

## STROUD VALLEYS PROJECT

C.H.A. Townley

The first steps towards preservation of Stroud's industrial heritage were taken by the District council when a conservation Area was created, taking in the main valleys from Chalford to Eastington and Stroud to Nailsworth. The Stroud valleys project itself was formally set up some eighteen months ago, as a Limited Liability Company with charitable status, so that local organisations could work closely with the Council in achieving its objectives. GSIA was invited to nominate a director because of the special contributions that it could make in matters of industrial and transport history.

Initial funding has been provided by Stroud District Council and by Gloucestershire County Council, and this has enabled the appointment of a full time Project Officer, Chris Smith, formerly Conservation Officer with Avon County Council. Most of Chris's time has so far been taken up with setting the wheels in motion and in attending to planning matters. The latter is particularly important if new developments in the valleys are to blend in satisfactorily with the old, and the Project has been successful in opposing several unacceptable applications.

The official launch of the Project took place in October last year (1989) when an exhibition at the Union Street Hall was opened by the patron, Prince Michael of Kent. In addition to the main display, highlighting the importance of Stroud's industrial and natural heritage, participating organisations had their own stands. Ours showed the work which our members are doing at Dunkirk Mills and emphasised what can be achieved in collaboration with sympathetic developers.

The project is now in a position to start work in earnest. The first job to be tackled is the restoration of Wallbridge Upper Lock and a clean-up of the neighbouring area. This will be followed by reconstruction of the Georgian Bridge at Lodgemore Mills and it is also intended, later in the year, to consider what can be done at Chalford to improve the canal and its surroundings.

Last but by no means least, the Project has been invited to assist the District Council in the forward planning for an Industrial Museum. This is a topic in which our members will follow with interest.