

Halifax's amazing Industrial Museum was temporarily opened on the 13 October when members of the Rotary Club of Sowerby Bridge were given the opportunity to take a look around. They were skillfully guided by Richard Macfarlane, Collections Manager at Calderdale Council and Jeff Wilkinson Curator of the Industrial Collection.

The museum which has been closed to the public for some ten years houses a host of exhibits reflecting Halifax's illustrious industrial past. Current and former manufacturers are represented in sectors which include Mining, the Machine Tool Industry, the Confectionary Industry, Textiles, Wire Drawing, Washing Machines, Steam Boiler and Engine Manufacturers amongst others.

Many of the visiting Rotarians have had career links with the represented companies but none more so than Sowerby Bridge Rotarian Michael Holdsworth who's family business John Holdsworth and Co had a 200 year history in the town having been one of the largest suppliers of Moquette fabrics for bus and coach seating for many years. In 1979, this Company donated a working loom to the museum. It was dismantled, transported and erected in its current site. All the rest of their looms have been scrapped over the years in small pieces.

On seeing the loom again Michael Holdsworth said "It was really interesting to see and feel this loom because all the things we found wrong with these types of looms were exemplified in this loom and was the reason we gave it away. Possibly at a later stage in life one could ask why we did not give an improved version of this loom to the Museum instead of scrapping them, but at the time there was no money, no foresight, no interest and no enthusiasm to do so which is a wicked shame. This would have shown all the adaptations and additions, many home made and fitted in the Company to improve the productivity and quality of the plie fabrics produced by these looms. Those skills and entrepreneurial spirit by the management, the weavers and turners has now been lost forever in Halifax. It was a very nostalgic moment and I really appreciated looking at a piece of kit again which I thought was worthless in 1979."

Other famous Halifax businesses represented include Mackintosh's Toffee, Crossley's Carpets, Asquith's, Boulton and Watt, Hartley and Sugden, Hattersley Valves, Ada Washing Machines, Halifax Building Society, Smith's Wire, Hargreaves Foundry, Reflecting Roadstuds, and many more.

There is now a growing movement to try and get the museum re-opened to the public and for education. This is being organised by the Calderdale Industrial Museum Association, which is considering whether to get the museum opened in whole or in part with the machinery either static or working. The Association is attempting to regenerate historical aspects of Yorkshire. To find out more contact Lynden Shearman, Curator or Franne Wills, Collections and Service Development Manager at the Bankfield Museum.

Visitor, Rotarian Roger Bancroft said "It is a crime that this facility isn't open to the schools of Calderdale where it could be a huge educational asset both in terms of real history and science".