



The Institution of Civil Engineers

Panel for Historical Engineering Works

NEWSLETTER

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Annual Meeting - 1991 ... The Editor

The Annual Meeting of the Panel took place on 12 September at Trevelyan College, University of Durham. A new member, Mr Peter Cross-Rudkin, and Mr James Sutherland of the ISE History Group, were welcomed to the Meeting.

Panel Members were reminded that they should 'develop a high profile' and play an active part with their Local Associations. The Institution is to send a letter to Local Associations asking them to ensure that Area Panel Members' names are included in their programme cards and in other literature.

The number of new B7s submitted to the Technical Secretary in the last twelve months is the lowest ever (does this reflect the inertia of members, or have we nearly exhausted possible subjects?) Members should initiate their own investigations and not rely solely on the Technical Secretary's backlog lists, and they should

liaise with fellow members about HEWs that lie on or across area boundaries. Modern structures can be regarded as HEWs if they are particularly noteworthy, e.g., the first of their kind. The Chairman asked members to keep the target of four B7s a year in mind.

The next four Annual Meetings are to be at Dublin, Lincoln, Swansea and Aberdeen, in that order.

Reports were heard from members who had represented the Panel at meetings of various outside bodies. Mr Labrum distributed copies of a brochure '*Disused Railway Viaducts*', published by the England and Wales Viaducts Committee, attractively illustrated and including a list of 50 viaducts now available for acquisition. It was suggested that the '*Group Focus*' leaflet describing PHEW could be handed out to the various outside bodies by the PHEW representatives, although it needs some revising.

Plans were in hand for the marking of various centenaries - R H Brunton in October 1991, Montford Bridge and John Smeaton (both bicentenaries) in 1992, Thames Tunnel (sesquicentenary) in 1993, William

Mackenzie (bicentenary) in 1994. Montford Bridge will be commemorated by a joint meeting of the ICE and the Newcomen Society in Birmingham on 4 March 1992, and a tour round some of Telford's works in Shropshire on 28 March. The ASCE will organise a tour in connection with the Smeaton Lecture. The centenary of Thomas Hawksley's death in 1993 was suggested as another opportunity for an exhibition, but enquiries must first be made as to the whereabouts of suitable material, e.g., the offices of the various water undertakings, or their successors, for whom Hawksley was a consultant.

Mr George distributed copies of a leaflet for a Civil Engineering Heritage Trail in Plymouth, produced by the Devon and Cornwall Branch. The Chairman commended the leaflet as an excellent example, and urged other Panel Members to interest their Local Associations in producing similar leaflets. The Librarian handed out some guidelines for the use of people compiling such leaflets. Publication by Thomas Telford Limited might be possible.

Mr Otter has offered to take over the editorship of Volume III of '*Civil Engineering Heritage*' (his offer has been gratefully accepted), which is now making progress again towards publication. Subsequent volumes are doing the same.

Mr Dunkerley said he would present a revised draft of the PHEW Handbook at the next Meeting, taking into account the comments that he has already received from Panel Members or that are sent to him in the near future.

Mr Labrum reported on the restoration of Homersfield bridge, Suffolk, the earliest (1870) reinforced concrete bridge still extant in the United Kingdom, and he asked for information on other early reinforced concrete bridges. The Chairman urged members to get involved when the preservation of important civil engineering structures was at stake. Mr Greenfield pointed out that the current strengthening programme of old bridges is likely to raise problems.

The next Panel Meeting will be at the Institution on 1 April 1992.

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While the Meeting was in progress, the ladies were escorted round the City of Durham by Pat Rennison, and given a conducted tour of the Castle. In the afternoon the whole party made a thorough tour round Durham Cathedral, including a guided tour round the roof led by Mr Ian Curry, the Cathedral Architect. On the following day the party visited Seaham Harbour, Ryhope Pumping Station (a Thomas Hawksley masterpiece), and Sunderland Docks and Harbour, with a cruise up the River Wear. All this was ably organised by Bob Rennison, undertaking such a task for the second time in the Panel's history (the first time was at Newcastle in 1979), and thanks are due to him for all his trouble, and for his lecture on 'The Improvement of

the River Tyne, 1815-1914', all of which made the Durham Meeting a rewarding and enjoyable time for all concerned.

The Chairman's Column ... Roland Paxton

To readers who attended the Richard Henry Brunton (1841-1901) sesquicentenary seminar promoted by Yokohama and the Japan Society of Civil Engineers at the Science Museum on 24 October, thank you for your support. Earlier in the day a fine commemorative headstone (photograph NCE 30 October) had been dedicated to Brunton in West Norwood Cemetery. At the seminar, Brunton's Japanese lighthouse and Yokohama infrastructure achievements were evaluated by Mr Watanabe and Professor Nagao and in the absence of Professor Olive Checkland through illness, I covered his Institution and Scottish connections and Mike Chrimes other Institution associations with Japan, all under the lively chairmanship of Sir Hugh Cortazzi, former British Ambassador to Japan. At a reception afterwards in Park Lane guests were welcomed by Mr Ueho, Chairman of Yokohama Chamber of Commerce. The distinguished company included descendants of Brunton, and Mrs Jean Leslie of Edinburgh, whose great-grandfather David Stevenson (1815-1886), had recruited and trained Brunton in lighthouse engineering for his Japanese assignment, who delivered a charming vote of thanks to Yokohama and the JSCE on behalf of the guests. The whole event was an outstanding success reflecting great credit on its promoters and their London agent Roger Haywood & Associates. I was particularly pleased to meet the President and Director-General of JSCE, also Professor Nagao, a former Chairman of their History Committee, and Mr Isohata of NKK who has begun translating '*100 Years of the Forth Bridge*' into Japanese!

The ASCE visit to Britain next year, which is the bicentenary of Smeaton's death, has now been re-arranged to coincide with the Institution's AGM, 'Smeaton Lecture' - on this occasion about the great man himself, and Smeaton Exhibition, all of which are programmed to take place at Headquarters on 14 July. Two days later the ASCE and the Institution will further commemorate Smeaton by designating the Eddystone Lighthouse, his most well-known work, the tower of which is now re-erected on Plymouth Hoe, an International Historic Landmark. It is planned to place an inscribed plate to this effect under his bust, previously presented by the Institution and now in the lighthouse, which will be unveiled in the presence of both Presidents. The ASCE Presidential party particularly wishes to meet Panel Members and their partners at various locations during their 10-day visit to England and Wales. Details of suggested meetings and the Smeaton commemorations will be discussed at the Spring Panel Meeting.

The Panel's strong objection to the demolition of the historic Telford/Rhodes retractable cast iron bridge at St Katharine's Dock appears to have had some effect as the original proposal has now been amended, but unfortunately not in a manner which meets our interest. The amended proposal involves the cutting up and loss of most of the original ironwork of the bridge with a corresponding loss of the integrity upon which its historical engineering meritworthiness and listing depends. Whilst the location of the proposed bridge at its original site is welcome and the cosmetic addition of original ironwork to its facades is perhaps acceptable from a distance in purely visual terms, this solution is not considered worthy for a site of the major historical significance of St Katharine's Dock and a unique, although small-scale, structure of a great engineer. As it does not seem practicable to modify the structure to accommodate modern pedestrian requirements without an unacceptable amount of alteration, I have written to LDDC indicating an alternative solution. This is, that a new bridge be installed and that the old structure be carefully dismantled and preferably all, but at least one complete half span of it be re-sited as a public display feature nearby, with a suitable explanatory panel. The Panel believes the structure and mechanism to be of such importance that all parts of it should be preserved and, whilst objecting to the amendment, has offered advice and to contribute a representative to any meetings as necessary in furtherance of an acceptable outcome. James Sutherland and Bob Rennison have also written to LDDC to this effect.

Readers of NCE on 24 October will have been disappointed to learn from Dr Bradfield's letter of the sad state of the display area with section of original tube at the Britannia Bridge over the Menai Straits. It will be a great pity if more cannot be made of the opportunity seemingly presented by this site to promote public knowledge of one of the nation's most historic bridges. I have made some informal approaches to see what can be done.

The Panel's efforts to encourage preservation of the world's oldest surviving multi-span railway viaduct, 1808-1811 (no-one has yet told me of an older one!) at Laigh Milton near Kilmarnock, before it collapses into the river, are continuing. A Trust to save it has not yet been formed and the present position is that the three Local Authorities in whose area the viaduct lies and Scottish Enterprise have recently commissioned Crouch, Hogg, Waterman of Glasgow, (of which Jim Bowie is a partner) to report on its condition and the safeguarding work required with estimated costs.

I have just returned from representing the Panel at a two-day seminar in York on the planning and management of 'world heritage sites' in Britain. The seminar was organised by York University's Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies for ICOMOS UK (International Council on Monuments and Sites), the body which submits candidates for 'world heritage sites' designation to the World Heritage Committee of

UNESCO. Submissions to ICOMOS UK are made by or through government by English Heritage, Historic Scotland and their counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland. Delegates were told that the primary purpose of designation of sites is not to create tourist attractions, but to protect outstanding sites from natural and human threat. Just how effective designation has been in actually meeting this objective, in the absence of government funding or special legislative provision and inadequate funding from UNESCO, is arguable. There is evidence that designation has helped site managers at some Public Inquiries to resist inappropriate development, but cases were cited where any such benefit had been lost through conflicting evidence where particular sites, consisting of a number of constituent parts over a considerable area, which was often the case, were managed by more than one agent. In defining the boundaries of sites, the need for allowing wherever practicable a sufficient margin to protect historic structures from inappropriate development was recognised. It was also emphasised that sites should be actively and properly managed under a single agency. Several speakers drew attention to the lack of resources for the proper management of sites and expressed concern that increasing numbers of visitors at some sites were leading to degradation of the environment through inappropriate development, traffic congestion, pollution and parking problems.

There are at present some 338 world heritage sites of which only 14 are in the United Kingdom. Most of these are largely outside the Panel's remit, consisting of natural sites, abbeys, churches, castles and palaces. Other sites in which the Panel had an interest were Ironbridge Gorge, the City of Bath, Hadrian's Wall and Stonehenge, Avebury and their associated sites and habitations. Other potential candidates were Conway Castle and adjoining bridges (Menai Bridge had been rejected!), the Lake District, New Lanark, the Forth Bridge and Edinburgh. Delegates were informed that it was not an easy matter to gain the approval of the World Heritage Committee to sites. More than 120 countries were seeking designations, political considerations were often a factor in decision making and the best chance of success was with well-argued, comprehensive, professional submissions of high quality. The objective of protecting outstanding historical engineering sites is one to which the Panel can subscribe and it seems appropriate that we should offer advice to the various government agencies preparing submissions to ICOMOS UK.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to close by commending to your attention a most worthwhile addition to the literature of civil engineering history - Mike Chrimes's authoritative photographic history: '*Civil Engineering 1839-1889*' which is obtainable from Thomas Telford Publications at £18.
