



SALTFORD BRASS MILL PROJECT

Established 1997 – Registered Charity No 174901 in 2017

Principal Aims: To conserve Salford Brass Mill and educate the public on the history of the Mill and the social and industrial heritage of the Bristol based brass industry and its relevance today.

SBMP Annual Report 2023/24

Annual Report – 2023/24

- 1. Period covered.** Following present, this report covers the period May to December 2023 and preparations for opening in May 2024. Our financial year and Charity Commission reporting year is 1st January to 31st December.
- 2. Meetings of the Trustees and Volunteers**

The Trustees and committee met on 22 February 2023 and the 2023 AGM took place in the Mill on 29th June 2023. Other consultations of the Trustees and SBMP Committee members have taken place in the Mill and by email. A briefing meeting was held in March 24 to bring everyone “up to speed” for the new season.
- 3. Lease of Salford Brass Mill to the SBMP**

The scope, background and implications of the lease of Salford Brass Mill by B&NES to the SBMP, signed on 31st May 2023, were reported last year. There remain one or two administration issues, where B&NES appears to be affected by resource shortages, to be addressed.
- 4. Conservation of Salford Brass Mill**

Our Conservation of the Mill has focused on Garden Maintenance, Masonry, and Flood Recovery. The gardens continue to be maintained by volunteers and this provides an attractive setting for the Mill. SBMP continue to monitor with concern the condition of masonry, particularly the chimney and some of the lead walls. The Council have bid for funds for masonry conservation over the medium-term future and some potential contractors have visited, but no repair work was undertaken in 2022 or 2023 and the security of funding is not clear. The River Avon flooded the Mill in February 2023 and 5 times between January and April 2024, the 2023 flood overtopping No 1 Penstock and flooding the Mill to a depth of 0.5m. The January 2024 flood reached almost double that depth, equalling previous known

records. The Mill displays were packed away at the time of the floods and almost no damage was sustained to the Mill or displays. SBMP volunteers worked hard to clear the deposited silt and there were no resultant delays to either open season. Thanks to all the sweepers, sluicers and cleaners.

5. Education of the Public and Displays.

The proposed improvements to the Mill layout and displays described in previous reports were carried out, comprising:

- **Model Waterwheels:**
The working waterwheel models displayed in the garden have been reinstated with a pumped supply drawing water from the leat.
- **Battery Hammer Diorama:**
The scale working-model diorama of a battery hammer was a major attraction throughout the 2023 season. The model demonstrates a tilt-hammer striking at what is considered full speed - 4 blows per second. Thanks to Brian McCarthy and Mike Reed. A second Diorama depicting the Rolling 'Shop has been installed for the 2024 season. The Battery Hammer Diorama was used as part of a "pop-up" museum in collaboration with B&NES and Keynsham and Salford Local History Society (KSLHS) at a site adjacent to Keynsham Library. We also collaborated with KSLHS in the production of the "Brass Tracks" walking history guide. This commemorates the work of Joan Day over a 40-year career in industrial archaeology and was funded by a legacy left to the history society in her will. Thanks also to Stavros Christofides of ongoing enhancements to our audiovisual displays.
- **Opening to Visitors.** The 2023 programme commenced on the 13th/14th May for National Mills Weekend when we were again joined by the South Bristol Amateur Radio Society the 'Mills on the Air' festival. The Mill was opened to visitors on 27 other occasions in 2023. Some 700 people visited, some of whom included in 11 group visits. These included Cubscouts, the West of England Metro Mayor and a group from the Association for Industrial Archaeology National Conference. After four days of the National Heritage Open Days Festival in September and two days for B&NES Museums Week, the season drew to a close at the end of October. As in previous years there were pre-season openings to support a surveying project for 4th year Structural Engineering students from **Bath University**.
- **Talks.** Talks on the Bristol Brass Industry and the Mill to local interest groups were in abeyance for a while but Stavros Christofides has generously offered to step into the breach to reinstate them.
- **Information Technology and Publicity.** The www.brassmill.com website continues to be an active means of communication with the public and Dominic Hewitt has stepped in as web manager, supported by a Facebook page fed by Stavros Christofides, and regular contributions to the Salford Community Association Newsletter.

6, Trustees, Committee and Volunteers.

- **Chair.** Our long-standing Chair, Tony Coverdale, resigned as a Trustee and Chair in September 2023. Tony was enormously influential in the care of the Mill and the development of our Education and Interpretation Centre. He led the formalisation of our relationship with the Local Council and brought in useful funds with his talks to societies in the region. He developed our website and drew on his own research to create the displays in the Mill. Tony leaves with the remaining trustees' and other volunteers' grateful thanks and best wishes for his new ventures, including the care of his Parish Church in Widcombe.
- **Volunteers.** As Tony highlighted in last year's report, the availability of SBMP volunteers is critical if the CIO is to continue to operate into the medium-term. Our Saturday morning working groups are well attended and the tremendous work put in by all is really appreciated, but the availability of volunteers at other times to ensure the Mill is safe when open to visitors is a limiting factor in how many times we can open. Our policy remains to have three volunteers in the Mill when open to visitors, one at the desk and two available to oversee visitors. The volunteers need not have an extensive knowledge of the Mill's history, which is very adequately covered by display panels. The trustees were therefore delighted to welcome four new volunteers through the year. A briefing meeting was held in March with the aim of bringing everyone "up to speed" for the new season.

Patrick Beazley Acting Chair, Saltford Brass Mill Project