



The Institution of Civil Engineers

Panel for Historical Engineering Works

NEWSLETTER

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Annual Meeting - 1990 ... The Editor

At the Annual Meeting on 27 September 1990, the Chairman, Roland Paxton, paid tribute to Professor A W Skempton who (as announced earlier) had had to relinquish the Chairmanship for private reasons, but had agreed to remain on the Panel as Vice-Chairman. The Chairman paid tribute also to Mr W J (Bill) Sivewright, a former Panel Member, and Mr Roger Hetherington, a former Chairman of the Panel and President of the Institution, whose deaths had occurred since the last Meeting. He announced with regret the forthcoming resignation of Owen Gibbs, Panel Member for Wales and representative on the Welsh Industrial Archaeology Panel, who had joined the Panel in its early days.

It was announced that the Jesse Hartley plaque had been fixed at the Albert Dock, Liverpool, and was waiting for an official unveiling.*

The Technical Secretary reported that the merit-marking formula had fallen into general disuse. A discussion on its usefulness ensued, without reaching any definite conclusion except to say that members submitting B7 forms were not obliged to calculate merit marks (as most of them had obviously already decided). More on the subject of assessing the merit of engineering works may well be heard from the new Industrial Archaeology Panels set up throughout the country.

The Technical Secretary asked for volunteers to relieve him of some of his work. Brian George undertook to compile the regular 'HEWs in the News' feature of the *Newsletter*, and Paul Dunkerley offered to draft a revision of the 'Green Folder' (the general handbook for use by members and helpers).

The two *Civil Engineering Heritage* books were selling slowly, 10 and 4½ years respectively after their publication. Panel Members living in the area of Volume III (Southern England) were asked if they could lend a hand in pushing that volume towards publication,

parties, including the Institution of Civil Engineers, to examine the building and make records.

English Estates have apparently entered into an agreement with a developer and it is thought that demolition may commence in the New Year. They are considering the employment of a consultant to make a detailed record of the Factory.

A request has been made to English Estates, on behalf of the Panel and the History Group of the Institution of Structural Engineers, to be kept informed of developments in making a record of the Factory, and also an inquiry as to whether it would be possible during the demolition to test one or more cast iron columns to destruction in bending. The matter has been referred to their consultants.

The Chairman's Column ... Mr R A Paxton

I have just been reading the glossy magazine *What's On: Scotland* (circulation 30,000 copies). Several articles emphasise the 'increasing role in our leisure' played by historical engineering works and call for their interpretation and conservation. The Panel is well aware of this trend and with its wealth of records, expertise and contacts is uniquely placed to encourage excellence in conservation and to promote worthwhile examples of our engineering heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. We have made a good start through our numerous lectures, exhibitions, visits, publications and advice to amenity and other bodies, but we need to reach a wider public to become more effective. It was to this end that I suggested at Bristol that the Panel should investigate the possibility of publishing heritage leaflets to be made available in information centres.

The mention of Bristol reminds me of the truly excellent recent Panel visit. Thank you again, David Greenfield, Mary Murphy and all who contributed to its success. The high quality of the Burwalls accommodation and of every aspect of the technical visits, which included inspection of a saddle and anchorage of Clifton Bridge, the Port of Bristol, water supply and Temple Meads Station, was very much appreciated. At Bristol University it was a pleasant surprise to be actually encouraged to handle unique Brunel records and also to talk to Sir Alfred Pugsley about oscillation in early suspension bridges. The Clevedon Court evening which closed the visit was quite up to the very high standard we have come to associate with Julia Elton. We experienced a magnificent collection of historical engineering books, prints and paintings, intriguing tours and a superb supper, all in the setting of one of Britain's most historic houses. Not only this, it was an evening of charm, style and warmth, and one that will be remembered with pleasure by the

Panel for many years to come.

In Scotland, the first week in October was a busy one in terms of engineering history. On the 4th, Thomas Telford Publications' printed version of the successful Institution Spring centenary lectures on the Forth Bridge was launched at the Forth Bridges Visitor Centre with the handing of a copy of the book to Lord Elgin for presentation to HRH Prince Edward. The book has attracted good press notices and is selling well. Incidentally, the Visitor Centre, originally launched in the Scottish Group of the Panel, has this year in its new geodesic dome attracted 20,000 visitors from 40 countries. Congratulations to Douglas McBeth and his helpers on this fine achievement.

On 7 October, more than 100,000 people lined the Queensferry shores to celebrate the centenary of the Forth Bridge. In the evening HRH Prince Edward pulled a switch on the P & O vessel 'St Clair' and light from over 1,000 Scottish Power flood-lamps swelled from mere pin-pricks to full brilliance outlining the intricacies of what had just become the biggest floodlit structure in the world. More than 4 tons of colourful fireworks, 30 giant searchlights, lasers, aquatic bombs and a water-ballet by a fleet of fire-fighting tugs combined with a Radio Forth narration from loud-speakers to tell the story of the bridge against a musical back-drop from 'Chariots of Fire', J M Jarre's 'Industrial Overture', the 'Hallelujah Chorus' and Elgar's 'Enigma Variations'. The fine night sky was filled with spectacular sights and sounds. This splendid occasion was enjoyed by 80 Scottish civil engineers, Panel supporters and their friends during a 5-hour party amongst the artefacts at the Visitor Centre. What a pity that *New Civil Engineer's* 'George Street' was unable to join us!

Last week I received a letter from a friend of many years' standing, Professor Alan Prasuhn, now of Lawrence Technological University, Michigan, mentioning that he had taken over the chairmanship of ASCE's Heritage Committee (CHFACE) from Neal FitzSimons. Congratulations Al, we look forward to working with you. Congratulations also to Neal who has become a Vice-President of ASCE.

HEWs in the News ... Brian George

The *New Civil Engineer* has continued to record progress of boring the Channel Tunnel showing by bar chart on 2 August, 6 September, 4 October and 1 November the current situations. Breakthrough of the leading United Kingdom running tunnel (the north) into the crossover cavern is reported on 30 August and its relationship to the service tunnel, which has enabled the construction of the cavern ahead of the running tunnel, is given on 6 September. Both United Kingdom running tunnels have now passed the crossover cavern and the northern land drive has reached Folkestone. The service tunnel is