



# 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 – 2021 / 22

### Aim

1. This report covers the period May to December 2021 and preparations for opening in 2022. The report addresses:
  - Meetings of the Trustees.
  - Lease of Saltford Brass Mill
  - Conservation of Saltford Brass Mill.
  - Education of the Public.
  - Research.

### Meetings of the Trustees

2. The 2021 AGM took place via zoom. Other meetings of the Trustees and meetings of the SBMP Committee have taken place in the Mill.

### Lease of Saltford Brass Mill to the SBMP

3. It has been a long-term objective to formalise the relationship between the SBMP and B&NES Council.

### Background

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Alternatives have been considered as to the method of formalising that relationship 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.

### Lease

7. A 'Head of Terms' document has been agreed, outlining the respective responsibilities of the Council and the SBMP and work is now in-hand to produce a formal lease and supporting site plan.

## Conservation of Saltford Brass Mill

8. Conservation of the Mill has focused on:
- Garden maintenance.
  - Replacement of the decking above watercourse 03.
  - Repair of penstock (sluice gate) 02.
  - Structural survey of the mill

### Garden Maintenance

9. The gardens continue to be maintained by volunteers to provide an attractive setting for the mill in the Shallows.

### Decking

10. The area above watercourse 03 was decked in 2007 to enable visitors to view the former location of waterwheels 03 and 04, their respective watercourses and controlling penstock gates. A survey carried out in 2021 identified that the decking was in need of replacement. The SBMP developed a scheme employing a galvanised steel frame and modern composite decking. The design is free-standing, hence does not involve intrusive changes to the monument. A scheme of work, risk assessment and method statement were produced by the SBMP and agreed with the Council, and the decking was installed over the winter before reopening in May 2022.

### Penstock 02

11. Penstock 02, the controlling penstock gate for the operational waterwheel, comprises a timber moveable gate and timber fixed breast-wall plate, which are permanently flooded and hence subject to erosion and decay. In 2012, both components were in a very poor condition and both were reinforced using treated plywood. The condition of the moveable gate deteriorated further necessitating its replacement in 2016. An inspection in 2021 identified that the breast-wall required replacement. A scheme of work, risk assessment and method statement were produced by the SBMP and agreed with the Council, involving rigging of close coupled coffer-dam to partially dewater watercourse 02. Timber was procured, cut to size and treated. The coffer-dam was rigged in May 2022 and the breast-wall plate replaced.
12. The opportunity was taken to inspect penstock 02 moveable gate which was observed to be in good condition with no evidence of decay following 8 years of operation.

### Masonry

13. Following an initial masonry survey by the SBMP, the Council have bid for funds for a programme of ongoing masonry conservation and repair over the medium-term future. In January, the Council also arranged for a large self-seeded ash tree to be cut down which was growing out from the bank of the west leat and was causing damage to the monument.
14. The boundary wall at the south end of the garden had partially collapsed due to age and has been rebuilt by the site owner. The wall is outside the scheduled monument but is probably the remains of north wall of the western battery mill.
15. The walls of the eastern leat have been deteriorating for some years and displayed signs of instability, being reinforced with scaffolding. The walls are outside the area leased to the Council but are within the Scheduled Monument. The site owner is undertaking work to stabilise the walls.

## **Education of the Public**

16. Opportunities for education of the public about the Mill were constrained in 2021 as a consequence of Covid but opportunities were taken to: deliver talks to local interest groups using Zoom; improve the website; support third-party research; and Investigate collaboration with other museums, in particular in relation to links with the Africa Trade.

### Displays

17. The proposed improvements to the Mill layout and displays described in the 2021 report were carried out, comprising:
- Repainting and reordering of the entrance foyer plus enhancements of lighting to improve visitor experience.
  - Construction of a new desk and book cabinet, to provide more space and ease the moving of furniture when the risk of flood is high.
  - Installation of improved lighting and sound systems in the annealing furnace to help visitors understand its operation.
  - Renewal of all displays in the Mill, incorporating the results of recent research, and reproduced on Dibond board to present a more professional appearance to the Mill.
18. This work was funded by a legacy left to the SBMP in the will of Joan Day (1928-2019); industrial archaeologist and former president of the project. The improvements to the entrance foyer included a brass memorial plaque to Joan and her husband Roy who were instrumental in the early conservation of the Mill.

### Open to Visitors

19. The 'Open to Visitors' programme resumed in September 2021, subject to coronavirus restrictions, for the two weekends of National Heritage Open Days. The Mill was subsequently opened on a further 6 occasions in September & October before being closed for the autumn / winter.
20. Dan Norris, the West of England Metro Mayor visited the Mill on the 24 November 2021 accompanied by Saltford's two County Councillors.
21. The 2022 programme commenced on the 7<sup>th</sup> May for National Mills Weekend. The SBMP also hosted the South Bristol Amateur Radio Club for the 'Mills on the Air' festival in conjunction with National Mills Weekend on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

### Talks

22. Three talks have been recorded and are available on the SBMP website: the early history of the brass industry; the later history of the brass industry; and John Padmore, eighteenth century engineer.
23. Three talks planned for 2021 were postponed due to Covid but four talks have been delivered since restrictions have been relaxed. A further six talks have been requested by local interest groups for 2022/23.

### Website

24. The [www.brassmill.com](http://www.brassmill.com) website was refreshed in 2021. One particular change is that a new page has been created on metallurgy with links to the Historical Metallurgy Society. The objective is to provide a vehicle for publishing papers related to the metallurgy of brass making. Links are provided to a number of papers produced by Joan Day in the 1980s, to more recent analysis on industrial remains in the Bristol area and to current work on manillas currently being carried out in conjunction with the Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum in Germany.

## Salford Community Association News

25. A number of short pieces have been published in the Salford Community Association News to maintain local interest in the mill and encourage new volunteers to join the SBMP.

## Keynsham and Salford Local History Society

26. Work is being conducted in conjunction with the Keynsham and Salford Local History Society to develop a series 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.

## **Research**

### Manillas

27. In 2021, the SBMP supported Dr Tobias Skowronek of the Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum (Mining Museum, Bochum, Germany) with his research into manillas used in the C18<sup>th</sup>/C19<sup>th</sup> trade with West Africa. Samples of manillas in the SBMP's collection were provided to Dr Skowronek who conducted analysis to determine their metallic composition which enabled the source of the ores used in their manufacture to be determined. Early results from samples of five manillas indicates that they contain ores ranging from mines on Mendip, mines in the Northern Pennines and from sources of which do not exist in Great Britain or continental Europe, the ore originating in Australia, Cuba or Chile.

### America

28. The SBMP has been in communication with a researcher in New Jersey, USA. The exchange has looked into two copper mines in New Jersey which shipped ore to Bristol beginning in the early 1720s and to links between the Quaker families who owned the Bristol Brass Company and Quakers with links to Bristol who were instrumental in establishing the state of Pennsylvania.

**Tony Coverdale**  
**Chair, Salford Brass Mill Project**