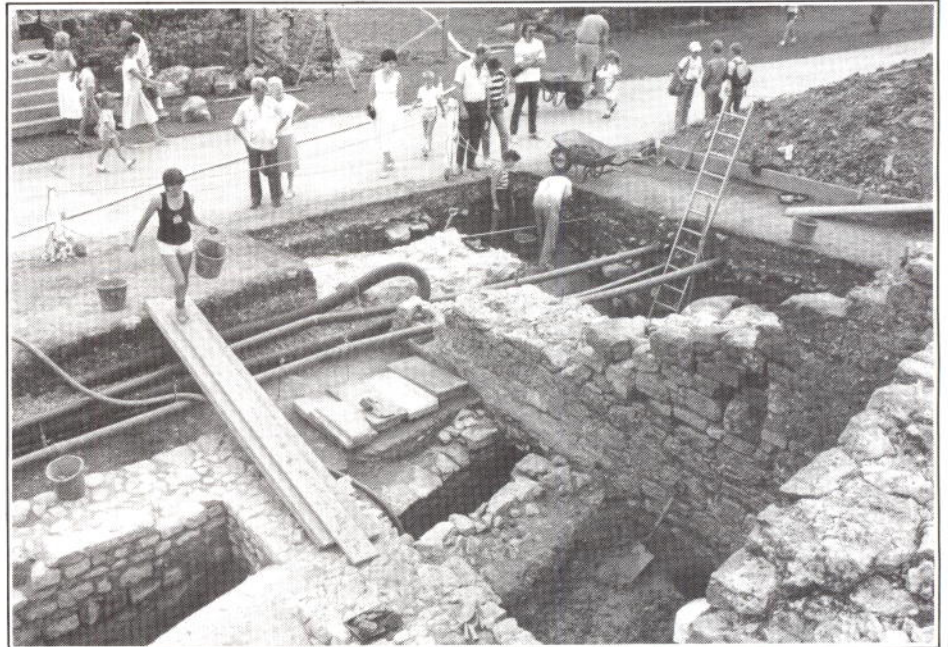
In addition a feasibility study has been prepared for the Exeter City Council on the possible use of buildings in the riverside area of Exeter as an interpretation centre.

In 1750, a visitor to Exeter described how finished cloth was hung out to dry in this area and a variety of industries later gathered there, including coal wharves, lime kilns, paper mills, and cotton mills. Amongst these the Cricklepit complex is now thought to be of major national importance as a remarkably complete textile finishing complex of the second half of the 17th century. It is thought likely that it may be Listed as being of historic and architectural importance, and it is hoped that a full survey of it will be made. The local authority, Exeter City Council, is to be commended in having the foresight to recognise that the interests of Exeter demanded a proper evaluation of the available resources before taking any long-term decisions. The Report was prepared for the Council by the Institute of Industrial Archaeology at Ironbridge.

THE ALTON TOWERS OF CORNWALL

The historic Tuckingmill Foundry site between Camborne and Redruth is the subject of a proposal by Teagle Machinery Ltd. to create the Atlantis Theme Park which it is estimated would cost £1m and provide 100 jobs. Mr Teagle admitted some initial amusement at his plans to make Tuckingmill a Mediterranean-style fun spot, but no one else appears to want to use the site for industrial purposes – and if this is the way to preserve the buildings, why not? Certainly the tourist industry of Cornwall could do with something of this type. The massive 65,000sqft factory has stood empty for over two years and Mr Teagle comments: 'it's too big for anyone to touch and the cost of converting it into small units is prohibitive'. Watch this space!

A. P. F. Stephens



Excavations at 'The Winepress', Beaulieu Abbey, August 1987.

INAUGURAL STEAMING OF THE 1845 HEADLY ENGINE

This historic engine was restarted in the Cambridge Museum of Technology, Riverside, Cambridge on the 24 May 1987. The engine, a 15-inch horizontal, was built by James and Edward Headly at their Eagle Iron Foundry in Cambridge and supplied to the Sawston Leatherworks where it continued in operation until 1968, driving various machines through line shafting. The engine was removed and re-erected in the Museum in 1970 as a static exhibit until restoration by volunteers began in 1985.

VICTORIAN BRICKWORKS: SPECIAL PUBLIC OPENING

During August the South Cove Brickworks, near Southwold, Suffolk arranged a special opening during which visitors could see all the processes taking place together with the 19th century coal-fired Scotch kiln actually in fire. A display of photographs, equipment and documents relating both to the site and the history of brickworking was staged. Now one of the few surviving of around 170 village brickworks in East Anglia, South Cove uses mechanical diggers in the clay pit and the engine-powered pug mill, but otherwise bricks are still moulded by hand, stacked in wooden drying sheds by hand and then fired using coal as fuel.

BEAULIEU ABBEY FULLING MILL

A fulling mill dating from between 1475 and 1500 has been unearthed by archaeologists from Hampshire County Museum Service excavating in the grounds of Beaulieu Abbey. The area where the excavation has been taking place had been known for the last 100 years as the 'Winepress'. The excavations were an attempt to discover the age of the building, confirm its supposed use and establish a sequence for its beginnings, its active life and its decay.

The building revealed at a depth of 1.8m has thick walls and deep foundations with six rectangular areas which are thought to be the foundations of six wooden tanks in which the fulling process took place. Late medieval ceramics found during the dig have been confidently dated to the last quarter of the 15th century, therefore pre-dating the dissolution of the Abbey at Beaulieu.

WARMLEY BRASSWORKS EXHIBITION

Kingswood Borough Council and the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust have cooperated in mounting an exhibition in Kingswood Civic Centre, near Bristol, concerned with William Champion's Brassworks. First established in Bristol, Champion moved to Warmley in 1746 and carried out copper, brass and zinc manufacture there until 1769, when the works was sold to the Bristol Brass Company and run down. A garden landscape, including grottoes, was constructed on top of the demolished brassworks and it has been the task of Lesley Howes, the archaeologist employed by AIBT, to unravel the various periods of development on the Warmley site. Alan Bryant of Kingswood Local History Society, Dave Sutton, John Cornwell and Tony Woolrich have put together a most informative exhibition dealing with the techniques of zinc and brass manufacture as well as with Warmley itself, and it is hoped that the exhibition will be made available outside Avon.

The Clock Tower on the Warmley site contained an eighteenth century turret clock which was recently damaged by fire but has now been restored and erected in the Civic Centre. It was unveiled by the President of **AIA** on 8 September to mark the opening of the exhibition.



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Tony Woolrich explaining the Warmley Turret Clock to the AIA President.