



London
Museum
of Water
& Steam

ISSUE
136

Kew News

ISSUE 136, SPRING - SUMMER 2026

Letter from the Director

HANNAH HARTE - MUSEUM DIRECTOR



Summer has arrived, and with it comes a real sense of momentum around the museum. Everywhere you look there are exciting things happening, from major projects behind the scenes to new spaces, new experiences and plenty to enjoy for visitors of all ages.

One of the things that's excited me most this quarter is the work we've begun exploring around the future of steam. Our engines aren't museum pieces that sit quietly behind barriers, they run at our monthly Steam Ups. Seeing, hearing and feeling them in steam is at the heart of what makes this place special. But we also know that the way we've always done things won't necessarily be the way we do them in the future.

Innovation has always been part of our story. Two hundred years ago people came here to solve the challenges of their day using water and steam. It feels rather fitting that we're still asking bold questions today. We're exploring how we can keep our engines running for generations to come while reducing their environmental impact, and I hope we'll be able to share much more about this exciting work with you in the months ahead.

Alongside this, our major capital projects continue to make great progress. The first phases of work on both the Great Engine House and the Standpipe Tower are now complete. They haven't been glamorous jobs, but they're vital ones, and my sincere thanks go to Glen, Richard and everyone involved for the skill, commitment and determination they've shown.

There's plenty happening for visitors too. Our summer programme is underway with family activities, workshops and even bubble discos, while the new play space in the Economiser House, complete with a beautiful mural by Koko Harte, is already proving a popular addition. If you've visited recently, you'll also have spotted our beautifully restored fire engine proudly welcoming visitors, alongside the first of a new range of bespoke products in the shop inspired by our remarkable collection.

Behind the scenes we've welcomed Charlotte, our new Marketing & Campaigns Officer, who's already making a huge difference, along with several brilliant interns and work experience students whose enthusiasm and fresh ideas have been a real joy.

Finally, I'd like to say thank you. To our visitors, members, volunteers and everyone who continues to support the museum – thank you for believing in what we do. This quarter, though, I'd especially like to recognise our wonderful staff team. The last few months have been exceptionally busy, and you've met every challenge with energy, creativity and determination. You bring your whole selves to this museum every day, and I never take that for granted. It is a privilege to work alongside you.

Whether you're joining us for a steam-up, a bubble disco, a quiet coffee or simply to see how things are taking shape, thank you for being part of our story. We can't wait to welcome you back to the museum very soon.

Richard's Round-up

RICHARD ALBANESE - CHIEF ENGINEER



With so much going on its been a busy and rather warm time for the engineering and restoration team volunteers. The primary focus over the last few months being to prepare the 90 and 100 inch engines ready for the asbestos removal works which are now completed. Other projects have been under way and are either finished or are now picking up speed.....

Tower to The People!

Pigeon guano clearance is completed now that the weather is slightly cooler and more favourable. You certainly need a good windy day to keep cool inside and to make sure the dust is carried away!

The timber staircases and landings have almost been cleared of loose or stuck on heavy debris and are now being brushed off, ready for steam cleaning over the next month or two.

All the timbers are being closely inspected and we are finding that more floorboards and supports are going to require replacing than originally thought. It's also likely that the wire mesh grilles to the viewing lantern arched openings will need to be redesigned with new ones fitted.

Logistics for getting power, water supply and a steam cleaner to the very top have proved an interesting challenge but we think we have a viable plan.

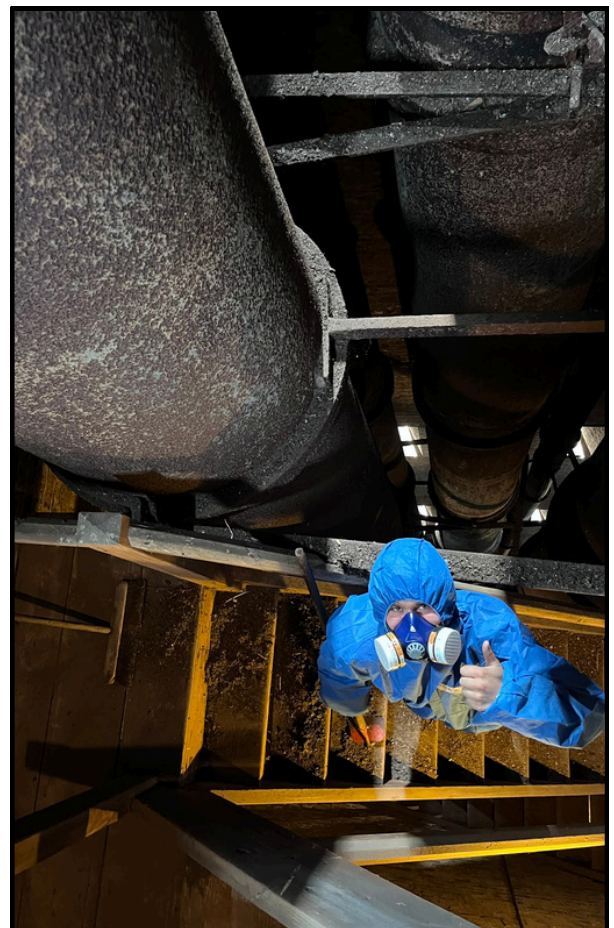
The guano pile at the bottom continues to grow, but the end of this dusty part of job is in sight!

Detailed design and planning proposals are now being drawn up for Hounslow Council showing the modifications to the staircases needed to allow for safer public access.

Coal from London Transport

Our railway has had an early Christmas present in the donation of some unwanted coal from our friends over at the nearby London Transport Museum at Acton Depot.

This was left over from the 'Steam on the Met' a year or two back and the coal has been gratefully received at a time when affordable coal or biofuel is hard to find.



Volunteer Zaki in PPE cleaning the tower stairs.

Sewer Repairs Completed

Our poor tenants have been without their toilet space for many months due to a collapsed main drain.

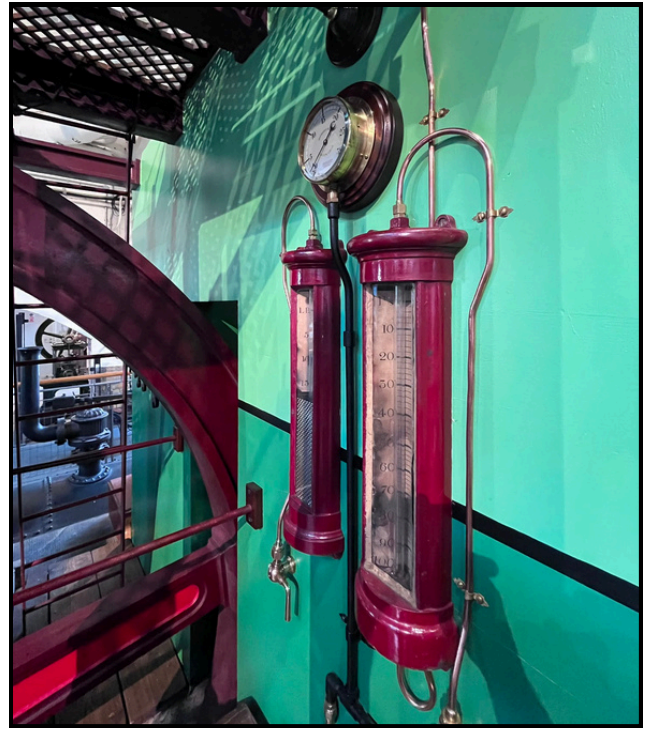
This has become quite a drawn out problem, with Glen and myself unable to clear the pipe after going down into a rather revolting access chamber beneath filled with biting mosquitoes and other unmentionables.

Two subsequent visits by Thames Water with pump outs and camera surveys located a complete blockage down below street level.

Finally contractors had to come in and dig a very large sheet piled hole in the road six meters deep, through reinforced concrete and under gas pipes and electricity cables before getting to our earthenware drain. The large tree nearby had managed to get into the pipe which was damaged and block it with a thick cluster of roots. We thank Thames Water and their contractors for their help and especially our tenants who have showed a great deal of patience!



The blockage of tree roots that was pulled out from the toilet pipe.



The Dancers End engine house wall with a new coat of paint.

Dancers End

This engine is now looking rather smarter after a cleanup.

The 'engine house wall' has been repainted in two tone green and a lot of work has gone in to refurbishing both the original non-working mercury vacuum and steam gauges and fitting a working Victorian bourdon tube vacuum gauge.

Old historic valves have been polished up and repurposed and new copper pipes added. A fine Victorian gas lamp has been purchased to top everything off. The engines non original cylinder drain pipework has been replaced and expertly fitted by Bill Godwin, a complex job which has put the engine back to its historically correct appearance.

Wooden floorboards by the flywheel, spanner and gauge backboards have been refurbished or replicated, stained and varnished with the help of Piran Harte one of our artist tenants.



The Trench Fire Engine on display in the gift shop.

Trench Fire Engine On Show

After several months of delay, our gorgeous horse drawn 'trench' or fire engine has had a big polish and clean up and has been moved into the Museums shop and reception area where it looks stunning, sat within a field of must have retail merchandise. Hopefully in the next year or two will see it returning back to steamable condition.

Diesel House

Following on from a big clean up and rebuilding of the damaged air compressor the recommissioning of the Allen and Ruston Diesel pumping engines continues. The new fuel tank and pipework installation is almost complete and old historic pressure gauges and pipes are being refurbished and fitted to the air compressor to replace modern ones which have failed.

Cooling water pipework is being modified and older sections which have rusted through are being replaced.

Electric House

New steam pipes to the Reader generating engine are starting to be made up and electric cables and services are being re-run within the Bull Engine enclosure and house so that the steam pipe can pass through the wall from the main steam line to the Engine.

By the time you read this our Mercury Arc Rectifier should be able to be demonstrated fully with a very impressive display of blue arcs and sparks. The modern power supply and control system designed by Ben and Clive have been improved and test runs are proving most dramatic!

We hope to inaugurate the Rectifier fully at our popular Gausfest Show on October 10th where it will join a host of other amazing electrically powered curiosities!



Volunteer Ben next to the Arc Rectifier in the Electric House.



Glen standing in the Great Engine House that is covered in scaffolding and polythene sheeting prior to works.

Well, what's been happening since the last Kew News on the Great Engine House Project? Quite a lot!

The project works commenced on 18 May, with the pre-construction phase of works to remove asbestos and other hazardous materials from the beam engines and the rest of the building.

The set up was quite something with the building covered in scaffolding and polythene sheeting and a full contractors compound externally.

The scaffold took a little longer than expected to complete as it had to be constructed so as to provide sufficient access for the heavy lifting of engine components, with minor running adjustments made in the process. Finally, the whole building (more or less) had to be covered in polythene sheeting and signed off by filling it with smoke to detect any leaks.



Asbestos inside the 90 Inch Engine cylinder.



Richard halfway through a very warm day of work removing asbestos.

All this done during a heatwave, with the hottest May on record!

Once this was done and signed off, myself and Richard began the task of lifting the engine components off over the course of five days, commencing with the 90" engine cylinder false cover. The outer segments were lifted off in sequence first using a chain hoist and guide down to the floor by hand, an easy enough task, which then revealed the inner disk. This threw us a small curveball as the design of the disk was not as we originally thought, and concerns about the disk binding up on the central upstand (part of the gland follower assembly) were always in the back of our head.

Nonetheless the cylinder disk lifted like a dream, using strops passed through holes in the cover for safety, and it was safely resting on its steel and timber supports by 1pm.



Glen and James from Asbestech standing next to the 90 inch engine with false cover lifted and in position.



The 100 inch false cover on timber chocks with the valve box cover behind.

The 100" cylinder false cover was next. If the 90" covers were a dream then this was a nightmare. The first problem was lifting the outer iron segments, where almost all lifting eyes were totally unusable as the threaded holes in the engine components were shot. There were also added complications to the inner disk as well which had to be carefully lifted with wedges at first before lifting gear could be used.

Both engine valve chest top covers were then tackled. These lifted more or less as expected, although, they were very front heavy due to the valve gear. We knew this would be the case although it was impossible to know just how much so until lifting. With the aid of an additional small chain hoist, they also came up without much trouble.

All this done during *another* heatwave, with the hottest June on record!



The material that fell out of the cylinder when the lagging sheets were removed.

During the course of removing components the engines continued to give up their secrets. A number of tooling marks were found in concealed areas showing how the original engine builders hand-chiselled components on site to get them to fit. Also found were evidence of steam pipe feeds to piston rod lantern rings (a device to stop air being drawn into the cylinder), long since disconnected, alongside plenty of cigarette packs, matches, match boxes, crisp packets and chocolate bar wrappers all stuffed down convenient holes! These were recorded and a selection removed for preservation in our archives.



Items found inside the engine. Now placed in the archive.

Next, following removal of asbestos to the cylinder tops, the lagging sheets were removed, starting from the top of the engine and moving down onto the ground floors. This made for a less wanted discovery; almost 2.5 tonnes worth of loose coal ash, iron filings and builders waste which had been poured down the gap between the lagging sheets and the insulation, some of which had congealed together with oil, and all of which fell out of the bottom of the engines as the sheets were removed. After some rather strong language, we wondered why this had been done? Perhaps as a form of additional cheap insulation? Perhaps because it was Friday afternoon and the foreman wasn't looking?



Lagging sheets removed, original lagging still in place.



Lagging sheets removed, lagging removed.

Once this was removed the original lagging was found, which was an early form of insulation of indeterminate composition, much like the Bull engine was when that was restored. Due to contamination with asbestos and other hazardous materials and its poor condition with many areas collapsing this also had to be removed. The same material was found in the valve chests, much of which had already fallen off and settled in the bottom of the valve boxes.

The asbestos clearance was signed off as complete by the independent analyst on 22 July, and the team are now clearing the site. The scaffold will remain in place for the rest of August to enable us to reinstate the engine components and replace the lagging.

My thanks to James, Karol, Mario and Jarek from Asbestech and Jason of Lucion services for their help and commitment to the project.

Alongside these works our design team have been completing the final touches of the tender for the main works, and this is now out with our shortlisted contractors for pricing, with returns due back in mid August. All being well the main external scaffolding will start in Mid October.

As always our thanks go out to Arts Council England and the Department for Culture Media and Sport who's grant funding, through the Museum Estates Development Fund, has made these works possible.



Shop Updates

JOANNA WALSH - FRONT OF HOUSE COORDINATOR

It's time to get your reuseable bags out of the cupboard, as we have lots of new shop products to get your hands on. You can now have the Standpipe Tower, the Boulton & Watt and Thomas Wicksteed on your fridge with our new magnet range.



Pick up a museum pen and write to a friend with our new postcard designs and keep cool in the heatwaves with our museum water bottle.



The Summer of Water will be taking place from Tuesday 21st July to Wednesday 2nd September. We have some watery friends that would love to come home with you. Our children's range also has fun stickers, funky water bottles and fantastic craft kits to delve into.

All members get 10% off in the gift shop. If you have any non-member friends, they can get 10% off if they leave a Google review or sign up to our mailing list.

New Kew

CHARLOTTE BRIDGE - MARKETING & CAMPAIGNS OFFICER

This 'New Kew' design has been edited by myself, the newly appointed Marketing & Campaigns Officer, Charlotte. Hello, to our Kew News members!

When I'm not at the museum, I'm designing for other arts, culture & heritage venues around SW London, you may have seen my work elsewhere!

Stories in Steam

**** NEW POSTERS ****

The new stock of posters has now arrived at Kew. If any members and volunteers can arrange prominent display sites - no flyposting! - will they please contact the office as soon as possible for their copies.

Engines were included in the itinerary of TWA's most distinguished guests.

WANTED LIST

Welcome to scroungers corner! The shopping list for this issue is:

- Ice cream unit; sunblind; horn type gramophone, all for Stoker's Rest.
- Tools and heavy lifting gear
- Long aluminium ladders
- Redundant engineering materials like pipes, valves, walkways etc.

Telephone 01-568 4757 with any "leads".

KEW NEWS + KEW NEWS + KEW NEWS + KEW NEWS +

Snippets from past Kew News issues.

I love history, especially typographic/design history (with steam as a close second of course!) and so when looking through old version of Kew News, I decided to make this version inspired by some of the past design elements. Maybe there are some from the past you recognise?

I hope you enjoy this issue of Kew News.
See you around the museum!



Curious Corner

BY COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES
VOLUNTEER YIFAN ZHANG
& WORK PLACEMENT MAYA WOOD

This object is a tinplate toy Hoover washing machine, modelled on a 1950s upright washing machine. It features a hand-cranked mangle, a pair of rollers used on early washing machines to wring clothes and remove excess water before spin-drying became common. Although designed as a children's toy, it closely imitates a real household appliance, allowing children to recreate everyday domestic tasks and reflecting the growing importance of household technology in post-war Britain.



The toy was manufactured by Mettoy, a British toy company founded in the 1930s by German-Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Germany. Specialising in tinplate toys—the company's name combines the words “metal” and “toy”—Mettoy produced miniature versions of many everyday objects. In contrast, Hoover was one of Britain's best-known household appliance manufacturers, and its washing machines symbolised modern domestic technology. By combining the Hoover brand with Mettoy's toy-making expertise, this object did more than reproduce a household appliance: it introduced children to one of Britain's most recognisable consumer brands through play. Hoover became so influential that its name entered everyday language, and many people in Britain still use the verb “to hoover” to mean “to vacuum,” regardless of the brand of vacuum cleaner they are using.

YOU, TOO, CAN BE FREE FROM WASHING DAY DRUDGERY

The Hoover Electric Washing Machine will do your full family wash, however large

ASK ANY housewife with a Hoover Electric Washing Machine and she'll tell you the hours of hard backaching drudgery it saves her every week.

It will do the same for you, too. It does the full weekly wash for a large family in an astonishingly short time — and yet is such a handy size it will stand under the average draining board.

Remember, too, the Hoover Electric Washing Machine washes everything beautifully, spotlessly clean, so that you'll be really proud of your washing. And you will be absolutely delighted with the wringer, cleverly sprung to take even large bulky articles.

Important. Demand for the Hoover Electric Washing Machine is extremely heavy. So don't delay. See your Hoover Dealer now.

ONLY THE HOOVER HAS THIS "QUICK, GENTLE, THOROUGH" ACTION
This is the "pulsator" which makes the Hoover Electric Washing Machine quite different from any other make. Set in the side of the tub, it swirls the soapy water through the fabric, loosening and washing away the dirt without churning the clothes. That is why every article is washed more quickly, more gently, more thoroughly.



£30 (plus tax)

H.P. terms can be arranged, of course

The HOOVER
ELECTRIC WASHING MACHINE
WASHES CLEANER

The advertisement above shows the global appeal of the Hoover washing machine, from a magazine in the UK.

CALLING ALL NEW VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in volunteering at the museum, we are currently recruiting for the following roles:

- Visitor Welcome Assistants
- Train Drivers
- Explainers
- Gardeners

For more information, please contact volunteers@waterandsteam.org.uk

WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

- Anoushka Chakravarti
- Alex MacDonald
- Daniil Livshits
- Pranim Rai
- Anne Haigh
- Lucas So
- Umar Farooq
- Nigel Stanley



Work Experience

Each year the museum holds work experience placements for young people in year 10 (age 15) of secondary school. The programme gives students the opportunity to volunteer in different museum roles and seeks to offer a unique insight into the diversity of roles that are available within the museum and heritage sectors.

Lucas was our work experience student this year, and he enthusiastically participated in many of the varied tasks that were assigned to him. One of these tasks included writing and taking photos for Kew News' Gardening Adventure, which you can read below:



Gardening Adventure

WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCAS SO

In the sizzling sunshine we take you on a tour of the garden in full bloom.

On our first stop we spot some radiant roses. Surprisingly a variety of plants are grown in the garden by our hardworking volunteers.

As we meander through the gardens, the next plant which you can see is the aptly named Pretty Polly. We can see its vibrant white petals glistening in the sunshine.



The next flower we can see is the less elegantly named Common Mallow. The beautiful purple hue can be seen from across the garden.

On our next stop we have the Hemerocallis or the more commonly known Crimson Pirate, although this species is found firmly on land. These fantastic flowers can be found at the end of the museum's garden.

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Finally, we have the Hertfordshire Ground Cover Rose whose bright pink hue can be seen from far and wide. Its distinctive colouring contrasts amongst the green foliage.



Interested in gardening?

Join our garden volunteer team!

Contact volunteers@waterandsteam.org.uk

Commercial Column

DOMINIC DE SOISSONS - COMMERCIAL OFFICER



Here at the museum, there are interesting commercial developments in the works.

With the start of the school summer holidays, there is a new selection of water related soft toys for children available in the shop, from flamingos to axolotls.



Along with this, we have launched a new range of scented soy wax candles with Private Label, each based around the key merits of some of our most popular engines. The team tested many samples, trying various scent combinations to deduce what we felt best captured the essence of the engines themselves. My personal favourite being 'The Triple', with its sharp scents of fig and cypress.

Additionally, we are building relationships with engineering consultancies, possibly in the form of corporate volunteering, educational events, talks on heritage engineering and other forms of partnership. Furthermore, the museum is looking to host more public and private events.

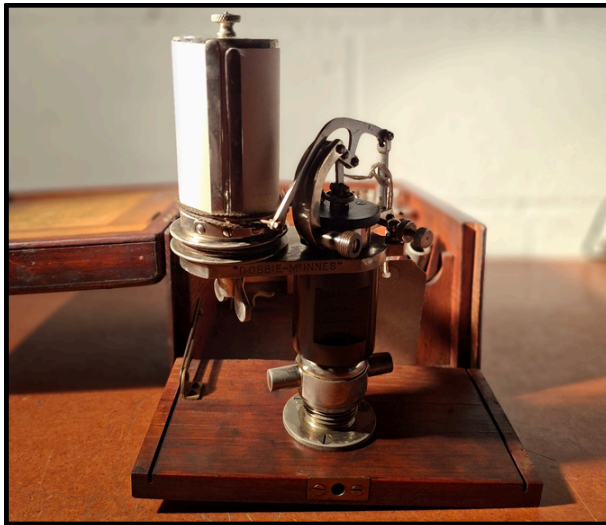
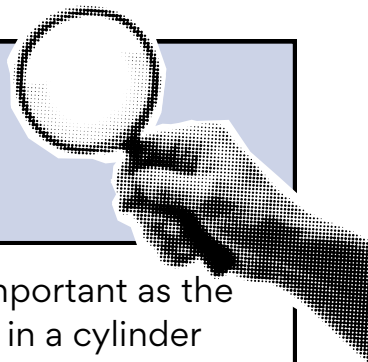


From weddings to conferences, we are now working with agencies to wider circulate our unique and impressive venue spaces; being one of the only places in the UK where you can have active steam engines and a steam train running during your event!

Soon, we will be launching our new range of designer goods in the museum shop made in association with Safomasi, an eco-conscious, Anglo-Indian textile company based between Hertfordshire and Delhi!

We have been working with the team at Safomasi to produce a design that is unique to the museum. Something that broadly telling our story, based on the engines, the tower and the archive; further seeking to inspire you to form your own interpretations of the fashionable design. Look out for new tote bags, tea towels and much more!

We look forward to welcoming a variety of visitors this summer, being open every day for the duration of the school holidays. Our friends at Bella Puglia, the onsite café, will be open as well so you can enjoy a plethora of hot and cold drinks, sandwiches and sweet treats during your visit; their signature roast being described by one visitor as "the best bloody coffee I've ever had".

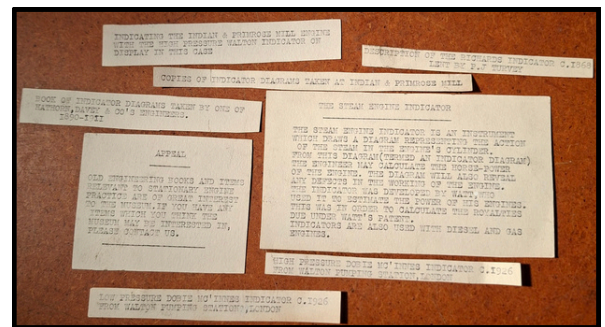


The Dobbie McInnes engine indicator was used to monitor and graph cylinder pressure against piston displacement. This indicates the mechanical work done inside a cylinder and the power output of the engine.

This engine indicator was used in 1926 and it is from the Walton pumping station in London which still runs today. However these were only manufactured from about 1900-1920s.

The object was very important as the graphs of the pressure in a cylinder can indicate if a piston is underperforming which leads to deficiency in the engine's power or even if there are broken valves which would lead to the engine's failure. I found this interesting as it confirmed if the engine was stable and functioning properly

I would say that this item was useful as I assumed it prevented catastrophic failures but in today's world its role has been replaced by digital engine monitor and engine control units which are more accurate and are probably easier to use, so in modern day the engine indicator is more of an artifact.



KNOW SOMEONE INTERESTED IN ENGINEERING?

The London Museum of Water & Steam presents steam Explorer, a specialised water engineering course for **youth aged 13-17**.

Participation in this course is free thanks to the generous support and funding of the **Worshipful Company of Water Conservators**.

STEAM Explorer will be running across three weeks in September. Contact learning@waterandsteam.org.uk for more information and to apply.

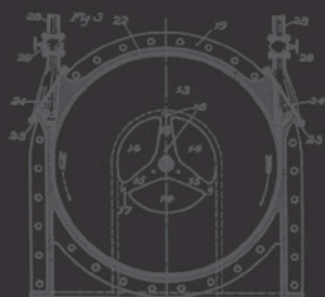
DISCOVER THE FASCINATING WORLD OF ELECTRICITY



ELECTRICITY DAY GAUSSFEST

SATURDAY OCTOBER 10 FROM 10AM - 5PM

TESLA COILS, HIGH VOLTAGE
MULTIPLIES, VAN DE GRAFFS,
AND VIOLET RAY MACHINES.
Experience indoor lightning and
magnificent light shows!

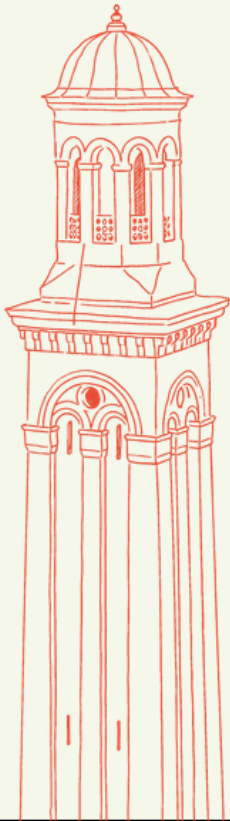


**LONDON MUSEUM
OF WATER & STEAM**
Green Dragon Ln, Brentford
TW8 0EN

ADULT TICKET £15.00
CHILD TICKET (UNDER 16) £5.00
MEMBER TICKET FREE

 **London Museum
of Water & Steam**

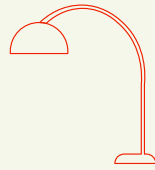
Sunday 18 October | 9.30am - 3.30pm



BRENTFORD

FLEA

MARKET



AT THE LONDON MUSEUM
OF WATER & STEAM

Discover vintage homewares,
mid-century furniture, and unique pieces
from local vendors.



£2 entry

All proceeds
go to support
the Museum!

Speak Out
in Hounslow

RETRO HEIST

UPCOMING

Steam-up Dates

AUGUST STEAM-UP

29 - 30

SEPTEMBER STEAM-UP

26 - 27

OCTOBER STEAM-UP

24 - 25

NOVEMBER STEAM-UP

28 - 29



GET EXCITED FOR...

RETURN OF THE GHOST TRAIN



HALLOWEEN WEEK - HAUNTED HOUSE - GHOST TRAIN RIDES
MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON

Ring in the New Year with three days of steaming engines!
NEW YEAR'S STEAM UP
& Heritage Bus Experience

**29 - 31
DECEMBER**



London
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KEMPTON
STEAM
MUSEUM



Prebook Tickets at waterandsteam.org.uk