



Call for Content

1. Introduction

The BTS will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in March 2021. To mark this significant event, we intend to produce a celebratory book which will appeal to both past and present members. The intention is that this book is based on stories from the industry, with these arranged around some joining narrative and plenty of illustrations.

2. Request for contributions

We are approaching a broad range of people who have been involved in the industry over the last 50 or more years to ask for their personal recollections, the ‘flavour’ of these recollections being stories that are typically told over a pint, rather than technical reviews. Would you be able to provide us with a story or two for the book?

We would like to read about:

- Those significant days when key decisions were made
- The way in which a change was made and your involvement in it
- The good and the bad days in tunnelling (or the successful and difficult projects)
- The funny stories
- The characters
- The way things used to be done that we would never dream of in this modern era
- Etc....

Stories do not have to be restricted to the UK, or to the last 50 years, but should have some connection to tunnelling.

3. Format of recollections

We welcome contributions in any form: handwritten, typed, audio, dictated, etc. We can arrange for a video or interview if you would prefer this.

There has been a great deal of interest in the book and we hope to receive a large number of contributions. As the book develops, it is quite likely that we will come back to authors for clarifications or further questions. It is intended that all contributions will be stored for future use or research even if they do not make it into this book.

4. Contributions

The format of these is very much open to yourself, but by way of guidance:

- Stories might typically be 400 or 500 words but could be up to 1000, equally they could just be an anecdote of 50 to 100 words
- An example story is included overleaf
- There is no limit to the number of stories that you may submit, but it is unlikely that more than two or three will be chosen from any one contributor, and there is no guarantee that a story will be included in the book.

5. Illustrations

We would appreciate any photographs of interest, whether related to the story or not and we are particularly interested in pre-digital photos of people at work. Ideally, photos should be a minimum 300dpi, and can be submitted in any format (digital/by post/by hand etc). It would be extremely useful if you are able to identify as many people as possible in the photographs.

We will need to ensure Copyright permission to publish, and so we would be grateful if you could state whether they are your photographs or taken by somebody else. We will do our very best to protect and return all photographs sent to us.

We would welcome any suitable diagrams and drawings, particularly where these illustrate or embellish the stories being told.

6. Credits

We will acknowledge all contributions made within the book but, due to the expected large number of contributors, it will not be possible to offer free copies. However, it is hoped that sponsorship will keep the purchase price low.

7. Your contact

Please respond to the person who sent you this request. Or if there is any problem with this please send your contribution to:

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Example story:

Ken Spiby – Thames Water Ring Main

I graduated from the Royal School of Mines in 1987 and joined Edmund Nuttall Ltd as one of the first Mining Engineers they had taken on (which perhaps had something to do with the recriminations following the Abbeystead disaster a year or two earlier (see page xx)). I was allocated to a Thames Water project in the Lee Valley (north London), providing the north feeder from the New River to the London Ring Main. We were tunnelling through good quality London Clay with a backhoe shield from Howden building wedgeblock rings at a tremendous rate of knots. I was working on shift with a Geordie gang led by Micky Peters and believe we held the tunnelling world speed record at 58 rings in a 12-hour shift, smashing the record of 56 set 12 hours previously. But our glory was short-lived as nightshift then came back in and added a further 60 rings.

Life was hard then for a Shift Engineer: move the laser forward; set a prism beam deflector to turn the laser by say 2.5 degrees; install this; calculate a table of offsets (the position the laser should be on the target at the end of each ring) and leads (the distance the rear bulkhead should be off square); throw a square mark up and give the figures to the Leading Miner; dodge between trains (that had no forward camera and no intention of stopping) to bring a level forward into the build area; install and survey a 'gate' to check the laser direction; and then off to surface to set another prism beam deflector, and the cycle repeated – and that was on a good night, when nothing went wrong. If you made a mistake or set the prism beam deflector to anything other than the optimum angle, things could very quickly go out of control.

After completing 3.5km to Coppermills in the south, we re-launched the machine and headed north for a further 2.5km. However, just 90m into the drive, there was a sharp metallic clang as the backhoe came up against an obstruction in the face. The Agent, John Northfield, was sent for (and as this was around pub closing time, the interruption was none to welcome). Whilst awaiting his arrival speculation turned to what the obstruction was, and when someone suggested a bomb, the crowd at the face suddenly melted away. John crawled bravely to the face with the backhoe operator and established that the obstruction was concrete, which relaxed the audience. They scraped a little clay away to establish that this was a pipe crossing the face, but the next man inadvertently knocked the thrust ram lever with his knee, and the shield advanced forward. To those at the face, this appeared to be the pipe moving towards them and with cries of 'burst', panic set in.

The obstruction proved to be a 42" potable water pipe which, whilst generally positioned on blocks a little above surface, chose this moment to dive under the adjacent New River in a pipejack. The undercrossing was replaced by over-bridge, the pipejack was backfilled and broken out and we were on our way again.

(515 words)

This is a 'complete' story and it is likely that in transferring to the book, the editors would split, or trim sections off which they consider inappropriate or better covered elsewhere. However, please don't try and second guess the editorial team, it is better to be complete and comprehensive at this stage.