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Durrants

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Project is milestone, says anti-smoking lobby

Website lifts lid on life at BAT factory

A WEBSITE has been launched today that reveals the inner workings at British American Tobacco's cigarette factory in Southampton.

It shows internal memos, research and reports relating to the seed-to-smoke giant, both locally and globally, from the Second World War to the late 1990s.

More than one million pages reveal in the smallest detail the company's internal workings and policies.

Thousands of pages relate to activities at the 26-acre cigarette factory at Millbrook, where 1,200 people work.

Names of senior staff at the site are mentioned in internal documents over the years.

Notes at the factory were circulated about various subjects, including lung cancer, cigarette quality and wage settlements.

Southampton is BAT's last remaining factory in the UK,

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producing hundreds of cigarettes each second for export.

BAT has its global research and development centre at Southampton, with more than 220 staff.

Among other studies, scientists are trying to find a "eureka" moment by identifying what toxins in a cigarette cause specific diseases. This would lead to what they describe as a "safer cigarette".

The online archive cost £1.6m and took nearly five years to put together. The anti-smoking lobby are hailing it as a milestone in public information relating to smoking.

The website, known as the Guildford Archiving Project (GAP), is a joint project between the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the University of California, San Francisco, and the Mayo Clinic, a medical not-for-profit group in the USA.

BAT, which today announced a profit rise of 20 per cent to £1.54 billion for the nine months to September 30, said it was "not concerned" by the new website.

A spokeswoman for BAT in London said anything "untoward" would have been found years ago by researchers and journalists who have already trawled through documents.

The company was forced to allow public access to its documents following a legal ruling in the USA.

BAT has some eight million pages of archives stored at its repository in Guildford, Surrey. Critics say difficulties faced by the public in searching through the 41,000 paper archives provided the impetus for GAP, which can be seen at www.bat.library.ucsf.edu

Some documents have not been released on the grounds of legal privilege.

● In tomorrow's *Daily Echo* - just what was being said at the Southampton factory?

