

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Keywords: archaeology, artefacts, cultural resource, engineering, heritage, hydraulic, industrial, industry, learned societies, machinery, mining, preservation, recording

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Summary

Industrial archaeology is that particular branch of archaeology that deals with the constructs and processes of human industrial organization and labor. It is a relatively recent discipline, dating only from the latter part of the twentieth century. The discipline arose in Britain as a response to the widespread destruction of the physical remains of past industries by urban redevelopment. The techniques and methods employed by industrial archaeologists are many and varied; however, accurate on-site recording is a prerequisite. In addition industrial archaeology encompasses cataloguing and interpretation of artifacts, the adaptive reuse of buildings, and the management and administration of industrial heritage properties.

1. Introduction

If archaeology is the systematic study of the past through the analysis, in context, of the material remains and other artifacts of humanity, then industrial archaeology is that particular branch of archaeology that deals with the constructs and processes of human industrial organization and labor. Although it may be understood as comprehending all archaic industry, it has in practice been largely confined to the study of mechanized industry and its products in the period since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century.

1.1 Background and Development of IA

Industrial archaeology (IA) is a relatively recent discipline, dating only from the latter part of the twentieth century. It arose in Britain from a change in popular attitudes to the

past engendered by the widespread destruction of numerous tangible heritage remains, including many from the industrial revolution, in a postwar period of seemingly unlimited and ubiquitous urban redevelopment. The commercial disuse of canals, the discarding of steam as a power source in mill and pump house and the disposal of steam locomotives led local groups of amateurs interested in specific industries to publish histories and then increasingly to seek the preservation of some notable local structure or artifact. Many of these groups became involved in the restoration of old machinery. As the tangible remains of industrialization vanished and local interest groups brought their historical impact to light, the value of industrial monuments as documents of economic, cultural and social history came more clearly into focus. The work of people like Michael Rix, who taught at the University of Birmingham, gave perspective to these disparate efforts, and as a result, the Council for British Archaeology in 1959 urged the national government to formulate standards for both the recording and protection of national industrial monuments.

No substantive action was taken, however, until 1963, the same year that Kenneth Hudson published the first book on Industrial Archaeology. At this time, a public outcry over the destruction of a significant, highly visible and widely known industrial landmark of the 1830s, the London terminus of the Birmingham railway known as the Euston Arch, spurred the government to create the Industrial Monuments Survey. This body established the National Record of Industrial Monuments, and a basic site index was begun. Other countries have subsequently initiated systematic national industrial heritage inventories and recording programs. The most notable are the United States, which in 1969 created HAER (Historic American Engineering Record), and France, which in 1983 gave official recognition to IA by founding a special industrial heritage group known as the Cellule du Patrimoine Industriel within the Inventaire Général. The latter is a body dating from 1964 within the Ministry of Culture, which is charged with producing a documented inventory of the cultural heritage of France. In 1986 the Cellule du Patrimoine Industriel began their national inventory. In Sweden also, the Central Office of National Antiquities published in 1985 a survey of recording and preservation activities relating to Sweden's industrial heritage.

2. Industrial Associations and Learned Societies

Although IA began in Britain, the ideas of industrial heritage preservation, investigation, documentation and interpretation found fertile ground in many areas of the world. Industrial museums—many directed toward specific aspects of industrial heritage such as canals, mills, ironworks, or railways—and local heritage societies devoted to advocacy and preservation began springing up in many countries. Today such establishments exist virtually everywhere, and all of them require professional assistance with the material covered by their mandates. Industrial archaeologists thus may be found working not only for museums and heritage societies but also for a wide variety of government and private heritage agencies, contract firms and larger museums with broad mandates. In addition learned societies for the dissemination of information and the association of practitioners, without which no discipline can survive, were founded. Among the largest and most active learned societies is the Society for Industrial Archeology (SIA), which publishes *IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology*. Others include the Association for Industrial Archaeology

(AIA), which publishes *Industrial Archaeology Review*, and Comité d'information et de liaison pour l'archéologie, l'étude et la mise en valeur du patrimoine industriel (CILAC), which publishes *l'Archéologie Industrielle en France*. In addition to its journal, each society is involved in advocacy work, has a newsletter, promotes special events and tours, holds annual meetings, and maintains a web page on the Internet.

2.1 International Organizations

Even though SIA, AIA, and CILAC are based in the United States, Britain, and France, respectively, they all have an international membership because industrial processes have always transcended borders. For this reason too, there is also a strong international organization with members on every continent and an international board, known as TICCIH (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage).

The TICCIH exists as a worldwide forum to promote the preservation, conservation, investigation, documentation, research, and interpretation of the global industrial heritage. TICCIH members include a broad range of public and private scholars. The organization sustains a web page and publishes the *TICCIH Bulletin* to provide a global overview and to bring to attention matters of broad concern. It also has a publishing program, holds annual and special meetings and conferences, and makes submissions to national governments and other international organizations.

Because of its multi-national scope as a learned society, and its extremely diverse membership comprising academics, conservators, curators, historians, and other heritage professionals, as well as students, teachers, and other interested parties, TICCIH is uniquely suited to act in an advisory capacity for international bodies. A recent example in this regard has been TICCHI's leading role as the coordinator for a study on how world textile industry sites might be assessed for inclusion as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

A study of this sort requires extensive consultation and careful consideration. In order to be useful in identifying sites of world significance, any defining criteria have to be precise, yet they must also be broad enough to be applicable to a ubiquitous industry that is enormously diverse in its age, organization, products, and technology. The textile study is being prepared for ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites), a non-governmental organization headquartered in Paris, which has national committees in over 90 countries. It is the principal advisor of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee on matters of the protection and conservation of monuments and sites. As such, ICOMOS also has a direct interest in IA.

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Biographical Sketch

John D. Light is a Senior Material Culture Researcher with Parks Canada. He is a former Director of the Society for Industrial Archaeology (USA), a current member of the Editorial Board of the Association for Industrial Archaeology (GB) and a member of the General Tools Award Committee of the Society for Industrial Archaeology (USA). His publications on various aspects of Industrial Heritage include: *A Frontier Fur Trade Blacksmith Shop* (with Henry Unglik); The archaeological investigation of blacksmith shops, in *IA: The Journal for the Society for Industrial Archeology*; A field guide to the identification of metal, in *Studies in Material Culture Research*; and Observations concerning the hand forging of wrought iron, in *Materials Characterization*.