

SALTFORD BRASS MILL PROJECT

2013 Annual Report

AGM: 18th June, 7.30pm, The Crown, Saltford

This report covers the period from July 2012 to June 2013.

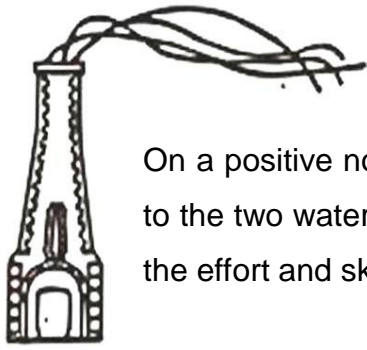
The second half of 2012 proved to be both eventful and challenging. In June the sluice controlling the flow of water to the working waterwheel started to leak and, shortly after, jammed the wheel itself. Investigation of the cause of the leak required damming the flow of water upstream of the sluice – a lengthy trial and error exercise involving numerous tarpaulins drawn across the inlet grating. Once the flow of water was stemmed the sluice was lifted, revealing that the bottom wooden section of the paddle had broken away. A repair was made by bolting on a new panel but this can only be considered a temporary solution and a full repair will be needed in due course.

In October the damage to the roof caused by the fallen tree in April was repaired – a task that required extensive scaffolding – so the Mill was watertight again (from above)

Early in the period we raised a number of maintenance concerns with B&NES (the roof support pillar recorded in last year's report, the sluice, the roof damage) and in early November a team carried out an initial inspection of the Mill (the first for many years); this was followed by preliminary surveys carried out in December. That was the good news; the bad news came on Christmas Eve when we learned that the survey of the electrical system had shown deficiencies necessitating closure of the Mill on safety grounds – we were locked out, so our winter programme, already delayed by the flood, came to a halt.

Late November saw both heavy incessant rain and strong winds, these causing the dead tree behind the Mill (which we had asked B&NES to remove) to fall onto the Mill causing further damage to the roof - and the Mill to flood. B&NES responded quite quickly in removing the tree and the project cleared out the mud. The roof remains unrepaired.

B&NES are now conducting a thorough programme of surveys covering the structure of the building, the electrical system and asbestos content; we hope that by the end of May we will be informed of the findings of these surveys and the way forward to put things right. There is no indication as yet of how long the remedial work might take



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On a positive note, the project to build a replica set of rolls, positioned correctly in relation to the two waterwheels, proved very successful. Many thanks must go to Mike Reed for all the effort and skill that went into this exercise.

The plan for this closed season was move on to a new project to build a full size replica of one of the battery hammers, correctly positioned in the 'squash court' area. Mike is again leading and has produced an initial design and costs. Following a bid from the Project, Saltford Parish Council provided full funding, for which we are very grateful. Unfortunately the start of construction is on hold until we can resume activities in the Mill.

A further project was to have been the construction of a turntable in front of the annealing furnace; this having original been used to load and unload the furnace with brassware. Again on hold.

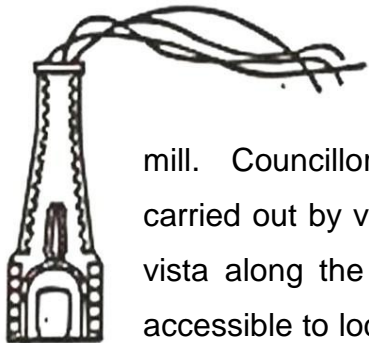
Also delayed is the project to replace the wooden 'starts' on the waterwheel, for which we received a grant of £1000 from the Saltford Ward Councillors Initiative fund covering the full cost of £1000 – for which we must thank Councillor Mathew Blankley.

The one success in this closed season has been the construction of a wheelchair friendly path from the entrance gate to the bridge gate; a lot of effort went into this – the vast majority from Noel Dawson, and our thanks go to him. Now all we need are visitors!

On the management front, B&NES have expressed a wish for a formal agreement with the Brass Mill Project covering the relationship between the two parties; an initial exploratory meeting has been held to address the issues and B&NES now have an action to investigate possible approaches and come forward with a proposal(s) for further discussion.

In 2012, the mill was open to visitors on 29 occasions: 11 of which were for group visits by local and specialist interest groups, 4 days were part of the B&NES Heritage Open Week, 1 day was the part of the national Heritage Open Day scheme, and 2 days were combined with the Saltford Art Trail. In all, we welcomed 976 visitors to the mill through the year.

Two visitors of special note were Parish Councillor Duncan Hounsell, the Chairman of Saltford Parish Council in July, and Councillor Paul Crossley, the leader of B&NES Council in October. Both Councillor Hounsell and Councillor Crossley were very interested in the



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mill. Councillor Hounsell encouraged the brass mill project to continue the hard work carried out by volunteers to both care for the riverside around the mill, contributing to the vista along the Shallows, and for making an important monument to Saltford's history accessible to local residents and visitors. Councillor Crossley's visit was also encouraging as it indicated a recognition by B&NES unitary authority of their involvement with the mill, whose support in the future will be vital if this important Scheduled Monument is to be conserved and periodically opened to the public.

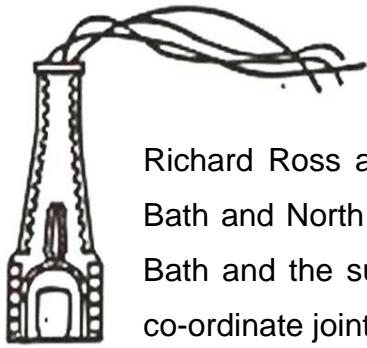
In October, the annual conference of the Historical Metallurgical Society was held in Bristol. The theme of the event was 'Not so much Gold, Silver and Bronze - more Copper, Zinc and Brass'. Joan Day, as a founder member of this international society, was invited to contribute, and Joan, supported by Tony Coverdale, delivered a talk on the 18th century copper and brass industry in the Avon Valley. On the second day of the conference, delegates undertook two field trips, the first to the remains of Champion's brass works at Warmley and the second to Saltford Brass Mill. 30 delegates visited the mill, emphasising the importance of the site to academic research.

Having prepared the material, the talk has been repeated for a number of local history and specialist interest groups. 6 talks have been given so far in 2013, and a further 4 are planned for the remainder of the year, including a talk to the Bath Royal Literature and Scientific Institute in September. Joan and Tony also plan to publish a paper based on the talk in the 2014 journal of the Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society.

The Brass Mill Project have also supported the Heritage events organised by the former Mayor, Bryan Chalker, providing a display for the events held at Twerton football ground.

The closure of the mill has curtailed the visitors programme for 2013, but one visit that we were able to host in March was to support a group of PGCE students from Bath Spa University as part of an 'enquiry' based assignment, the aim of which was to explore how environmental issues can be presented within primary school education.

Ways are also being explored about how to use the materials from the current series of talks, and the mill itself once it is re-opened, to support the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme, which is a national scheme that seeks to encourage young people into careers in engineering and mathematics.



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Richard Ross and Tony Coverdale have also represented the brass mill project on the Bath and North East Somerset Museums Group, a forum where the various museums in Bath and the surrounding areas can meet, benchmark their ideas and programmes and co-ordinate joint activities, such as the museums open week.

2013 Work Programme - Progress

- Progress essential refurbishment of the waterwheel, sluices and drives based on the 2009 survey report - work is ongoing
- Complete the re-modelling of the rolling mill area to make clear its original layout and function – complete
- Procure a model of a battery mill – no progress
- Address means of increasing promotion of the Brass Mill - ongoing
- Re-paint the squash court – no progress
- Produce a new Brass Mill leaflet – no progress

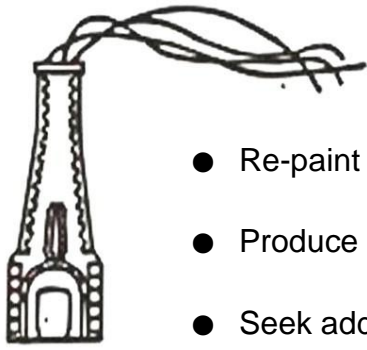
Items not completed will go forward into the 2013 programme

Finance

A copy of our audited statement for the financial year to 31 December 2012 will be circulated at the meeting.

2012/13 Work Programme

- Negotiate a new management agreement between The Brass Mill Project and B&NES
- Continue essential refurbishment of the waterwheel, sluices and drives
- Produce a full size replica of a single hammer for the battery mill
- Procure a model of a battery mill
- Address means of increasing promotion of the Brass Mill



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- Re-paint the squash court
- Produce a new Brass Mill leaflet
- Seek additional volunteers to facilitate increased opening hours.