



The Institution of Civil Engineers

Panel for Historical Engineering Works

NEWSLETTER

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Spring Panel Meeting ... The Editor

Two Japanese gentlemen attended the Meeting as guests, having come to England to arrange the erection of a memorial to R H Brunton. The Panel had the interesting experience of being addressed by them in Japanese, followed by an immediate translation by a young Englishman who came with them to the Meeting.

The Chairman welcomed them, and also three new Panel Members attending for the first time: Dr Michael Gould (Northern Ireland), Robin Sweetnam (Thames Valley) and Gareth George (South Wales).

The Panel heard that the ASCE are hoping to fix commemorative plaques at Sir Marc Brunel's Thames Tunnel and on John Smeaton's Eddystone Lighthouse, and that the North-Western Local Association (in conjunction with the IMechE) will do the same at Rainhill Station. The Institution's Archives Panel has organised an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of Sir Joseph Bazalgette's death. This opened on 5

June. There will follow commemorations of the bicentenary of John Smeaton's death in 1992, and the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Thames Tunnel in 1993.

The reports on the *Civil Engineering Heritage* books were much the same as last time. The two volumes already published are still selling slowly, and progress is continuing towards the publication of three further volumes and has started on the volume for Ireland, although no dates were forecast for any of them. Miss Ann Thompson of Thomas Telford Limited pointed out that they (who have published the first two volumes) were primarily concerned with mail-order sales, but promised to look into other marketing possibilities. It was suggested that Panel Members and local association chairmen should get more involved with promoting sales.

Paul Dunkerley presented a report on ways of improving the 'Green' Folder (the manual of procedure for Panel Members and helpers), and asked for comments to be sent to him.

Mr Sutherland of the IStructE History Group confirmed that the PROM (EW) Factory at Chatham

In September 1989, I reported that the lenticular truss bridge, although lying in a sorry tangled heap on the west bank, had an assured future. In the summer of 1990 the County Council took over responsibility for refurbishment and Messrs NCL Stewart Scott were appointed to manage the works. Dorothea Restorations of Bristol rebuilt the superstructure like for like, using as much of the original material as possible, and re-erected it on the existing abutments which were cleaned and repointed. The larger part of the costs have been borne by English Heritage but with substantial contributions from Colne Valley Golf Club and the County Council.

It is encouraging that the Golf Club, whose course lies to the west of the river, are considering the construction of one or more of this type of bridge over their lakes.

The Chairman's Column ... Roland Paxton

Recently I was asked 'What is the Panel's policy on conservation?' From its considerable database and expertise the Panel is uniquely qualified to influence excellence in the conservation of historical engineering works. Some Panel Members have already advised on merit-worthiness, on which works should be conserved and indicated options to be considered for conservation work itself. Should the Panel do more and perhaps set up a Conservation Committee to give advice and to comment on conservation projects submitted for awards to bodies such as the Civil Engineering Construction Awards Panel and the Saltire Awards Panel? Members are invited to prepare for discussion of this subject at the September Meeting.

On 11 May members of the Scottish and Northern Counties Local Associations visited Gattonside suspension footbridge and appreciated for the last time its lively deck and soon-to-be-dismantled unique ironwork of 1826. In March, when the Borders Region - Travers Morgan approved scheme escalated in cost to £618,000, or £168,000 over budget, a *Scotsman* headline that 'RESTORATION WOULD COST MORE THAN TO BUILD A NEW BRIDGE' briefly raised hopes of a reprieve for the historic ironwork, but it was not to be. The group then moved down-Tweed to Union Bridge, another suspension bridge of major historical engineering significance, where it was noted with approval that the steel wire cable and hangers added above the chains at each side of the bridge provided security without loss or original ironwork. From minimal tension in the steel hangers it was evident that the deck was still receiving support from the 1820 chains!

Elsewhere on conservation in Scotland, discussions have taken place with Grampian RC about Carron

Bridge 1863 with a 150ft. span cast iron arch over the Spey. Leaderfoot Viaduct is at long last scaffolding-clad and undergoing restoration by ScotRail prior to being handed over to Historic Scotland. Victoria Bridge at Aberchelder erected over the Oich in 1850 and thought to be the last surviving in-situ example in Scotland of a James Dredge suspension-stay structure has been taken over by Historic Scotland and will soon be restored. THANK YOU Historic Scotland and in particular David Connolly and John Hume for this most worthwhile outcome. The Panel in Scotland has also taken an active interest in trying to save Laih Milton railway viaduct of 1811 which is in danger of collapse. The present position is that Local Authority support for the formation of a Trust with this objective is being sought and that William Barr, Chairman and Managing Director of W & J Barr & Sons of Ayr has generously indicated his willingness to act as its Chairman. Panel Members could give similar accounts for their areas - conservation is now happening everywhere!

The first joint meeting of the English and Scottish Viaducts Committee met at Newcastle on 8 May under the auspices of the Civic Trust with Ted Labrum and myself representing the Panel. Various case studies were described and discussed covering just about every aspect of the disposal of, re-use, maintenance, conservation and management of ex-railway viaducts. The meeting attracted high-level representation from British Rail, English Heritage, Historic Scotland, the Railway Heritage Trust, Viaduct Trusts, Consultants and Local Authorities and was particularly informative from a conservation standpoint.

The address in Japanese to the Spring Meeting of the Panel by Mr Fijimoto, Yokohama's Director of Road Planning, proved a memorable experience. Richard Henry Brunton (1841-1901), whose sesquicentennial event he and Mr Kanechika were here to arrange, is considered the 'father' of Japanese civil engineering. In 1868, at the recommendation of David & Thomas Stevenson, Brunton was appointed Chief Engineer to the Japanese government. My shelves have just yielded up the Stevensons' separate of his important ICE paper on *The Japan Lights* - a complete lighthouse system for the country! A commemoration has been planned at Brunton's grave, Highgate on 24 October to be followed by a lecture by Mrs Olive Checkland at the Science Museum on his life and work. On the ASCE front, applications by the Institution for the Thames Tunnel and Eddystone Lighthouse to be designated International Historic Landmarks are now being progressed. Also, the possibility of a joint conference session on engineering history is being investigated.

The Institution's first Smeaton Lecture is to be given by Dr Denis Smith on Sir Joseph W Bazalgette and London's main drainage on 16 July at 6:00pm at headquarters. Please come if you can.
