

# Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester

*Dr Ian Griffin, Director*

Manchester was the world's first industrial city and has been a centre of innovation in science and engineering from the start of the Industrial Revolution. Dalton and Joule carried out groundbreaking work here, and it was just outside the city that Sir Bernard Lovell created Jodrell Bank in time for the dawn of the space age. It is therefore appropriate that the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester (MSIM) exists today to showcase the region's contributions to science and its rich industrial heritage. We also strive to act as a vehicle to promote science and engineering and to inspire the next generation of creative people who will keep our country at the forefront of scientific and technological innovation.

MSIM is a relatively young institution, with origins dating back to the mid-1960s. Back then, Donald Cardwell, a Professor at the University of Manchester Institute for Science and Technology (UMIST), realised that the closure of local manufacturing industries was leading to the loss of items of significant scientific and industrial heritage. He decided to prevent this, and started collecting artefacts and records from local factories and mills as they closed down.

The UMIST collection became the nucleus of a new museum, the North Western Museum of Science and Industry, which opened in

1969. During the 1970s the museum became a victim of its own success when its collection and visitor numbers outgrew the existing facilities. Luckily an opportunity to re-locate the Museum to a new site presented itself when, in late 1978, after mounting public pressure, British Rail sold the historic, but derelict and unused, site of the world's first passenger railway station, on the Liverpool Road in Manchester to the Greater Manchester Council.

The sale, for £1, enabled the renovation of the passenger station and a freight shed and the site, together with the UMIST collection, became the founding assets of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry Trust in 1981. The Museum opened at Liverpool Road Station on 15 September 1983, the 153rd anniversary of the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway.

In 1985, another opportunity to expand arose when Manchester City Council asked the Museum to take over the Air and Space Museum, which the City Council had opened in May 1983. The Air and Space Museum was housed in the adjacent Lower Campfield Market Hall. An agreement was reached and the Museum thus acquired its Air and Space Hall with an unique collection of large aircraft, including an Avro Shackleton.

In 1986 the abolition of the

metropolitan county councils, including GMC, meant that the Museum needed a new source of core funding. Fortunately, the Museum was successful in making a case for receiving core funding from national government through the then Office of Arts and Libraries, and today continues to be nationally funded as a NDPB by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Today the Museum occupies a large (2.5 hectare) site in the centre of Manchester, whose five listed buildings contain seventeen galleries. The ongoing development of the Museum from its humble origins has depended heavily on raising money through grants (from sources such as English Heritage, the European Regional Development Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund), commercial sponsorship and through its own trading activities which generate significant income from catering, retail and other commercial activities such as hosting large touring exhibitions.

The Museum's success in fund-raising has been demonstrated through its continuing expansion, providing new galleries and other public facilities. Its reputation for excellence has been endorsed by the many awards that it has received, including the Museum of the Year award in 1990 (jointly with the Imperial War Museum). Public



*Characters you may find in the Museum*



*Replica locomotive, Planet, steaming past the Grade I listed building.*

appreciation has been evident in the Museum's healthy visitor numbers, which peaked at just over 350,000 in 1998-99. The resumption of free admission in December 2001 boosted visitor numbers, which reached a record 492,000 in 2004-05.

From the beginning this Museum has been committed to the restoration of machinery to working order and to maximising public access to our collections, which are designated by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council as being "pre-eminent collections of national and international importance". Amongst our most popular galleries are the Power Hall, which contains a large number of fully working historic machines, and the Textile Gallery, where visitors can see the entire textile manufacturing process, from cotton to woven garment, demonstrated, again using the original machinery. Like most museums, despite the fact we have a relatively large city centre site, we are only able to display a small fraction of our collections in our permanent galleries. Unlike most museums, despite the large physical size of much of our collections (such as printing presses and aircraft!), we can also provide access to about a third of our reserve collections through our on-site Collections Centre.

With a site of such historic significance and a large and growing collection, the staff at the Museum have their work cut out simply to preserve, protect and interpret our rich heritage. However, as an

Institution we have great ambition. In addition to preserving, protecting and interpreting the collection, we have developed and are implementing a vision that has identified six key themes: Energy, Community, Science, Transport, Industry and the Environment which will be used as channels to showcase and interpret the past, present and potential future interactions of people, science and industry.

Through researching, recording and sharing the stories behind every building, artefact and archive at the Museum, we aim to use our collections to inspire interest in science, technology and engineering, helping to create a more science-literate society. In our quest to achieve this goal, a new master plan is being created for our institution. We know that to be successful we must reach a diverse audience, and need to make our collections challenging, relevant and accessible to all.

Partnership with other organisations is another important aspect of our vision since it allows us to use the skills and expertise of others to help us develop. For example we have recently enjoyed a most successful collaboration with the Foundation for Science Technology and Civilization (FSTC) to host an exhibition on the Muslim contribution to civilization. The result of this partnership is "1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in our World" which is a unique UK-wide travelling exhibition. It forms part of an

educational project, which aims to bridge the gap in understanding of the rich heritage that the Muslim community share with other communities in the UK and Europe. The project also includes a concurrent events programme and provision of educational resources.

1001 Inventions focuses on the period between circa 600-1600 AD referred to in the West as the "Dark Ages" which was a time when science was in fact actually very much alive and flourishing in Europe and elsewhere. It was the period when Muslims flourished in science and it provided the springboard from which the renaissance emerged. The exhibition looks at this one thousand-year gap of science and technology and highlights some of the main Muslim contributions to civilization and the pioneers behind them, to inspire a similar innovation from current and future generations.

The exhibition and indeed the partnership has been a tremendous success for the Museum. An independent evaluation has determined that it has driven over 10,000 new visitors to the Museum (the majority of whom are Muslim) and importantly that is having a positive impact on them when they are here. The exhibition will tour throughout the UK for a period of two years from September 2006.

In summary, our Museum has evolved over the past two decades from an industrial wasteland to a successful museum whose 17 galleries regularly attract nearly half a million visitors per year, all of whom want to find out more about past, present and future achievements in science and technology. Our success continues to be founded on the energy and motivation of our staff, together with the ongoing support from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. As a national and regional asset, we have taken the uniqueness of our site and embraced the notion of "inspired learning for all" as a key focus of our activity, creating a real sense of purpose in showcasing our unique collections to wider communities. We are determined to ensure that everyone who visits our Museum, whether novice or knowledgeable, young or old, has a real chance to become engaged in shaping the future of this country.