

Rear of Peel, Williams & Peel on the banks of Ashton-Manchester Canal.

society, the committee elected at the first annual general meeting, decided that it was important to have a lecture programme for the first two or three years. For these first few years there was no regular venue for lectures. When the North West Museum of Science and Industry was established at 97 Grosvenor Street, its director, Dr. Richard Hills, invited the Society to hold its meetings there on a regular basis. This was accepted and the Museum continued to be the meeting place until its removal to Liverpool Road Station. Throughout its history the Society has continued to maintain a lecture programme in the winter and summer months, meeting on the second Friday of each month between September and April.

The Society maintained a strong link with the North West Museum of Science and Industry. As well as holding its meetings there, members were actively involved with the Museum and its activities. For example on working days, which were held monthly throughout the 1970s, some of the machines were worked by members whilst others gave demonstrations of activities such as spinning and weaving.

The monthly lecture programme brings together members and provides a forum for those interested in the many aspects of industrial archaeology to discuss their work and exchange views on topics of mutual interest. Papers are given on a wide range of subjects by experts and by members talking about their work or fields of interests. A typical example of the range is shown by those lectures given in the 1989-1990 session. There have been lectures on the Manchester

Ship Canal, the early Manchester Gas Industry and the Black Country Museum.

The first activities of the society, before it was properly constituted consisted of two visits. Although organised visits to places of interest continued for many years, the increase in the number of classes on industrial archaeology combined with trips organised by the Extra Mural Department and local societies, has resulted in a decline in numbers participating in such trips. In recent years only a very few excursions have been arranged, often being a follow up to a lecture given earlier in the session.

In 1969 the society published its first newsletter. It was intended to keep members in touch with each other and provide a medium for the dissemination of information on the Society and on industrial archaeology in general. Initially there were four a year but this has rarely been achieved since. The present objective is to issue three newsletters a year. Although many of the items in the newsletter are short, there have occasionally been more substantial articles published which set out the results of research by members, some published as 'Occasional Papers'. For example Sylvia Clarke's work on Chorlton Mills was first published in the MRIAS newsletter and later expanded for publication in the *Industrial Archaeology Review*. Several of the papers contributed by David George have been expanded and published by Manchester Polytechnic. The newsletter has provided a means of getting research published.

Owen Ashmore stressed the importance of recording industrial remains in the region. MRIAS has been active for many years in recording these in and around Manchester. Copies of these records are kept in the Society's archives, which are on deposit in the Archives Section of the Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, where they can be consulted.

Over the past three years, MRIAS has been active on several fronts. Firstly, worried by the threats to the remaining cotton mills in Ancoats, especially those in Redhill Street, it actively campaigned to secure the designation of that part of Ancoats as a conservation area. A survey of existing buildings was undertaken, which involved co-operation with the Victorian Society and MEDReG. This was the first time for many years that anyone had looked seriously at this area and its heritage. Eventually it was designated as a conservation area. The Society is now looking for a way to make the results of its research known to a wider public.

Arising from the work on Ancoats has come an attempt to record basic information and to photograph industrial and commercial buildings in central Manchester. This has been in response to the threats which have arisen through the speed of redevelopment brought about through the policies of the Central Manchester Development Corporation which aims



Hoist. Detail from rear of Peel, Williams & Peel.

to deal with all applications for development within its area in a couple of months. Many of the buildings have gone unnoticed for many years and have never been recorded photographically, except by individuals for their own personal collections.

One result of this work has been that MRIAS has been able to feed information on important buildings into the recent review of the List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest for Manchester. As well as this the Society has also found itself in a much stronger position to support application for 'spot listing' threatened buildings and object to applications for listed building consent



Warehousing near Victoria Station.



Detail of Birley's Chorlton Mill, Cambridge St.

which will adversely affect an important industrial or commercial building.

The Society has over a hundred members whose interests vary widely. There is a hard core of thirty or forty members who regularly attend meetings and a somewhat smaller group who are prepared to become involved in recording work in one way or another. Two members, for example, have recorded in detail the water-wheel in the basement of the Rochdale Canal Company's warehouse on Dale Street. Their work has been assisted by three or four other members of the Society. Quite often members of MRIAS are involved in preservation activities. Although a lot of the preparatory work at Liverpool Road Station in 1979 and 1980 was undertaken by members of the Liverpool Road Station Society,

many members of MRIAS were involved as they were members of both.

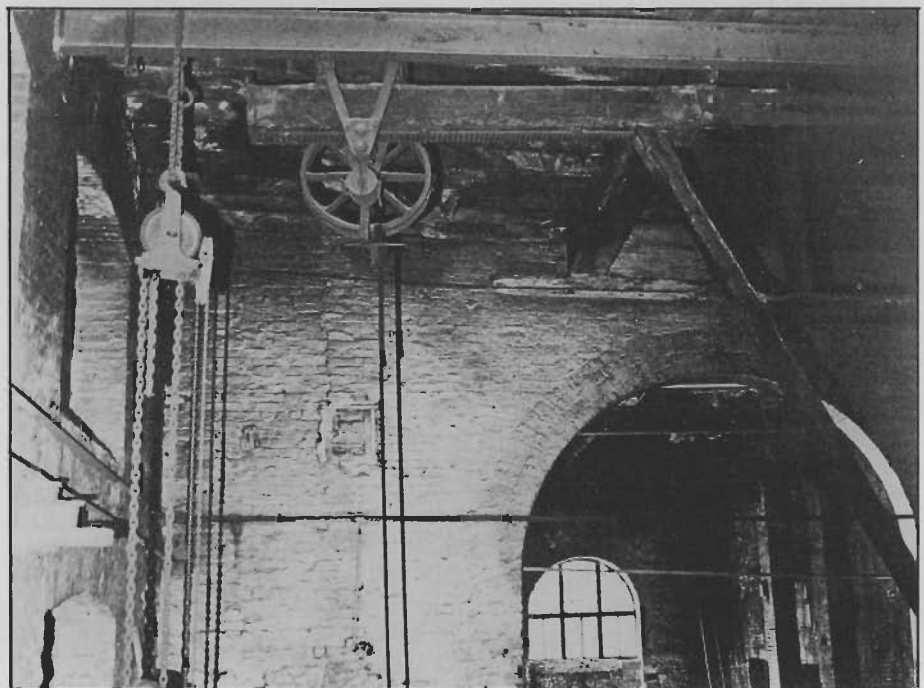
At the 1990 Annual General Meeting, MRIAS decided against appointing field secretaries, which it has had since it was founded. Instead a co-ordinator of recording activities was appointed. This job will entail co-ordinating recording by members rather than initiate recording projects as the field secretaries were originally meant to do.

Today most of the Society's meetings are held in the Town Hall. Throughout the autumn and winter months there is a lecture programme with social events in September and January. It is hoped that the Society will again become more active in recording the industrial heritage of the

region and make a contribution towards its preservation. To this end it is intended to compile a list of experts on particular subject areas so that enquiries to the Society can be channelled to the best authority.

After twenty five years as an active society in the field of industrial archaeology, one hopes that the next twenty five years will be just as successful. To do this the Society needs to increase its membership, particularly in the area of those members who are willing to be involved in recording the region's industrial heritage before it disappears or is altered beyond recognition.

If you want further information on MRIAS please contact the secretary: Steve Little, 19 Gibson's Road, Stockport SK4 4JA.



Interior of Soho Foundry, Forge & Jib Crane.