Steaming Plant or Steam Punk? Researching Industrial Archaeology and Heritage in the 21st Century

Mike Nevell (University of Salford, m.d.nevell@salford.ac.uk)

This session seeks to build on the discussion of a decade ago about the role of industrial archaeology and industrial heritage research and fieldwork. This lively debate was captured in the 2009 Horning and Palmer edited volume ‘Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks? Future directions in the archaeological study of post-1550 Britain and Ireland’. There are over 600 independent volunteer-run industrial museums in the UK and nine industrial-themed UK World Heritage Sites, whilst around two-thirds of all developer-funded archaeological work produces post-medieval and industrial period material. Yet how relevant or understood is industrial archaeology and heritage in the second decade of the 21st century? This session is seeking papers that discuss and challenge the more traditional and newer approaches to these subjects, rather than having narrower talks on sites that have been recorded or conserved. We would encourage papers that consider the following Issues: Are perceptions of the subject barriers to engagement and participation? Whose archaeology and heritage is it we are recording? Are the terms industrial archaeology and industrial heritage still relevant and helpful? Where do the current trends for urban exploring and steam punk fit into our understanding of industrialisation and industrial heritage tourism? Have archaeologists moved beyond simply recording the data to provide explanations for industrialisation? And does it matter than very few university departments have dedicated undergraduate modules or post-graduate courses dealing with the subject?

**Keywords:** barriers; engagement, industrialisation, theory, skills

**Papers**

*Funky Archaeology – The Legacy of Industrial Buildings in the 20th Century.*

*Sarah Cattell (University of Salford, S.J.Cattell1@salford.ac.uk)*

Understandably, archaeological research and fieldwork on Industrial period sites tends to concentrate on the construction and early uses of such sites. This work allows us to develop an understanding of life, employment, technological advances etc. of the 18th and 19th centuries. But this is not the end of the story, vast numbers of buildings and sites from this period continued in use throughout the 20th century, in fact some are still going strong in the 21st. This paper will consider the legacy of the Industrial period through the buildings that form our last tangible link with that time. Using the Reno nightclub, Hulme as an example, the paper will explore the later uses our Industrial heritage has been put to and what impact that heritage has on current custodians and users.

*“But what’s the point?”*, and Other Questions, Faced while Excavating Victorian Bandstands in Sheffield

*Katherine Fennelly (University of Lincoln, katherine.le.fennelly@gmail.com)*

The Dig It! Bandstand project started out as a student-and-community focused excavation on the site of a now-demolished bandstand in Firth Park in north Sheffield. Since the first excavation in 2016, the project has moved on to a second bandstand in Sheffield, at Meersbrook Park. The project has uncovered significant remains and thousands of artefacts, and been joined by school children, university students, local people, and interested
volunteers. Despite the enthusiasm for the project by the visiting public and the diggers alike, however, the question heard most often on the trench edge (and sometimes within it) is: “Why?” Why, people ask, are we excavating a park feature from the fin-de-siècle, when there were photographs of it? These are the questions that excavators of industrial archaeology are undoubtedly familiar with. This paper will address some of the most frequently asked questions encountered while digging the bandstand sites in Sheffield, and in this manner attempt to address the most frequently asked question: what is the point?

How do you Define Heritage in Fast Moving Fields such as Telecommunications?

*Nigel Linge University of Salford, N.Linge@salford.ac.uk* and *Andy Sutton (BT, andy.sutton@bt.com)*

Telecommunications has had a transformational impact on society. Whether that is through the development of international communications, the evolution of the telephone into the mobile and onwards to the smartphone, or the Internet and its associated world wide web. However, much of the technology that underpins this revolution lies hidden from public view and therefore tends to be taken for granted. It is also an incredibly fast moving field with an industry that is commercially driven and ruthlessly focused on today and tomorrow with little regard to preserving what happened yesterday. Using examples such as the BT read phonebox and the rapid replacement of mobile networks, the paper considers the challenge for industrial archaeology: by the time an object is considered important and worthy of preservation, it has often already gone and been replaced with something more modern. How do we as archaeologists become far more agile in terms of recognising significance early enough, adopting more aggressive contemporary collecting policies and having the correct policies in place to enforce preservation?

“What’s in a name?” - Concepts, Practice and Prejudice in Industrial Archaeology

*Leonor Medeiros (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, lapmedeiros@gmail.com)*

For a discipline that has established itself and grown for more than half a century, it is surprising that it is still often hardly understood outside of the academic cocoon. While postindustrial communities are eager to reconnect with their past (in its heritage version or through urban explorers’ photography) regardless of the name its scientific research may have, the name of the discipline helps us bring forward a set of concepts and practices that identify industrial archaeology in the field. But, as experience in Portugal shows, this set of tools isn’t still widespread enough to be known by other areas of archaeology or most archaeologists in the field, damaging the record, regardless of any effects it may have in the affirmation of a name.

Industrial Archaeology or Railway Anthropology?

*Siobhan Osgood (Trinity College Dublin, osgoods@tcd.ie)*

This talk shall discuss the application of industrial archaeology to the study of railway artefacts in their broader physical context, and whether ‘railway anthropology’ could be a more suitable term.

Since the first publication of the term by Michael Rix in the journal *The Amateur Historian* in 1955 Industrial Archaeology has wrangled with its identity as an academic discipline in balancing the responsibilities of understanding human endeavour in industry and as a rallying
call for industrial heritage conservation. Often in application to railways industrial archaeology becomes limited by scientific explanation and heritage; the preservation of a locomotive, for example. This risks the loss of the artefact’s cultural significance in its broader physical and socio-historic context. Post-processual archaeology calls for anthropological approaches to artefacts; does the study of railways need a new term – ‘railway anthropology’? Or has the definition of industrial archaeology been misinterpreted as the study and preservation of technology, rather than of the society in which it was created? If so, could anthropological approaches to railway studies be the truest application of industrial archaeology, meaning a new term is not required but that the original methodologies be correctly applied?

**Integrating Industrial Archaeology and Social Archaeology**

**Hanna Steyne Chamberlin**

Integrating Industrial Archaeology and Social Archaeology

Industrial archaeological research traditionally focuses on the remains associated with industrial processes, however industrialisation touched all areas of life in the 19th century, from the food eaten and clothes worn to the way people travelled, the time and of course how people worked. Furthermore, industrialisation had enormous impacts on the population, urbanisation, housing, and rural and urban landscapes. This paper suggests that whilst the terms industrial archaeology/heritage may still have a role to play, the nature and impact of industrialisation can only be fully achieved by integrating traditional, functional analysis of sites of industry with socially focussed research on the communities involved in and affected by industrialisation. Using examples from riverside central London, this paper demonstrates the ways in which people not directly involved in industrial processes were affected by industrialisation and the dominant ideologies of the day.

**Belford’s Divergence: or is ‘Industrial Archaeology’ Relevant in an AONB?**

**Katy Whitaker**

Belford’s Divergence: or is ‘Industrial Archaeology’ Relevant in an AONB?

This paper will reflect on the stresses and strains of matching the past industrial use of a rural landscape, now protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Is Industrial Archaeology hidden or written out of descriptions of the area and how this does the industrial and the natural fit with current issues of rural employment and barriers to engagement with the past?