

THE site on which the Portishead power stations stand belonged originally to one of the three Manors of Portishead and it is generally believed that the Romans developed a small landing place there. The Domesday Book records the names of the first Norman Lords of these Manors. In a deed dated 1328-29 which records a division of one of these Manors, it is stated that the Manor occupied roughly the eastern half of Portishead. One half is the Woodhill, now covered by trees and called Eastwood, and the other half is Eastfield, a common field on the ' Saltye' slopes. Portishead A station is sited on the hill.

The manorial land was purchased by the shrewd Merchant Corporation of Bristol in 1616, during the reign of James I of England (VI of Scotland), and thirteen years after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. Edward III had previously granted to Bristol the banks of the Severn as far as the Holms. This had led to bitter disputes with the Berkeleys over conflicting rights to wreckage cast upon the shores.

The Bristol and Portishead Pier and Railway Company constructed the railway to Portishead between 1864 and 1867 on the lines of a scheme projected by Isambard Brunel, the eminent engineer. The building of the Portishead Pier was then considered, and was constructed between 1868 and 1870. Nine years later the Portishead dock was completed, being built by a private company, and this was the first dock at Avonmouth.

In 1884, the Bristol Corporation bought the docks at Portishead and Avonmouth, and persuaded the then Great Western Railway Company to take over the railway and the pier at Portishead. The Portishead Company was bought out for £250,000, some of it in deferred bonds, by the railway company.

When, in 1926, the Electricity Commissioners required a capital station to be built in the western area, Portishead seemed a natural choice - for here was land owned by the Bristol Corporation, served by a railway, and with a dock nearby also owned by the Corporation. Here, too, was an abundance of water, which of course is essential for cooling purposes in a power station.

Portishead A power station was therefore built on this site and due to the increase in the demand for electricity the building of the Portishead B power station was commenced in ¹⁹⁴⁹ on the same manorial land that is recorded in the Domesday Book.

Portishead B power station is the third power station in the South Western Division of the Central Electricity Generating Board to be commissioned since the industry was reorganized on a national basis in 1948. The construction of the station was first authorised in May 1949; the first set was commissioned in 1955, and the station was completed in December 1959 with the commissioning of the sixth generating unit.

The station was designed for six 60,000 kilowatt turbo-alternators each supplied with steam from two 300,000 lbs. per hour boilers. This boiler capacity gave the equivalent of one spare boiler for the whole station. Since installation, however, the turbo-alternators have been up-rated to 65,000 kilowatts, making the total capacity of the station 390,000 kilowatts.

The design and construction of the Portishead B power station was carried out under the direction of Mr. A. C. Thirtle, A.M.I.C.E., A.M.I.E.E., M.Inst.F., then Divisional Controller, South Western Division (now Regional Director of the Southern, South Western and South Wales Region), assisted by Mr. J. Irlam, Assoc. I.E.E., Chief Generation Engineer (Construction), until the formation of the Southern Project Group in 1957 when he continued to be responsible as Project Engineer until his retirement in August 1959.

The final stages of the work have been the responsibility of Mr. H. S. Davidson, T.D., M.I.E.E., Divisional Controller of the South Western Division, assisted by Mr. H. E. Vickers, M.I.Mech.E., A.M.I.E.E., Chief Generation Engineer, and his staff.

Sir William Halcrow & Partners were the Civil Engineering Consultants, but the whole of the mechanical and electrical engineering work was handled by the Construction Department.