

EDITORIAL

Despite the absence of the Rolt Memorial Lecture that has been a feature of the journal since its inception, it is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce a diverse suite of five articles that present a sample of the latest research into historic industries and showcase a couple of topics that have not featured in *Industrial Archaeology Review* previously. Most of the articles derive from archaeological work secured through the English planning system in advance of redevelopment, and it is encouraging to see that the journal remains the preferred route for publishing the most significant results from this burgeoning source of research.

Digital subscriptions to the journal continue to increase our readership, with 2620 articles being downloaded between July and September of this year, an increase of more than 180 than for the same period in 2022. Much of this new interest derives from overseas, reflecting the expanding global reach of the journal and perhaps greater engagement with industrial archaeology and heritage worldwide. This certainly appears to be the case in China, where an acceleration of academic research into the country's remarkable industrial past is testified by articles published in recent volumes of this journal, including detailed surveys of salt production (2019), the alum industry (2020) and zinc smelting (2022). The ground-breaking research described in these articles has highlighted the significance of China's rich and diverse industrial heritage, and helps to enrich the context for understanding the growth and progress of industrialisation in Britain and across Europe. The opening article in this issue adds to the portfolio by providing a fascinating account of cinnabar mining in the Wanshan District of south-west China. This precious natural ore is the most common source for refining elementary mercury and was used widely in alchemy, pigments and even medicine by the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC – AD 220). Archaeological surveys have identified remarkable cave groups that resulted from early mining activity, together with extensive remains and buildings deriving from the development of the site by the Anglo-French Mercury Company from the late 1890s to the state-owned Guizhou Mercury Mine Company after 1950.

Mercury in the form of mercuric nitrate was crucial to the English felt hat industry as a stiffening agent, although its prolonged use led to mercury poisoning amongst hat makers with symptoms that included psychosis, excitability and tremors, encapsulated in the phrase 'as mad as a hatter'. In the second article in this issue, Steve Tamburello articulates the development of the felt hat trade from a cottage craft to a factory based industry of international repute by drawing together the evidence from several

archaeological surveys of former hat works in Stockport and its surrounding district in north-west England, the epicentre of this specialised industry throughout the 19th century. Particular attention is paid to a survey of the Offerton Hat Works in Stockport that was hailed a 'state-of-the-art factory' when it was built in 1886, adding weight to a contention that hatting was the crowning glory of the town's rich industrial heritage. It is perhaps surprising in view of its former importance that this is the first article in *Industrial Archaeology Review* that has looked at the felt hat industry.

The last article in this journal to consider any aspect of the English glass industry appeared in in 2012 and this issue brings a welcome return to an expansive subject. Rachel Williams and David Dungworth present the conclusions drawn from the archaeological excavations of the former Park Glasshouse in Birmingham and the scientific analysis of the glass waste and related products. The glasshouse was established in 1788 and is noted for successfully trialling and adopting a Siemens gas regenerator in the early 1860s, evidence for which was gathered from the excavation. Scientific analysis of the glass debris has also demonstrated a progression from the production of kelp glass in the late 18th century to the flint glasses that were manufactured at the Park Glasshouse up to its closure in 1874. It is pleasing to see that the article incorporates a link to 3D digital model of the excavated glasshouse, expanding the use of supplemental digital media files that was introduced in the last volume of the journal.

One of the key ingredients for flint glass was lead oxide, the production of which was a specialised industry in its own right. One of best-known production sites in England is the Chester Leadworks, centred on its iconic shot tower. Most of the associated buildings were cleared gradually to enable the regeneration of the canal-side site, although this long development process was accompanied with archaeological research. An excavation of the white lead house in 2018-19 represented the culmination of almost two decades of historical research, surveys and intermittent archaeological investigation. This work is synthesised by Rachael Matthews, Ric Buckle and Liz Govier to present an integrated account of the Chester Leadworks with particular reference to the production of white lead.

The final article in this issue examines the railway infrastructure that served the South Dock of the Port of Sunderland, the construction of which commenced in 1846 at the behest of George Hudson's Sunderland Dock Company. An excavation carried out by Archaeological Research Services uncovered significant remains of the former locomotive yard, engine turntable roundhouse and related engine sheds that had served the new dock railway. The engine turntable and roundhouse were built in 1875

and the detail gleaned from the archaeological work may be compared with interest to excavated examples in London and York that have featured previously in this journal.

After a ten-year term in post that has seen a sustained growth of the journal in terms of its national and international reach, Ian West has decided to retire as my Co-editor of *Industrial Archaeology Review* in 2024. Anyone who is interested in joining the editorial team is encouraged to contact us at review@industrial-archaeology.org

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