



SALTFORD BRASS MILL PROJECT

Established 1997 – Registered Charity 2017

To conserve Saltford Brass Mill and educate the public on the history of the mill, the heritage of the Bristol based brass industry and its relevance today

Annual Report – 2022/23

Aim

1. This report covers the period May to December 2022 and preparations for opening in 2023. The report addresses:
 - Meetings of the Trustees.
 - Lease of Saltford Brass Mill
 - Conservation of Saltford Brass Mill.
 - Education of the Public.
 - Research and assets.
 - Pool of Volunteers.

Meetings of the Trustees

2. The 2022 AGM took place in the Mill on 30th June 2022. Other meetings of the Trustees and SBMP Committee have taken place in the Mill.

Lease of Saltford Brass Mill to the SBMP

3. The lease of Saltford Brass Mill by B&NES to the SBMP was signed on 31st May 2023.

Scope

4. A 'Head of Terms' document was agreed in 2022, outlining the respective responsibilities of the Council and the SBMP which the lease formalises:
 - The lease defines the ground plan of the parts of the Mill leased to the SBMP and the right of access of the SBMP to the Mill.
 - The lower garden is not leased to the SBMP and remains the property of B&NES Parks & Gardens. It is however agreed that the SBMP can continue to maintain the lower garden as it provides an important feature of the public entrance to the Mill.
 - The respective responsibilities of the SBMP and B&NES for Health and Safety and Fire Safety are defined. The agreement is that B&NES retain responsibility for the Mill structure, fixed installations and fire safety equipment while SBMP are responsible for administrative arrangements while members of the SBMP are in the Mill or the Mill is open to visitors.

Background

5. It has been a long-term objective to formalise the relationship between the SBMP and B&NES Council.
6. Saltford Brass Mill was listed Grade II* in 1975 and the site Scheduled as a Monument in 1986. In the early 1980s, the Mill was leased to the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust (AIBT), who undertook restoration of the annealing furnace and chimney. The remainder of the Mill was derelict but further restoration was beyond the means of the AIBT. Conscious of the importance of the monument, English Heritage funded restoration of the Mill in the mid-1990s on condition that: the lease was

transferred to the local Council; the building was maintained by the Council; an interpretation centre was developed; and the Mill was periodically opened to the public.

7. The maintaining lease was duly transferred to B&NES Council and the SBMP have produced interpretive displays within the Mill and opened the Mill to the public, but the relationship between the SBMP and the Council has to-date been informal and it has been considered for some time that the relationship should be formalised.
8. Alternatives methods of formalising the relationship were considered and the conclusion reached that the Mill should be sub-leased to the SBMP, to enable them to continue the programme of interpretation, but that the Council should retain responsibility for maintenance of the Mill.

Conservation of Saltford Brass Mill

9. Conservation of the Mill has focused on:
 - Garden maintenance.
 - Masonry
 - Flood recovery.

Garden Maintenance

10. The gardens continue to be maintained by volunteers to provide an attractive setting for the Mill.

Masonry

11. The SBMP continue to monitor the condition of masonry. The Council have bid for funds for masonry conservation over the medium-term future but no repair work was undertaken in the 2022.

Flood

12. The River Avon flooded in February 2023, overtopping No 1 Penstock and flooding the Mill to a depth of 0.5m. The Mill displays were packed away at the time of the flood and no damage was sustained to the Mill or displays. SBMP volunteers cleared the deposited silt and there were no resultant delays to the open season.

Education of the Public

Displays

13. The proposed improvements to the Mill layout and displays described in the 2021 report were carried out, comprising:

Model Waterwheels:

14. The waterwheel model display in the annealing furnace garden was dismantled in 2020 to enable removal of a tree which was damaging the leat wall. The wheels were subsequently housed in the Mill where they formed a static display. The SBMP are currently working to reinstate the wheels in the garden powered by an improved water supply drawing water from the leat.

Battery Hammer Diorama

15. A 1/10th scale working-model diorama of a battery hammer has been manufactured. The model demonstrates a tilt-hammer striking 4 blows per second.

Three New Panels.

16. Three new panels have been produced: two are replacement plans of the Mill updated to show information learned during the 2018 dewatering and survey of the Mill; and the third is large scale map of the Mill based on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map showing the Mill in relation to the river, weir, Great Western Railway and Midland Railway.

Open to Visitors

17. The Mill was opened to visitors on 29 Occasions in 2022, 10 of which were for group visits. The open season commenced with National Mills Weekend in May and concluded with B&NES Museums Week in October. The open days included four days to coincide with National Heritage Open Days in September and two days for B&NES Heritage Open Days in October.
18. The 2023 programme commenced on the 13th/14th May for National Mills Weekend and the amateur radio 'Mills on the Air' festival.

Bath University

19. The Mill was opened on two occasions to support a surveying project for 4th year civil engineering students from Bath University.

Talks

20. Twelve talks on the Bristol Brass Industry and Industrial Archaeology related topics were delivered to local interest groups.

Information Technology

21. The www.brassmill.com website continues to be an active means of communication with the public supported by a Facebook.

Saltford Community Association News

22. Several pieces have been published in the Saltford Community Association News to maintain local interest in the mill and encourage new volunteers to join the SBMP.

Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society

23. Work is being conducted in conjunction with the Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society to produce a book of walks and cycling tours highlighting sites in the area related to the brass industry. The objective is to commemorate the work of Joan Day over a 40-year career in industrial archaeology and is being funded by a legacy left to the history society in her will.
24. The SBMP are also collaborating with the Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society to produce displays for a 'Pop-Up Museum' to be housed in a shop in Keynsham in September.

Research / Assets

Hollowware Pans

25. A large, mid-18th century, hollowware brass pan, stamped 'Bristol Battery Co', has been acquired by the SBMP. The Bristol Brass Company was established in 1703 but, following several mergers, was known from 1734 to 1786 as "The United Brass Battery, Wire and Copper Company of Bristol, Esher, Upper Redbrook and Barton Regis". The pan probably dates from this period and was most likely made in Saltford Mill one of the other four battery mills in the region operated by the company.

26. A second pan, a “Lisbon Pan,” has also been identified which has been donated to the Museum of Bath at Work. It is the intent to support the Museum in producing a display panel to accompany the pan.

Need for Volunteers

27. The age demographic of the SBMP volunteers is such that if the CIO is to continue to operate into the medium-term future the recruitment of new volunteers is required. Saturday morning working groups are well attended but the availability of volunteers at other times to man the Mill when open to visitors is the limiting factor to how many times we open, it often falling to a small number of trustees to support opening. Our policy is to have three volunteers in the Mill when open to visitors, one on the desk and two available to oversee visitors. One of the three must also be nominated as the duty safety / fire marshal to take charge in the event of an emergency. The volunteers need not have an extensive knowledge of the Mill’s history, which is now covered by display panels. The means of enlarging the pool of volunteers and training new volunteers to gain competency to support open days are being considered.

Tony Coverdale
Chair, Saltford Brass Mill Project