

A collection worth its 'metal'

In the first of a series on Community affiliated and funded organisations, we find out about an Aladdin's cave of all things steel-related in Middlesbrough.

Want to know how they built the Sydney Harbour Bridge, what a worker earned in 1900 or how you can help bring the history of steel to life? Then visit www.britishsteelcollection.org.uk, the website of the British Steel Archive Project (BSAP), an initiative receiving £60,000 funding from Community over three years.

'It's a collection of national and international significance, and we're proud to be recognising a part of our shared history,' explains Community General Secretary Michael Leahy. 'It's important that future generations are aware of how the industry built the wealth, economy and communities of the North East.'

In the 1990s Corus donated the collection to the Teesside Archives which, with the University of Teesside, set up the BSAP in 2006. But lack of funds and the archive's sheer size (600 feet of shelving) meant it remained uncatalogued and inaccessible to the public until funding from supporters, including Community, came along.

'Now we can start cataloguing the collection, doing preservation and conservation work, and uploading items onto our website so everyone has access to its treasures,' explains the archive's project manager Dr Joan Heggie.

'Until it's catalogued much of the collection remains a mystery but we have images of the construction of world landmarks like the Forth Road and Bangkok Memorial bridges,' explains Dr Heggie, 'as well as around 25,000 photographic images, 70 films and thousands of items dating back to 1840 that document the industrial process and the lives of those who made it.' While the BSAP is housed in Middlesbrough, it also contains information relating to Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland.

'With Community's funding we are recruiting a community engagement worker to visit ex iron and steel workers out in their communities to promote the archive and use their knowledge to identify and caption items,' she says. 'Through our website, they and others can share their memories of working and living in the industry. It's vital we capture this living history before it's gone,' she explains. 'We're also happy to receive donations of artefacts, or money to help with the preservation work.'

The BSAP will also be running educational activities, exhibitions and events (see panel). 'We want to bring back to life the stories around the industry that shaped Teesside and enable the community to get involved and feel pride in their industrial heritage,' states Dr Heggie.



Left to right: Richard Green, NEC member, Region 2; Heather Meldrum, Regional Director, Region 2; Dr Joan Heggie, project manager, British Steel Archive Project; and Derek Loughborough, NEC member, Region 2.



To find out more...

Visit www.britishsteelcollection.org.uk

Email britishsteel@tees.ac.uk

Call **Dr Joan Heggie** on **01642 384478**

Write to The British Steel Archive Project, Social Futures Institute, University of Teesside, Middlesbrough TS1 3BA

For a list of Community affiliations, visit www.community-tu.org

Archive open days

The archive will be running events and open days in the coming months. These will include exhibition materials, interactive displays and plenty of opportunities for people to get involved. To find out more email britishsteel@tees.ac.uk or call **01642 384 478**.