

The Restoration and Maintenance of an 18th Century Mill

Abstract

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(Saltford Brass Mill Project)

Saltford Brass Mill is a Grade II* Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The mill was scheduled as a monument to the Bristol Brass industry, the inspectorate of Ancient Monuments stating that 'the site is a most impressively complete and unusual survivor of the industry - the remains are unique in the UK and probably in Europe'.

The mill was one of a number of sites operated by the Bristol Brass Company, founded in 1702 in response to demand for brassware to support the growing trade with West Africa. In satisfying that demand the Bristol company furthered the nations understanding of metallurgy such that the country was capable of the Industrial Revolution which took hold in the late 1700s. It is noteworthy that Abraham Derby (of Coalbrookdale fame) was the 'active man' of the Bristol Brass Company before pursuing his interest in iron.

Saltford mill ceased work as a brass mill in 1925, following which the building was used for a number of purposes. But by the mid 1970s the building was in danger of collapse. The mill was listed Grade II* in 1975, following which options were considered about how to conserve the building and put it to useful purpose. One option was to convert the building for use as a restaurant and holiday homes, but following an archaeological survey, the site was scheduled to protect the water courses and buried remains, which prohibited development.

The talk describes how the mill building was conserved and the complex management arrangements to achieve that aim, involving: the site's owner; B&NES, the lease holder of the site, responsible for protecting and maintaining the buildings; English Heritage, who funded a major restoration programme in 1995; and the Saltford Brass Mill Project, who open the mill to visitors and provide talks and interpretive displays on the Bristol Brass Industry.