

Kew News



Left to right: Cherry picker on site for the Great Engine House Project works, a selection of treats and coffee from Bella Puglia, an abseiler assessing the Standpipe Tower



Hello from

Hannah Harte, Museum Director

As we head into the brighter, warmer months, the museum is buzzing! It's full of life, activity, and (importantly) some very good coffee.

Our delicious new addition, Bella Puglia at the Stokers Café, is now open and already receiving fantastic feedback. With a focus on Italian food and drink, it's quickly becoming a favourite stop for visitors and staff alike. I can personally assure you that it has been thoroughly (and repeatedly) tested by the team for quality control purposes – I'm sure you understand! From toasted sandwiches and cakes to excellent coffee and refreshing drinks, it's open every day the museum is, 10am–4pm, and very much worth a visit.

We recently enjoyed a brilliant, sun-drenched steam up weekend, made even better by the return of our retro flea market. Only our second time hosting it, but with the sunshine on our side it was a huge success, full of great finds, a lively atmosphere, and plenty of visitors heading home with treasures.

Families will be pleased to hear that the Wild Play Garden is now open again, thanks to a huge team effort (and some very generous plant donations from my mum!). With new seating, balance beams, a boat, and a brand new mud kitchen, it's already looking fantastic. And there'll be more to come as we head towards the summer holidays. The splash zone is also back and ready for action after the winter.

Richard, Chief Engineer, and I had a great time on BBC Radio 6 Music with Cerys Matthews, talking about why our collection matters and sharing the story behind it. Hearing the sound of our engines on national radio alongside our chosen tracks made it a really exciting and fun experience. You can still catch us out on BBC Sounds for the next month or so!

Across the site, major work is underway. The Great Engine House, home to our mighty 90 inch engine, is now closed as we begin our ambitious capital project that will see it running again for future steam ups. There's a lot to do, but we're looking forward to sharing the journey, including hard hat tours and sneak peeks as things progress. Meanwhile, work on the Standpipe Tower is moving ahead well. You may have spotted our abseilers tackling its 63-metre height ahead of the next phase inside.

Alongside all of this, we're developing new funding bids to support the museum's future, ensuring this fantastic site continues to thrive for all our communities and welcome many more.

Thank you for being part of it. Whether you come for the engines, the gardens, or the café (we won't judge), we look forward to seeing you soon.



Great Engine House

Following my previous update I can confirm that on the 5th March the Trust signed the documents necessary to register the legal charge and release the first grant payment to the museum.

I am therefore very pleased to announce the Great Engine House Project has a confirmed start date on site of 18 May 2026. This initial phase will include removal of all asbestos, several tonnes worth, from the 90" and 100" engines and is programmed to take 11 weeks.

Asbestos removal is, in light of its hazardous nature, not an activity taken lightly and the infrastructure that needs to be put in place to enable it is substantial. In order to guarantee the safety of everyone involved the majority of the building up to second floor level has to be fully sheeted with heavy gauge polythene over a timber frame, complete with three stage air locks to ensure no asbestos fibres are released. Scaffolding has to be erected in front, and over, the engines to provide safe access, all bridged over inaccessible basement areas. Each operative working on the project has to have respirators, all individually moulded to the face, and undergo up to two hours of decontamination every day to leave the enclosure - so no tea breaks and no facial hair allowed! I could go on, but suffice to say its quite involved! Our volunteers have been, and continue to be, fantastic, preparing the engine rooms for the works and removing and safely storing engine components such as the valve gear alongside objects from the engine house such as gauges, stroke counters, telephone board etc.

I must also say a big thank you to longstanding volunteer Roger White who has given his time and expertise to the project; calculating the weight of the various engine components and allowing us to verify that they can be safely lifted using the engine itself.



Glen's Gazette

Now that we have a confirmed date the race is also on to complete all remaining architectural investigation work, much of which has been completed. This has involved a lot of heavy work, which in the main has involved hitting the building with a hammer until it gives up its secrets! Some of the photos [page 2 and 3] show what we've been up to!

Most excitingly we have undertaken some small trial samples of engine brightwork restoration using laser cleaning. This involves using a hand held unit to fire an oscillating laser beam at the metalwork which instantly atomises any rust, congealed oil or coatings. Whilst we've had some trials done before on site it was a really interesting process to watch and we're really excited to see how this technology can be scaled up.

When we get started on site, it will get more interesting (and a little bit stressful!). Watch this space!





Richard's Roundup

Richard Albanese- Chief Engineer

With both the Great Engine House and Tower Projects now underway, the last few months have been a blur; throwing up various challenges and tasks, some of which have had to be completed quickly. The volunteer teams as ever have worked hard to keep things on track and run everything smoothly!

90 & 100 Inch Engines - Preparatory Works

As mentioned by Glen, asbestos removal using licensed contractors to both the 90 and 100 inch engines is due to start in May, followed by building repairs immediately afterwards. To facilitate this and to prevent accidental damage we have been removing smaller delicate parts such as engine stroke counters, spanner boards, gauges and pipes and light fittings off of the walls.

The many screws which secure the corrugated lagging sheets to engines cylinder and valve chest have been gently freed off and weights of heavy cast iron false cover parts to cylinder tops and valve chests have been calculated so that they can be lifted safely to gain access to the asbestos beneath once removal begins. Total weight of metal is around 10 tons!

Valve gear linkages and components have been partially dismantled, pump and condenser tanks have been drained down and electrical services are due to be disconnected. Historic cupboards have been put into store.

Finally the two iron ogee moulded frames used as a decorative feature to top off each of the engines valve chests have been lifted off, turned and lowered. A tricky maneuverer at almost 2 tons each, with limited space to work and not being able touch the ground and till reaching the final resting places! [see also images on page 3]

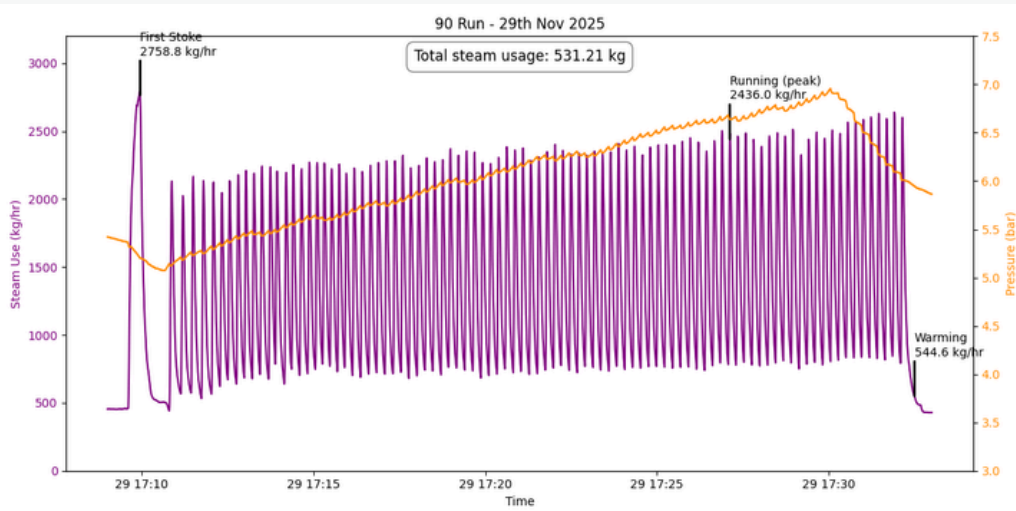
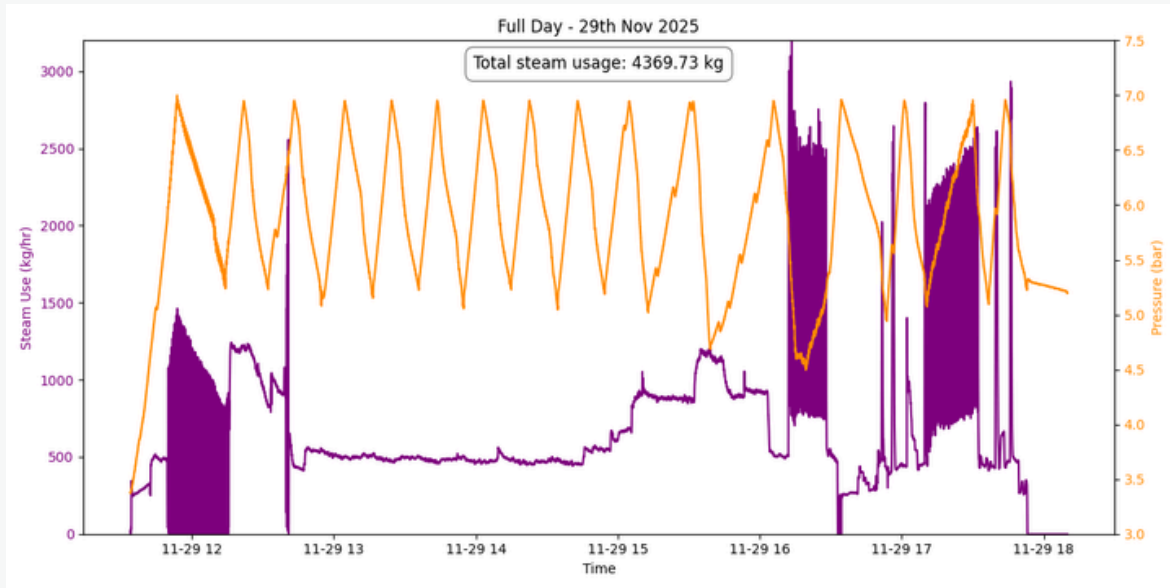


Steam Metering Tests Trials

Over November we successfully carried out steam metering trials to all of our engines and boiler plant over four or so days. This was the finale to our 'Steaming into Sustainability Project', funded by The National Heritage Lottery Fund over two years.

Richard's Roundup

The data collected shows the exact amount of steam used over time in seconds, along with pressure, temperature and mass flowrate. This has given us valuable information and understanding of our working efficiency, fuel consumption and way our engines take steam in varying conditions. Longterm this will help us further develop our plans for potentially using hydrogen to create green steam in a net zero way and or to size a steam boiler plant suited exactly to our operational needs, working at maximum possible efficiency.



Steam Locomotive Goes Green

Thomas Wicksteed has recently taken a big step forwards in trialling biofuel made from rapeseed as an alternative to coal which is now becoming extremely difficult to source at an affordable price. The UK Government no longer allows coal to be mined in this country, and though coal still needs to be burnt in industrial processes it now has to be shipped in from overseas. Ironically coal use for heritage purposes makes up less than 0.01 % of the total brought in!

Richard's Roundup

Biofuel is a cleaner alternative, using waste from the animal feed industry and consists of rapeseed stems compressed which hold a high natural oil content. When burnt the emissions are absorbed by the new rapeseed crops grown to replace it.



Historic Water Softener

Occasionally we receive emails from people wishing to find homes for historic water supply related artefacts. Mrs. Little in Ealing has kindly donated a large domestic water softener made in c1937 and used in her kitchen. It was made by the Permutit Company in Gunnersbury, Chiswick also local to us who were pioneering specialists in this field of base ionisation using salt, from 1899 to 1970 when they were taken over. The technology is still used globally today and we have a modern one which treats our steam boiler water.

The softener has since had a gentle clean and polish and now sits on display within our shop and reception area.



Easton & Amos and Reader Engine Steam Pipes

A recent donation has allowed us to purchase steam pipes, valves, flanges and fittings for use on the Easton & Amos engine to allow improvements to where steam feeds in. This will allow for provision of lubrication and a redesign to remove low hanging fittings which visitors could hit their heads on. Poorly fitted lagging will also be replaced with something more appropriate.

Phase two of completing our Electric House Project has started with the making of steam pipe runs and manifolds to connect our Reader high speed steam generating engine back to the existing pipework that feeds the Bull engine. This will be a few months of work, followed by similar activity to provide an exhaust and atmospheric condensing system. Hopefully we may get the engine running for the first time, towards the end of this year. In tandem the electrical team are making further progress with bringing the Mercury Arc Rectifier into full working order, which requires additional transformers to be installed.



Richard's Roundup

Tower Abseiling

Works to the Standpipe Tower have resumed after the winter, with an abseiling team in over several days who completed a full exterior survey on all four sides, from the weathervane at the top all the way down to ground level. Working with a specialist contractor both lightning conductors were serviced, tested and improved to the satisfaction of our insurance company.

After several years the Tower is now pigeon free and over coming months the last of the guano will be cleared out. Plans are being drawn up for deep cleaning of the staircases and fitting of additional visitor protection to handrails. The abseiling team will return to do an interior survey and remove hazardous corroded iron pipe bands.



Blowdown and 6 inch Safety Valve Commissioning and Steam Pipe Inspections

Some new pipework has been installed by our volunteer teams to allow our new six inch safety valve to vent waste steam out through the roof should our pressure reducing valve which supplies our engines ever fail. This has been quite a challenging project in terms of design, fitting and cutting the threads to screw everything together.

Similarly we have finally plumbed in cooling, drain and roof vent pipes to our second-hand blowdown vessel [left] which allows our boiler [right] to be drained down safely when in steam.

Our ever patient boiler inspector Simon has been in to examine and test the completed works along with steam pipe inspections to our engines in the Seam hall. All passed ok and are good for many more years!



Richard's Roundup

Young Persons Engine Project

We now have some 10 volunteers aged between 15 and 23 who are learning lots of new skills and are playing a big part in keeping everything running smoothly.

For some time I've been looking to buy a small full sized steam engine which they could have as their own restoration project and training exercise, allowing them to see hidden internal parts and understand in detail how steam engines were made and work. Not something which can be done easily on our bigger machines!

The little engine has no provenance or history but is typical of the many hundreds used in industry for providing power, dating from around 1900. It's been carefully photographed and stripped down with technical notes made of the various parts which are now being cleaned and polished up. A new piston and piston rings will need to be made, hopefully in our own workshops.

If all goes to plan they will demonstrate the engine working here on one of our steam days and perhaps take it to our good friends over at Kempton Park to do the same there.



BBC Radio 6

Hannah Harte

And unexpectedly, we are now radio stars! A huge amount of thought went into choosing five tracks to play on BBC Radio 6 Music with Cerys Matthews on Easter Sunday morning – have you ever tried to choose music to represent your life or your passion? It's really not as easy as it sounds.

We wanted to come across as a forward-looking museum with lots of interesting stories to share through our choices, but in the end it was the engines that stole the show – we should have known! The 90-inch's storm-like roar, and a brilliant Pathé recording of the 100-inch's last run, completely captivated Cerys and the studio.

We had a great time, and we'll definitely be looking for more opportunities to take to the airwaves!





Welcome Bella Puglia!

Dominic de Soissons - Commercial Officer

Exciting times from the end of last month at the museum, as we announce our partnership with Bella Puglia, who now operate the Stokers Café! Bella Puglia offers a fresh take on traditional Italian café fare to complement our historic surroundings.

Now, following your exploration of the history of the Thames, the development of steam technology and it's the impact on the modern day; you can enjoy a coffee paired with a Cannoli or a delicious slice of cake. Or, if you're looking to really fill your stomach, Bella Puglia offers a range of sandwiches that can be enjoyed hot or cold.

The café had its grand opening on our March Steam Up Day and our staff and visitors have all sampled every bit of the menu and have found it to be absolutely delicious!

They will be open weekly, Thursday through to Sunday and every holiday and Steam Up Day going forward. So come on down to the London Museum of Water & Steam, engage with the breathtaking machines that shaped our country and enjoy a cappuccino in the café or our gardens.



 **10am - 4pm** 

Café Open

Coffee - Sandwiches - Cakes

Thursday - Sunday

Goodbye and Thank You

Cherry Irvine- Former Marketing Officer

The past two years working for the Museum have absolutely flown by – and you know what they say about when time flies! During my tenure as Marketing Officer, I learned a huge amount more about steam engines, discovered my skills for graphic design, and been down a lot more underground holes than I ever imagined!

Working two days a week in the role had its challenges – but it also meant that I never had a dull day in the office! We've had some many amazing events and campaigns at the Museum – my favourite being our celebrations for the 50th Anniversary late last year and the return of Gausstest!

Some of my proudest achievements have been growing our total social media audience to (almost!) 25k , smashing our fundraising target for The Great Engine House project, and recently launching our shiny new website.

I've had so much fun and learnt so much during my time. It's been a joy to be part (even just a small piece) of the Museum's rich history. I'm sure, with help from my successor, the Museum will go from strength-to-strength and get the recognition it justly deserves. I can't wait to see how the Museum grows - and look forward to visiting when I can (if mainly to come to check-in on Piper the cat)!



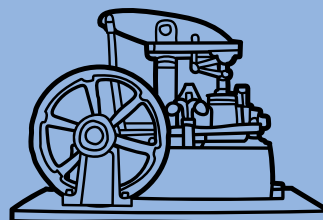
Become a STEAM Explorer



Did you know that the London Museum of Water & Steam has a specialized water engineering course for youth aged 13-17?

STEAM Explorers runs across three weekends in September and culminates in the experience of firing up the boiler and assisting in the running of the engines for a Steam Up Event.

Head to our website for more information or email learning@waterandsteam.org.uk to inquire.



Curious Collections

Yifan Zhang - Collections Volunteer

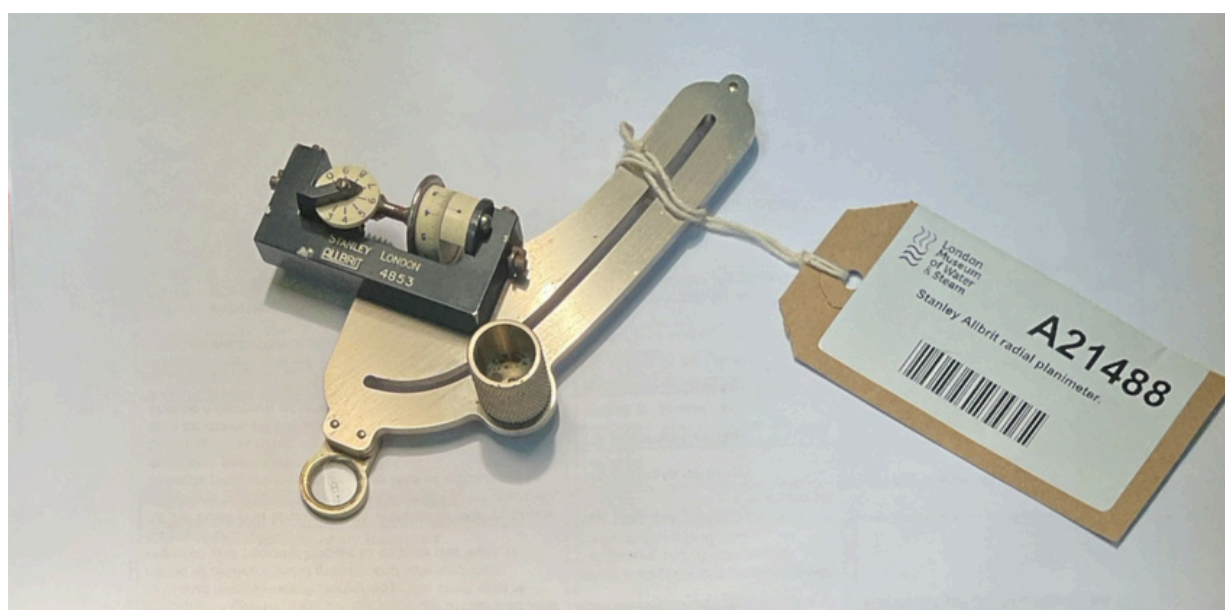
Welcome to our Curious Collections! Our archive team has been very busy over the last few months helping to reorganize our archive collection! For this edition of Kew News our Curious Collections have been brought to you by our collections and archive volunteer Yifan Zhang.

Can you tell what this object was used for at first glance?

Is it a puzzle prop, or a kind of mysterious mechanism?



This month we bring to you our Stanley Allbrit Radial Planimeter, a mathematical instrument used to evaluate functions plotted on circular charts. Planimeters as a class of instrument can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, and in around 1854 the Swiss mathematician, Jacob Amsler, developed a more practical version: the Polar Planimeter. Other versions of the planimeter include polar, linear and hatchet.



Radial planimeters were a later specialised type, already in use by the early twentieth century. The Stanley Allbrit radial planimeter in our collection, meanwhile, dates from the 1960s. What distinguishes the Radial Planimeter from other types is that it has been specifically designed to read data from circular charts. It is particularly useful for reading temperature and pressure recordings. To use the Radial Planimeter the pin of the planimeter is placed in the centre of graph while the tracer arms follow the perimeter of the area. The area is then calculated using a mathematical formula.

Prior to digital technology, when mathematicians or engineers were faced with curved, irregular charts that were difficult to calculate directly, they used planimeters to measure out the answer. Even more interestingly, planimeters were often designed for a particular chart function. The example in our collection is one such purpose-made piece. It would originally have been supplied with a centre-stud and chart board, but unfortunately these parts are now missing.

Essentially, before the age of computers, people relied on clever but slightly mysterious-looking tools like this to handle complex data. So, if a planimeter was placed in front of you today, would you know how to use it?



Volunteer Update

Holly Slater - Collections Officer

Volunteers – we need you!

If you are interested in volunteering at the museum. We are currently recruiting for the following roles:

- Gardeners
- Visitor Welcome Assistants
- Train Drivers
- Public Programming

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering at the museum, please contact:

holly.slater@waterandsteam.org.uk

A very warm welcome to our new volunteers

We would like to welcome our new volunteers who will soon commencing volunteering in the following roles: Visitor Welcome Assistants, Collections and Archives, Train Drivers, Engineering and Gardening

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Amena Ahmadi | • Irving Higo | • Aram Stephanian |
| • Dawit Dula Argaw | • Liam Hoban | • Amanda Usher |
| • Tiruwork Demmelash | • Kaliki Jonnalagadda | • Tsegay Woldermariam |
| • Olivia Dias | • Urszula Kacmarek | • Adil Yusuf |
| • Soraya Emmett | • Reena Katap | • Yifan Zhang |

Upcoming Events



Model Steam Railway

Saturday 16- Sunday 17 May
Saturday 13- Sunday 14 June
Saturday 11- Sunday 12 July

The Association of 16mm Narrow Gauge Modellers are back at the Museum with their model steam trains.

Come and enjoy the wonderful model trains in full steam on a purpose built track, learn all about how they work and watch them in action!

Plus take part in Wagoneering, a guided wagon building workshop. Date announcement coming soon.

Imagineering May Half Term

25 May - 29 May 2026



Head to the museum for Imagineering exploration!

Where engineering meets Play!

Tower Building in the Splash Zone
11.00-12.00, guided drop in activity

Engineering challenges in the Steam Hall
14.00-15.00, guided drop in activity

Crafting in the Waterworks Gallery
All day (including weekends 23-24, 30-31)
Self Guided Activity

Blueprint Drawing- collect from front desk
All day (including weekends 23-24, 30-31)
Self Guided Activity

Enjoy even more Half term fun with our May Steam Up, and our new Wildplay Garden!

Standard admission applies (£12 adults, £4 children, Under 5s and Members go free).



For a full list of upcoming events,
please visit:

<https://waterandsteam.org.uk/events>



@waterandsteam



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OPEN EVERYDAY
25 - 29 MAY

MAY HALF TERM
IMAGINEERING
WHERE ENGINEERING
MEETS PLAY!

TOWER
BUILDING

GAMES

STEM
ACTIVITIES

CRAFTS

ENGINEERING
CHALLENGES

Plus

MAY STEAM UP
30 - 31 MAY

Prebook tickets
on our website at
waterandsteam.org.uk



Upcoming Events



**FALL STEAMING DATES
COMING SOON!**