

MIDFORD AQUEDUCT RESTORATION

The Avon Industrial Building Trust proudly announce that the extensive restoration of the Midford aqueduct on the Somersetshire Coal Canal, south of Bath, has been completed with the assistance of funds from the Heritage lottery fund. In order to celebrate the achievement and thank the many individuals and organisations who have participated in and assisted this project, there will be an opening ceremony on Tuesday 9th July 2002 at 4pm. Additionally the final part of the project, which is an environmental study of the whole canal in partnership with B&NES, will be launched. When complete this will, hopefully, assist others to undertake further enhancement of the canal and its surrounding area.

The Canal

The canal was built between 1798 and 1810 to transport coal from the Somersetshire coalfield to its markets throughout the South and West of England and involved the extensive construction of locks, aqueducts and tunnels. The canal was very profitable during the 19th Century but was eventually killed off by railway competition and closed in 1893.

The Aqueduct

The Midford aqueduct is the most significant architectural structure on the canal and connected the canal with tramways bringing coal from other mines. Opened in 1803 it is constructed in Bath stone but since the closure of the canal it had deteriorated significantly and the risk of a major collapse was very high.

The Restoration project

The Midford Environmental Group (MEG) played a major role in developing the project not only by fund-raising and interesting other organisations in the aqueduct but also undertook much conservation work to minimise the deterioration. The Avon Industrial Building Trust (AIBT) was successful in obtaining the funding to restore the structure with the assistance of a Lottery grant. The restoration, which cost in the region of £1million commenced in August 2000 and was not without incident. That autumn was the wettest on record and St. Blaise, the specialist contractors were beset with no less than three major floods which necessitated the closure of the site for some months.

It was with some relief that the restoration was finally completed at the end of 2001.

Principle participants

AIBT

The Avon Industrial Buildings Trust was formed in 1980 to promote the conservation of industrial monuments. It has assisted in the completion of a number of projects notably Saltford Brass mill, work on William Champions' grotto at Warmley, and a number of collieries. Midford Aqueduct is by far the largest project undertaken to date but a scheme is commencing to preserve the chimney and buildings at Brandy Bottom Colliery near Emerson Green

St.Blaise Ltd.

St Blaise are Specialist contractors in the Repair and Conservation of Historic Buildings employing more than 150 staff trained in traditional skills. As well as acting as main Contractors their stonemasonry workshop provided the aqueduct with the required ashlar, cornice and parapet stones as well as four new cutwater stones.

Midford Environmental Group

MEG was formed in 1990 with the aim of maintaining the local environment's history for future generations. The village is a small scattered community covering three valleys, now a quiet backwater but in the past a thriving transport centre for railways, tramways and the canal. William Smith ' the father of World Geology' lived in the valley and was the chief Engineer on the Canal.

Somerset Coal Canal Society

The Society was founded in 1992 –“to focus an interest in the Somersetshire Coal Canal”. It is aimed at those people who are interested in the history of the canal and works to protect the remaining structures and line of the canal from decay, dereliction and vegetation. The Society has carried out extensive preservation work on Dunkerton Aqueduct, Combe Hay Lock Flight, and the Engine Wood Pumping Station as well as assisting the Midford project.

Bath & North East Somerset Council

B&NES works in partnership with voluntary organisation and local groups to support projects to conserve and enhance the special environmental importance of the area.

Architect

Jarrold Hill

Consulting Engineers

Geoff Stott

Mann Williams

Quantity Surveyors

Peter Gunning

Peter Gunning & Partners