

AVON INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS TRUST

The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust (AIBT) was formed in 1980 to promote the conservation of industrial monuments in what was then the County of Avon. It was a joint initiative between the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) and the County of Avon Conservation team. In its early years the trust was funded by the Community programme of the Manpower Services Commission. This ceased in 1988, and since then the trust has received grants from bodies such as Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund for work on specific projects. The Trust is a charity, N° 279998, and acts as a focus of interest in the industrial archaeology of the area. The definition of the word 'industrial' used by the trust is a broad one, which includes transport and agriculture as well as manufacturing and mining.

The trust normally works with partners, such as local councils and other heritage organisations, on its projects, and aims to hand over the long term running of the sites to local groups. It is also a limited company, N° 1483387, which allows it to execute contracts, such as those in the restoration of the Midford Aqueduct. Many of its members are also members of the societies or groups involved with other restoration projects.

The trust's website is www.aibt.org.

CURRENT PROJECTS

BRANDY BOTTOM

One of the AIBT's current projects is the conservation of the surface buildings at the Brandy Bottom colliery near Pucklechurch. The buildings represent a rare example of the

footprint of a 19th Century steam colliery, and form part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, N° 1019400. They are currently (2019) on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register.



North-east wall of the Cornish Engine House at Brandy Bottom in 2011 before rebuilding by contractors.

The first shaft at Brandy Bottom was sunk in 1837, and the lease of the pit was taken over by Handel Cossham in 1871. He sank the New Pit shaft and joined Brandy Bottom underground to his nearby pit at Parkfield. It is thought that Brandy Bottom was closed at the same time as Parkfield in 1936.

The AIBT leases part of the Scheduled Monument area from Ibstock. It works on the conservation of the buildings under the terms of a Scheduled Monument Consent issued by Historic England, with the aim of arresting the deterioration in the fabric of the buildings. Ibstock, Historic England and the Ibstock Enover Environmental Trust have provided financial and/or material assistance to the project. Work started in 2008, initially on clearing vegetation and then on establishing what had to be done and what the priorities were. Contractors have been employed to rebuild several areas, including the north-east wall of the Cornish Engine House, the top of the 23 m high chimney and the tops of the walls of the Cornish Engine House and Old Pit heapstead. Conservation work is continuing.

The trust has published a report of the history of Brandy Bottom. The site is open on days when there is a work party, and these dates are published on the AIBT's website.



North-east wall of the Cornish Engine House at Brandy Bottom in 2011 after the rebuilding.

BRUNEL'S SWING BRIDGE



Brunel's Swing Bridge at the entrance to Bristol's Floating Harbour, with the Suspension Bridge in the background.

The AIBT's other current project is Brunel's Swing Bridge, situated at the entrance to Bristol's Floating Harbour where it once spanned the North Entrance Lock. Here the trust works with the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) and the Cliftonwood and Hotwells Improvement Society (CHIS). The bridge is also known at times as 'Brunel's Other Bridge'.

The bridge, a listed Grade 2* structure, was built in 1849 and decommissioned in 1968 after the nearby Plimsoll Bridge was built. It is in danger of collapse and is on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register.

Volunteers, including AIBT members, are getting the structure ready for an engineering survey. This will determine both the scale of the restoration and its cost. The AIBT is also involved in fund raising and is currently preparing a bid for Heritage Lottery funding to pay for the engineering survey. The project has also been supported by grants from Historic England, the Bristol City Council's Bristol Visual and Environmental Trust, BIAS, and CHIS.

Further information on the project can be found at the 'Brunel's Other Bridge' website: www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk.

PAST PROJECTS



Downstream face of the restored Midford Aqueduct.

Past major projects include the £1,000,000 restoration of the Grade 2 listed **Midford Aqueduct** on the Somersetshire Coal Canal in 2000-2001. The trust was both client and project manager and used St Blaise as the contractors. It was also instrumental in obtaining a grant for this project from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The AIBT – How can you help?

Are you interested in helping to preserve our industrial heritage in the Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and Bath & North-East Somerset areas? If so, we are looking for people to join us - not just those with experience in conservation work, but also those who would like to gain experience, or even those who would just like to spend time outdoors working on conservation projects.

Possible areas of experience include:

- Fundraising
- Working with local government departments and statutory bodies such as Historic England
- Industrial archaeology
- Civil and mechanical engineering
- Specification and supervision of contracts
- Maintenance of buildings and other structures
- Historical research
- Conservation of artefacts
- Wildlife identification
- Gardening and Landscaping
- Website design and maintenance

The AIBT does not have a formal programme of lectures, though its members do give talks to other societies. Further details about the trust and its work can be found on its website: www.aibt.org.

The trust's management committee meets formally every quarter. Management of individual projects is devolved to sub-committees, who meet as and when required.

If interested in joining, please make contact with Hamish Orr-Ewing, the AIBT Chairman, through our email address of info@aibt.org.



AVON INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS TRUST

"A voluntary organisation working on the conservation of industrial monuments in the area of Bristol, Bath & North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire."



Horizontal Engine House at Brandy Bottom in June 2014

Email: info@aibt.org
Website: www.aibt.org