



## **Industrial Heritage Network West Midlands (IHNWM): meeting summary and key points**

### **Birmingham Museums Trust/Museum Collection Centre; 27 November 2018**

#### **Key points covered during the meeting:**

##### **1. Update from IHSO (Industrial Heritage Support Officer).**

- IHSO is an England wide, one-person project funded by Historic England and managed by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.
- IHSO is a facilitator for the Industrial Heritage Networks (IHNs) supporting members with the following:
  - Bringing members together
  - Providing help in organising the meetings
  - Providing the regional logos (sites/organisations can use the IHNWM logo online, in print or anywhere they think is relevant and can be beneficial; if you don't have a copy of the logo yet please let the IHSO know)
  - Providing access to the IHNs website which can be used for promotion, information sharing and spreading awareness
  - Providing access to the online communications and information forum, Trello.
- Joanna asked everyone to read the IHNs Guidelines (PDF available to download on the IHNs website: <https://industrialheritagenetworks.com/guidelines/>). The Guidelines clarify that:
  - Network meetings are bi-annual
  - Each meeting is to be hosted at a different site/organisation (providing lunch is optional)
  - Agenda is flexible, and members are encouraged to, and should input into it (offering suggestions for themes, talks, presentations, workshops and discussions).
- Joanna also talked about the benefits of the IHNs website, asked everyone to send in short blurbs (100 words) and a photo to add to their entry; she also asked to send in various stories with news, information, adverts etc. and subscribe to the IHNs website and the IHSO website.
- Lastly, Joanna stressed that meetings should be perceived as 'starters', or 'instigators' for the networking, discussions and support across member sites/organisations to follow throughout the year.

##### **2. Birmingham Museum Trust host presentation.**

- Emily Locke, Collections and Storage Officer, talked about the Trust and its various sites; and Phillip Roberts, Research Assistant (Science & Industry), talked about his current research project focusing on collections storage and interpretation. Phillip also asked members to think about how we can tell a story about an object which does not have a connection to anyone, or anything famous, is not 'first in the world' or connects to the industrial revolution as they tour the collection centre later.

### **3. The Chance Glass Works Heritage Trust presentation.**

- Mark Davies, Director & Trustee at the Chance Glass Works Heritage Trust, delivered a talk about the beginnings of the Trust, the various challenges and success over the years and plans for the future.

### **4. Trello workshop.**

- Joanna demonstrated how to join Trello and create boards, lists and cards. The 'How to' guides were handed out and Joanna reminded everyone she is happy to provide one-to-one support for setting up and going over the use of the online platform.
- Trello is not a social media platform (however it could be your own professional, industrial heritage online outlet) but a secure online forum accessible via personal login only, where members can interact with each other and post relevant information.
- Joanna aims to get everyone signed up, however she understands not everyone will be using the platform therefore emails will still be sent out with the key information such as meeting dates and locations.
- All members are encouraged to join Trello to have the choice of interacting or simply logging in to read about other members' activities and staying updated.

### **5. Who's who and what are they up to interactive group session.**

- Members were split into several smaller groups to chat about who they are, what their roles are and give an example of a success or a challenge their organisation achieved or faced.
- Some of the challenges mentioned included succession planning, limited space, lack of funding for feasibility studies, issues with site ownership and health and safety.
- Successes included examples of using an education programme to engage with the local communities and bring families over for visits, successful Heritage Lottery Funding bids and changing perceptions about a museum allowing it to reach wider audiences.

### **6. Site tour.**

- Members had an hour to walk around the Museum Collection Store which is filled with numerous artefacts from across varied areas of industrial heritage. The centre runs regular free tours every month and ad-hoc, paid visits can also be arranged.

## 7. Post-tour discussion.

- Members discussed issues with interpretation and agreed the stories we tell should look at the 'human aspect' and relate to people nowadays. This could be done by using social history and telling the story of an object from contemporary times going back to show how it relates to the modern times. Linking stories from the past to the present to involve visitors through relating to their current lives.
- Members also talked about dealing with engagement and appealing to the varied visitor types. It was mentioned that each visitor has its own experience and often visitors 'don't know what they want to know' in which case, we need to be there to guide them and make sure our collections are accessible and relatable. We also need to remember to not assume what visitors want but engage with them to understand their expectations and needs better.
- There was a general agreement that there are multiple ways of interpreting collections but what we need to remember about is finding a balance, as much as that's possible, understanding who our audiences are and staying relevant to keep them engaged and wanting to come back.
- Some members provided useful feedback about the discussion session which included looking at running the discussion in smaller groups instead of one large group; looking at more focused questions and having more structure such as in a workshop delivery for example.

## 8. Meeting summary.

- Joanna thanked everyone for coming and participating. She also asked members to think about and help with **3 things**:
  1. **IHNs website**: please send your 100-word blurb and a photo. Please also send your stories – do use this for promotion, sharing information and improving awareness.
  2. **Join/develop Trello**; make sure to **join/watch** everyone's boards and **watch your own board** and the IHSO's board (details are outlined in the 'How to' guide and Joanna can help).
  3. Think about **hosting a meeting in the future and delivering talks, workshops or presentations**. Hosting involves providing facilities on the day (lunch does not have to be included), talk/presentation about the site/organisation and a site tour.

Talks, workshops or presentations can be about any topic you think is relevant and members could benefit from. This can be about your work/volunteer place but can also be about a topical issue, or a challenge that you would like to discuss.

**Most importantly, use the network to your benefit – talk to your colleagues, start discussions, act on the project ideas you've had, offer and ask for support.**

### **Thank you for your feedback!**

Some comments are included below – if there is anything else you would like to suggest or share, as always, do get in touch. This is your network and your opinions are invaluable in ensuring it succeeds. You can shape the network in whatever way you like and believe will be sustainable; the IHSO is there to help with the process.

#### **Comments:**

*A good balance of diverse organisations.*

*I had a lovely time, thank you.*

*Ideas to help with our project. Networking/making contacts.*

*Really enjoyed seeing the collection and the discussion.*

*A nice balance of talks and discussions.*

*Learning about other projects. Tour of the store was fascinating.*

*Networking and getting to hear stories of successes from other people, as well as how they overcome issues.*

*Thanks for the great day and providing the chance for us all to get together!*

**Thank you!**