

Ornate metalwork at Crossness Pumping Station

Today, Crossness Pumping Station - one of the most spectacular examples of Victorian civil engineering - opened to the public following an extensive programme of restoration.

Housing four massive rotative beam-engines, including the largest working example in the world, Crossness was built by Sir Joseph Bazalgette as part of his solution to London's sewerage problems that had led, in 1858, to the 'Great Stink'. This was the moment when parliamentarians could no longer bear the stench coming from the heavily polluted River Thames. Opened originally in 1865, Crossness was in a decayed state when the Trust was founded to restore it in 1988.

[quote]2016 marks the 150th anniversary of the last cholera outbreak in London, which Bazalgette's sewer system helped eradicate.[/quote]

Now, thanks to National Lottery players, a complex engineering site rescued and lovingly restored by dedicated volunteers has been turned into an exciting new museum and exhibition space which can be enjoyed by all. Visitors now arrive via a newly created access path, with interpretation along the way to inform them of the contribution made by these magnificent engines to the public health of Victorian London.

Once inside, there is a new exhibition about the history of toilets and sanitation, the cholera outbreaks in 19th-century London which the building of Crossness helped to tackle, and Bazalgette's other great engineering works. These displays celebrate his magnificent achievement which gave London the world's first metropolitan sewerage system.

Visitors will have the chance to walk through a replica sewer tunnel, and view the ornate metalwork inspired by laxative fruits.

Fittingly, 2016 marks the 150th anniversary of the last cholera outbreak in London, which Crossness and Bazalgette's sewer system helped eradicate.

[quote=Stuart Hobley, Head of HLF London]"This 'Victorian cathedral of ironwork' represents a pivotal moment in the creation of the London we know today."[/quote]

Stuart Hobley, Head of HLF London, said: "This 'Victorian cathedral of ironwork' represents a pivotal moment in the creation of the London we know today. This project offers a fantastic opportunity for people to learn about the rich and varied history of health and sanitation in the city, as well as to have access to this amazing testament to Victorian engineering. We are delighted that, thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to support it".

John Austin, Chair of the Crossness Engines Trust, said: "This is a moment we have long looked forward to, the creation of an innovative museum which helps to explain the magnificence of the Victorian engineering and ironwork on this site and its contribution to the public health of this great city. It has been a challenging project to deliver these improvements to access, restoration work and new exhibition. We are very grateful to HLF and all the other funders who have helped us to realise our vision of a museum which does credit to Bazalgette's great work, as well to all our wonderful and hard-working volunteers without whom none of this would be possible."