

### THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVE ON LINE AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

The March issue of *Links* tells readers how the Society overcame the difficulties of converting more than 1000 *Transactions* papers into a form which would enable them to be available on the Society's website for downloading at reasonable cost. The system is now operational and readers of *Links* and of these edited highlights are invited to access the site and try it out for themselves. All searches are free of charge.

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Also reported was the Society's AGM, at which the newly-elected president, Miss Julia Elton, was in the chair.



These are marks which are applied to guns after they have been proof-fired at the Proof House of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers. A party of Society members were conducted round the historic premises and saw how guns are fired with a 30 per cent overload and meticulously checked to ensure that they are safe. The Gunmakers' Company was granted a Royal Charter in 1637 and is 73rd in seniority of the 108 livery companies of the City of London.

This historic photograph over the stern of *Turbinia*, Charles Parson's revolutionary launch, was shown to members at a meeting of the North Eastern Branch in Newcastle. The report tells the story of how *Turbinia* came to become the centrepiece at the Discovery Museum.



### The manufacture and use of glass



The three-day autumn study weekend was centred on St Helens, Lancs, and opened with a visit to the Pilkington Technical Centre. Delegates heard the history of the company, aspects of the manufacturing process and then saw the float glass process in action. Other aspects of the tour included a visit to the archive, talks on the colouration of glass and a history of stained glass and the church. Dominic Fonde, resident glassmaker showed examples of his work and gave a demonstration of glass blowing (picture above).

- ◆ Another visit by Society members was to the London Fire Brigade Museum where they saw historic fire engines and watched new recruits being trained at the Brigade's training school.
- ◆ The Midland Branch heard about 30 years of recording the many changes of the Thames and Severn canal. There is now a national campaign for its restoration. The Branch also heard the story of Angerstein's illustrated travel diary. Angerstein was a Swede and his diaries detailed British industry in the period 1753-55. Torsten Berg started translation of them in 1970; Peter Berg completed the work in 2001 and the Science Museum published them recently.
- ◆ An interesting feature tells the story of John de Haven's removable fireboxes for locomotives. A resident of Reading, Pennsylvania, de Haven patented the design in 1849 thinking it would solve the problem of fireboxes burning out prematurely. Author Alan M Levitt has researched the patent files and produced a detailed article giving possible reasons why the idea never went into production.



In this, the Brunel bicentenary year, it is sobering to think that the great man nearly did not live to do his pioneering work on *Great Eastern*. In 1843, while amusing some children, a half sovereign lodged in one of his lungs. The story of the

life-threatening surgery carried out by Sir Benjamin Brodie is told in this issue of *Links*. The surgeon opened Brunel's throat with no anaesthetic and no anti-septic precautions and eventually succeeded in retrieving the coin.