

PRISM Fund Annual Report 2011-12

Introduction

The PRISM Fund supports the acquisition and conservation of heritage objects from the fields of science, technology, industry and medicine. It was established in 1973 in response to the growing public concern that technological change was resulting in the loss of much of Britain's industrial heritage. Since 1973 PRISM has helped hundreds of non-national museums and preservation groups in England and Wales acquire or conserve thousands of objects of industrial or scientific importance.

The Fund aims to support the variety of organisations entrusted with the care of our industrial and scientific heritage, forging links and encouraging best practice.

The Fund was managed by the National Museum of Science and Industry (NMSI) on behalf of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) until 31 March 2003, before being managed solely by MLA. Management of the Fund transferred to Arts Council England in October 2011 at the request of the government. Arts Council continues to take expert advice from the staff of the NMSI as well as from other national museums.

There has been no significant change to the scope of the Fund since its inception except for its extension to include conservation projects in the early 1990s.

Summary of PRISM Fund grants awarded

There were 13 grants awarded during 2011-2012 worth £92,694. Comparable figures for 2010-2011 were 18 grants worth £171,117. The average size of a grant was £7,130 which is down on last year's average of £9,507.

This year 13 institutions across England and Wales, from fully Accredited museums to small preservation societies, have benefited from PRISM funding. As well as bringing important objects into public collections, the PRISM fund is contributing to their ongoing care. Conservation grants represent 46 per cent of the number of this year's awards (72 per cent in 2010-2011), accounting for 58 per cent of the total expenditure (72 per cent in 2010-2011).

All of the objects funded by PRISM through 2011-2012 have a unique or important place within Britain's rich past, and help to connect the public with the country's scientific, industrial or technological heritage.

Table 1 Summary of PRISM Fund awards by category

PRISM Category	2011-2012		2010-2011	
	Number	Amount (£)	Number	Amount (£)
Agriculture	0	0	0	0
Archives	2	£3,942	2	£18,856
Aviation	0	0	1	£5,000
Buildings	0	0	0	0
Geology	1	£3,500	0	0
Horology	0	0	1	£275
Industry	2	£19,347	2	£2,273
Medicine	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	£19,539
Natural History	0	0	0	0
Photography	0	0	0	0
Rail	2	£13,505	7	£83,574
Road transport	2	£3,900	2	£17,700
Scientific instruments	1	£12,000	0	0
Trams	0	0	0	0
Water	3	£36,500	2	£23,900
TOTAL	13	£92,694	18	£171,117

Table 2 Summary of PRISM Fund awards by type

PRISM Type	2010-2012		2010-2011	
	Number	Amount (£)	Number	Amount (£)
Acquisition	7	£38,847	5	£47,903
Conservation/Restoration	6	£53,847	13	£123,214
TOTAL	13	£92,694	18	£171,117

Details of PRISM Fund grants awarded

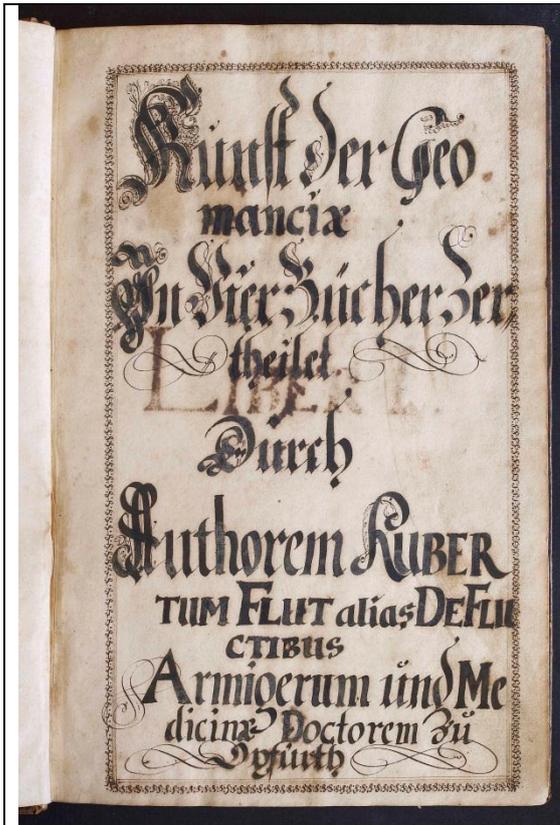


Photo: Bodleian Library.

£2,600 to the Bodleian Library for the acquisition of manuscript material by Robert Fludd.

This manuscript material consists of a bound folio volume of two texts: an unknown German translation of Fludd's treatise *De Geomantia* (1617, 1618), and another astrological treatise in German, written in a different hand. This copy of *De Geomantia* is one of only two seventeenth-century German versions of it to have been traced.

There appear to be no printed translations into German from the period, suggesting that Fludd's work in that language circulated by manuscript alone. This volume therefore provides important evidence that some years after his death Fludd's influence remained strong on the continent in hermetic circles, where the reception of his works was always stronger than at home.

£900 to Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives for the acquisition of a Douglas Vespa motor scooter. Emerging from the War almost bankrupt, Douglas started to develop new motorcycle designs, until their managing director saw the new Vespa motor scooter being made by Piaggio and negotiated the rights to build and market the Vespa in the UK and most of the Commonwealth. Production began in 1951 and lasted until 1965, by which time over 126,000 had been made, saving Douglas from collapse. This particular Douglas Vespa was first registered in Kincardinshire in 1952. It passed into the ownership of Fred Ford in Bristol in the 1960s and he used it locally for many years. In 1990 it was loaned to Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives, but this grant has enabled it to remain there forever.



Photo: Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives.



1930s train after conservation.
Photo: British Postal Museum and Archive.

£10,084 to the British Postal Museum and Archive for the conservation of 3 Mail Rail units.

The Post Office Underground Railway, or 'Mail Rail', made its first journey between Mount Pleasant Mail Centre and Paddington in December 1927, as a solution to delayed mail caused by congested London streets. At its peak, 34 trains ran 18 hours a day along 23 miles of track between East and West London. It is a unique part of British heritage, having revolutionised the way in which mail was transported through the capital and on to the rest of the UK. Throughout the lifetime of the network three basic fleets of trains were used. The first, introduced with the opening of the system in 1927, was quickly found to have a number of flaws and replaced by a new fleet of trains in 1930. The third and final design of vehicles was introduced in 1980 to replace the 1930s stock.

BPMA has 1 train from each era of the service in its permanent collection, and this project enabled conservation work on all three.

£3,000 to Coventry Transport Museum for the acquisition of a Singer 'Courier' bicycle.

This bicycle was part of the on-going development of the safety bicycle, which took place in Coventry during the 1880s. Patented by a Frederick Warner Jones, it has many of the features of a modern cycle, but had not arrived at the final design solution, achieved a couple of years later. What makes this bicycle extremely collectable is that cycle historians did not know it existed. Until this bicycle came to light, the only evidence it had been manufactured was a Singer sales catalogue of 1886 and various other contemporary publications. The bicycle is probably the only one of its type known to exist and therefore has local, regional, national and international significance.



Photo: Coventry Transport Museum.



The Whitelees Beam Engine being painted.
Photo: Ellenroad Steam Museum.

£12,000 to Ellenroad Steam Museum for the conservation of the Whitelees Beam Engine.

The Whitelees Beam Engine was built for the Whitelees Woollen Mill in Rochdale, Lancashire. The mill produced heavy woollen cloth for such uses as blankets and army uniforms. The engine was designed and built in 1841 by John Petrie and Co, and is thought to be the last their beam engines still in existence.

The beam engine was made on the principles laid down by James Watt, and has escaped being modified as many similar engines were in the late 1800s. It also retains its James Watt parallel motion mechanism and its Porter Governor.

None of the beam engines used in the Ancoates area of Manchester have survived, and the Rochdale area is unique as it was involved mainly in the production of woollen rather than cotton goods. This engine is therefore of great significance to the history of the Lancashire Textile Industry.

£1,342 to Flintshire Record Office for the conservation of Coal Board archive material.

Flintshire Record Office holds significant records relating to the North Wales Coal Board, which have been deposited incrementally between 1971 and 1989.

This particular collection complements a number of other mining-related collections within the organisation but is in need of minor conservation work (primarily cleaning and boxing) in order for it to be accessible. This collection includes records relating to many collieries in the area of the North Wales Coalfield, both before and after nationalisation.

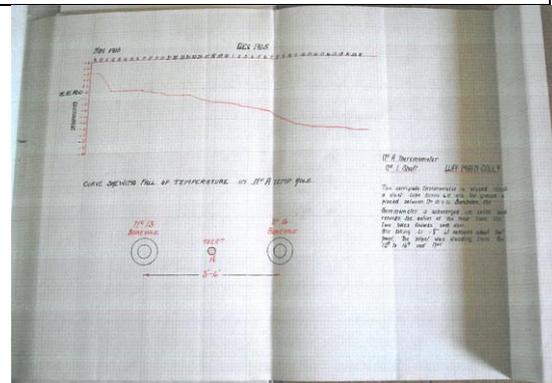


Photo: Flintshire Record Office.

£3,500 to Kendal Museum for the acquisition of the Bill Shaw collection of minerals from Cumbria.

Bill Shaw was probably the most important mining engineer in Cumbria during the 20th century. He worked numerous mines in the Lake District: Hartsop Hall, Greenside, Force Crag, Coniston, and Potts Gill, as well as Auchencairn in Scotland and Halkyn in Wales. In his retirement he wrote the bible of Lake District mining - "Mining in the Lake Counties".

This collection represents the diversity of his interest, and consists of 225 mineral specimens, including gold from Carrock, a cube of lead and silver from Greenside Smelter and other rarer local minerals of Cumbria.



The Bill Shaw Collection.
Photo: Kendal Museum.



The Rolls Royce 'Hawk' engine in situ inside Canfly.
Photo: Lakeland Arts Trust.

£9,500 to Lakeland Arts Trust for the acquisition of Rolls Royce 'Hawk' Aero Engine.

The significance of the engine lies in the fact that this is one of only 3 such engines surviving in the UK, and 1 surviving in the United States. Built by Brazil Straker in Bristol in 1917 and installed in an airship in May 1918, this is earliest working example of a Hawk engine, and therefore of immense significance in the history of aviation, as well as being the power for Canfly, which is a rare surviving example of the experimentation after the 1st World War when powerful surplus military engines were married with specially-designed hulls for high-speed racing on water. She is of significance as a rare national example and the sole survivor of such a vessel on Lake Windermere where between 1923 and 1937 she competed in over 200 events.

£3,421 to the LNER Coach Association for the conservation of the LNER third class railway carriage no.1623.

The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) Third Class Corridor carriage No. 1623 was built in 1950 to the design of Edward Thompson and is a unique example of the final generation of LNER coaching stock, built for use on services on the East Coast route. Although 1623 was one of about 450 of the type built between 1945 and 1950 and was the most common type produced by the LNER at that time, only two other examples of this type of stock survive, neither restored. 1623 is therefore an important vehicle and has been restored by the LNERCA to a near museum standard, as close to its original condition as possible. A great deal of background research has been carried out and materials collected, for example a sample of the upholstery from the original build has been used to commission a batch of replica material.



The inside of the carriage, showing replica upholstery and restrung luggage racks.
Photo: LNER Coach Association.

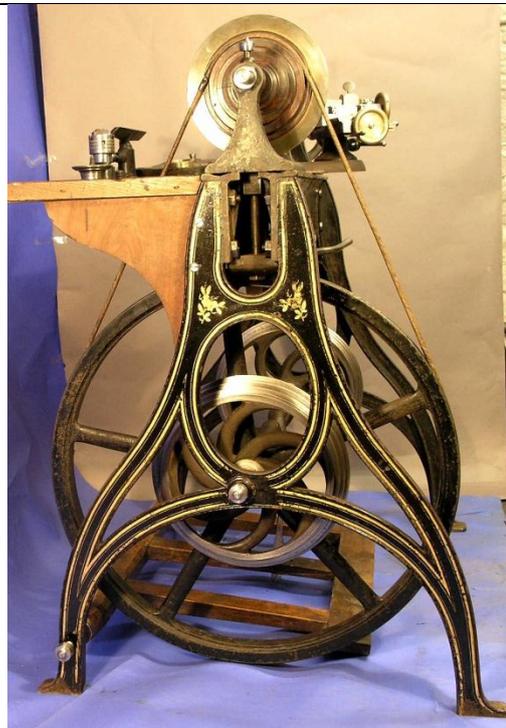


Photo: Museum of Science and Industry.

£7,347 to the Museum of Science and Industry for the acquisition of an ornamental turning lathe.

This lathe is a very significant example of Robert's work, adding to knowledge of this prolific inventor of many improvements to machine tools. When Roberts returned to Manchester in 1816 he set up in business as a 'plain and eccentric turner'. This is an ornamental turning lathe capable of high quality work when fitted with the appropriate tooling especially for eccentric turning.

The use of gold lining points to the early period in Robert's career, 1816-1823, and shows that by this time Roberts was capable of producing tools both of high quality for light engineering as well as the much larger lathe and other tools. It confirms that Roberts was competent in a wide range of skills.



Photo: Newport Medieval Ship Project.

£15,000 to Newport City Council to freeze-dry the Newport medieval ship. The Newport Ship is of unique local, national and European significance. Well preserved ancient ship finds are exceedingly rare. The Newport medieval ship is the best preserved and most complete example of a 15th century clinker-built merchant ship found to date. As a large ship, it was a critical link in the sophisticated trading networks of the middle ages, and represents a tangible link to the strong maritime history of Newport and Britain. The ship itself would have sailed international voyages, with the ability to carry goods and people anywhere from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. It is most likely of continental origin (a silver French coin was found inserted in the keel), with certain artefacts suggesting an Iberian origin for the crew. The use life of the vessel has also been illuminated through scientific research, with wooden repairs to the vessel having been dated to the 1450s and 1460s, and grown around the British Isles. Together these facts illustrate the international nature of the object and its potential to interest a wide range of the public.

£12,000 to Rickmansworth Waterways Trust for the conservation of the historic narrowboat 'Roger'.

Roger is a historic working boat built of wood. It is one of the last wooden canal boats left in working order, and the last example of the Bushell Brothers' influential narrow boat building, which was noted for the high standards of its decorative paintwork and construction. Roger was also the last wooden motor boat trading on the Grand Union, paired with the butty Raymond. Both vessels are on the register of National Historic Ships.

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust uses Roger in its education programmes to give opportunities for young people to gain experience, self-confidence and new skills on the waterways.



New stem post being fitted.
Photo: Rickmansworth Waterways Trust.

£12,000 to the Whipple Museum of the History of Science for the acquisition of a Nairne and Blunt mechanical orrery.

This particularly fine orrery by the leading London firm Nairne & Blunt (1774-1793) has a circular case constructed from mahogany, with 12 turned brass pillars which support the engraved horizon ring, the celestial rings and north celestial polar circle. The Earth, Moon, Mercury and Venus are the planets rotating around the Sun above a blue plate which covers the gearing below. The mechanism is in full working order, and the orrery also has a pine box which is believed to be contemporary with the instrument. Items like this are extremely rare so this is a fine addition to the Whipple's collections.



Nairne and Blunt orrery.
Photo: Whipple Museum.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the many curators at national museums and other professionals who have provided expert assessments of the applications. Without their contribution of time and expertise the PRISM Fund would not be possible.

Paula Brikci
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