The Society for Folk Life Studies

**Annual Conference, 2015**

**Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands, England**

10-13 September 2015

*Enjoying the Graft – canals and steam power as leisure and heritage attractions*

*Authenticity and Utility – the challenges of building conservation on heritage sites*

*The Black Country – landscape and identity*

This year’s annual conference will take place in the Black Country of the English West Midlands. We will be hosted by The Black Country Living Museum in Dudley (<http://www.bclm.co.uk>).

Through a range of papers and two excursions the conference will provide an excellent opportunity to learn about the industry and identity of this part of England. We will also consider the challenges of building conservation on heritage sites and how two key elements of early industrialisation -canals and steam power- now feature strongly as leisure and heritage attractions.

If you wish to attend this year’s conference, please complete the application form attached and send it with **a non-returnable deposit of £100**, to the Conference Secretary (Steph Mastoris) at: National Waterfront Museum, Maritime Quarter, Oystermouth Road, Swansea, SA1 3RD, Wales, UK.

The cost of attending the whole conference will be:

* **£399** per personwith accommodation and meals for **single occupancy of a room.**
* **£315** per person with accommodation and meals for **two people sharing** **a room.**
* **£200** per person with lunch and dinner but **NO accommodation.**
* **Day rates** for the conference (**with lunch and dinner, but NO accommodation**) are available:
  + **£100** EACH DAY for Friday and Saturday 11th & 12th September.
  + **£50** for Sunday 13th September.

A copy of the [SFLS Conference 2015 booking form](http://www.folklifestudies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SFLS-Conference-2015-booking-form.doc) is available through the link or can be printed out below. A copy of the [SFLS Conference 2015 programme](http://www.folklifestudies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SFLS-Conference-2015-programme-190815.doc) is available through the link or can be printed out below.

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**BOOKING FORM**

The Society for Folk Life Studies

**Annual Conference**

**Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands, England:**

**10th to 13th September 2015**

I/We wish to attend the 2015 annual conference:

Name/s: ……………………………………….........................................................

Address: ……………………………………………………………….........................

……………………………………………….............................................................

Telephone: ……………………..... E-mail: …………………………………......…….

I/We understand that the total cost of the conference will be:

WITH ACCOMMODATION:         **£399** for single occupancy of a room

**£315** per person for two people sharing a room

WITHOUT ACCOMMODATION:  **£200** per person

DAY RATES (with lunch and dinner, but NO accommodation) are available at:

* + **£100** EACH DAY for Friday and Saturday 11th & 12th September.
  + **£50** for Sunday 13th September.

Please book ….. place(s) with / without accommodation and I/we enclose a non-returnable deposit of £100 per person.

I understand that the remainder of the conference fee will be due for payment **by** **1st August 2015.**

Dietary requirements: ……………………………………………………………..

Mobility requirements: …………………...............................................................

***Please return this form with payment or notification of BACS transfer to:***

**Steph Mastoris, National Waterfront Museum, Oystermouth Road, Maritime Quarter, Swansea SA1 3RD**([steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk))

Please pay either by **cheque** payable to *The Society for Folk Life Studies*or **BACS transfer** to the Society’s bank account: Sort code:  40-35-18 Account number:11226363 *(Please identify the transfer as ‘Conference 2015 + [your surname]’)*

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**Annual Conference**

**Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands, England:**

**10th to 13th September 2015**

*Enjoying the Graft – canals and steam power as leisure and heritage attractions*

*Authenticity and Utility – the challenges of building conservation on heritage sites*

*The Black Country – landscape and identity*

The conference venue is the **Black Country Living Museum**

(Tipton Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 4SQ)

<http://www.bclm.co.uk>

The conference hotel the **Premier Inn, Dudley**

(Castlegate Business Park, Castlegate Way, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 4TA)

**PROGRAMME**

***DRAFT: 19-8-2015***

**THURSDAY, 10th  September**

*17.15-18.00                 Registration at the Black Country Living Museum*.

18.00-18.05            **Linda Ballard** (President, Society for Folk Life Studies)

*Welcome to the 2015 annual conference.*

18.05-18.30            **Andrew Lovett** (Director and Chief Executive, Black Country Living Museum)

*Welcome and introduction to the Black Country Living Museum.*

18.30-19.15            **David J Eveleigh** (Director of Collections, Learning & Research, Black Country Living Museum)

*An Introduction to the Black Country.*

*19.30            Dinner in Belaggio’s, ‪Birmingham Road, Castlegate Park, Dudley DY1 4TA‬*

**FRIDAY, 11th  September**

09.00  Assemble at the Black Country Living Museum.

09.00-09.05**Linda Ballard** (President, Society for Folk Life Studies)

*Introductory remarks.*

09.05-09.50            **Dr Paul Collins** (Local historian)

*Black Country Canals.*

Waterways played vital role in the development and daily life of the Black Country. Without the canals there would scarcely have been a Black Country at all. The ill-defined area that forms the Black Country lacked any navigable rivers, but sat upon untold mineral wealth in the form of an incredibly thick ten yard seam of coal, plus clay, iron ore and other minerals, plus stone which outcropped at or near to the surface. The canals unlocked this potential and made much that followed, from around 1770 onwards, possible. This talk will take the form of a brief voyage along the Black Country’s seven main canal routes. Some of these no longer exist, and many of the industries and activities seen are consigned to history. But all is not lost. A lot of the Black Country’s canals are still in water and in use, often through the dedication and persistence of the various canal trusts which have been formed since the 1950s.

9.50-10.30            **Nick Haynes** (Chairman of the Friends of *President*)

*Steam Boat* President *– from working boat to preservation.*

Steam boat *President* was built in 1909 at a cost of £600 by Fellows Morton & Clayton at Saltley Dock in Birmingham. She is 70 feet long and 7 feet wide with a working draft of 3 feet 6 inches and has a composite hull with riveted wrought-iron sides and a 3 inch elm bottom.  Fellows, Moreton & Clayton’s fleet of steamers ran non-stop between London and the Midlands in 54 hours with an all-male crew.  President was converted to diesel in 1925 and eventually finished her working life as a maintenance boat on the Macclesfield Canal. She was recovered in a derelict state, restored in 1974 and then purchased by the Black Country Living Museum in 1983. Since then, through the support of the Friends of President, the boat has been seen all over the waterways in the UK both promoting the Museum and the traditional way of life on the canal system.

*10.30–11.00   Tea & coffee.*

11.00-11.45            **Mel Weatherley** (Head of Learning, Black Country Living Museum)

*Real Lives, Real Stories – working lives as a learning resource.*

How do we create meaningful learning experiences within a living history setting? Mel will start by describing some of the key principles in interpretation that she uses to develop new learning programmes. She will then apply these to the Museum’s canal and boat collection, showing how a focus on real people and their stories can lead to a deeper level of engagement and understanding. This is a work in progress, and Mel will discuss the challenges and pitfalls as well as the huge rewards.

11.45–12.30            **Dr John Beckerson** (Senior Curator, Black Country Living Museum)

*From Wakes Week to Heritage Tourism – the Isle of Man steam railways.*

The railways of the Isle of Man were built to serve the booming tourist industry of the late 19th century. In the years before the First World War, millions of Lancashire cotton workers flocked to the island, playground of the north-west. A network built from 1873 survived with original rolling stock until partial closures of the 1960s, still using an original mix of steam, electric and horse traction. Unusually, most of the network, especially the electric railway, was built for pleasure from its earliest days. Perhaps this played a part in its preservation: for although tourism in the Isle of Man sagged in the late 20th century, and the railways nearly collapsed, the system retained enough of its original purpose to survive. It emerged by the 1980s into a renaissance of heritage tourism. This paper gives an overview of this unusual story.

12.30-13.15            **Dr Heather Holmes** (Web Officer, Society for Folk Life Studies)

*Working into Steam Preservation: steam ploughing in Scotland.*

This paper traces the long journey in Scotland from steam ploughing as a working practice to part of the steam preservation movement, and to working steam within that movement. Working steam in Scotland ended in the mid twentieth century with the last set of engines reported at work in East Lothian in 1951. However, steam ploughing as a working practice within preservation did not take place until nearly half a century later; the first public demonstration with matched engines took place in October 2014. How did steam ploughing engines enter preservation in Scotland? What role do they have within the steam preservation movement there? What were the factors that shaped the journey in preservation to working in preservation? What does steam ploughing in preservation look like in Scotland and how does it differ from working steam?

*13.15   Buffet lunch at Black Country Living Museum.*

14.15-17.30            **An exploration of the Black Country Living Museum**

14.30            Dudley Canal Trust limestone cavern tour.

15.30            Rolling mill demonstration.

16.00            Chain making demonstration.

16.15             Tour of museum.

*17.30      Autumn punch drinks reception at the Bottle & Glass Inn.*

*18.00      Supper and entertainment at the Bottle & Glass Inn.*

21.00            Return to hotels.

**SATURDAY, 12th September**

09.00 Assemble at the Black Country Living Museum.

09.00-09.45            **Harriett Devlin** (Birmingham City University)

*Care and Conservation – the challenges of managing the historic built environment.*

In this lecture Harriet will discuss the problems confronting not only the corporate but also the private home owner when trying to do the ‘right thing’ for their property. The impediments, the frustrations and the great rewards inherent in looking after Britain’s magnificent historic environment for future generations to enjoy.

09.45-10.30            **Steve Burrow** (Head of Historic Properties, St Fagans National History Museum)

*Valuing visitors and caring for the collections. Case studies from St Fagans.*

This paper will look at the current issues that St Fagans faces as an attraction which seeks both to preserve the past and to satisfy the demands of an audience which has increased substantially in the last ten years. It will look at how approaches to authenticity have changed in St Fagans since its foundation, and will review how the early values of the museum are being applied to resolve difficult contemporary issues relating to accessibility and usability of spaces.

*10.30-11.00   Tea & coffee*

11.00-11.45            **David McDougall** (Formerly Assistant Curator, Black Country Living Museum)

*Progress Brick by Brick – the early challenges of building construction at the Black Country Living Museum.*

The early years in the development of the Black Country Living Museum were a time of experiment in brick building reconstruction bringing together existing best practice from the other new style open air museums and improving upon it. A new system of recording, dismantling, cleaning, numbering and storing complete brick buildings was developed in house to achieve brick by brick reconstruction of entire shops, houses, workshops and even the Museum’s pub. Pioneering work with ‘original formula’ lime mortars in authentic mixes was considered vital to achieve the Museum’s aims and gave the ‘village’ the appearance of having ‘always been there’ which confuses visitors to this day.

David McDougall’s contribution uses his own original images from the first construction phase to show the brick by brick process in detail noting its successes, the occasional failures and the compromises. A mini travelling brick library will accompany the presentation along with lime mortar samples and examples of domestic ironmongery such as locks, hinges and screws.

11.45-12.30            **Irene De Boo** (Curator of Industry & Transport, Black Country Living Museum)

*Sarehole Mill – an eighteenth century water mill fit for the twenty first century.*

Sarehole Mill is one of only two working watermills left in Birmingham. The mill is a quite typical for the area – in the way it was built and laid out and also in having an industrial as well as a corn milling past. However, the mill has some interesting historic connections, one with Matthew Boulton and one with JRR Tolkien. By the 1960s Sarehole Mill had fallen into ruin, although important milling machinery was still in situ. As with so many old industrial buildings at the time, the mill was threatened with demolition to make way for new housing but was saved with help of a local campaign. The mill was then restored and opened as a museum in 1969. Forty years later the mill and its water provision were again part of a restoration project, this time with the aim to become a flour-producing watermill supplying to local bakers and shops. This paper will look into the history of the mill and into the conservation challenges faced over time and how the approach to conserving the building and its machinery changed over the years.

12.30                                    **Excursion:** led by David J Eveleigh

12.45 Arrive at The Bell, Birmingham Road, Walsall for lunch.

14.45 Arrive at the Walsall Leather Museum, Walsall.

16.00 Arrive at the Locksmith’s House, Willenhall, Tea and tour of the workshops and house.

17.00 Coach returns to hotel.

18.45            Arrive at Black Country Living Museum

*19.00            Dinner**and a night of Black Country entertainments at the Museum*

22.00            Return to hotel.

**Sunday, 13th September**

*Information regarding church services will be available for those wishing to attend*

09.00  Assemble at the Black Country Living Museum

09.00-09.45             **Annual General Meeting** of the Society for Folk Life Studies.

09.45-10.30            **Graham Worton** (Keeper of Geology, Dudley Museum & Art Gallery)

*The Black Country – A global destination based upon its cultural and natural heritage.*

The history of the Black Country has its being firmly rooted in what geologists refer to as  ‘deep time’ Occasionally earth’s processes conspired to concentrate minerals and fossils into rock layers that become ‘special’ on a global scale. The Black Country is one such place. The geology here has had profound implications on shaping the Black Country landscape. It has defined its topography, laid the courses of the rivers and established the most concentrated storehouse of mineral wealth below its fields of anywhere in Europe. This paper will outline the special nature of that geological and mineral legacy of the area and describe the Global Geopark application process that aims to raise the area’s international profile as a new global destination for geotourism.

*10.30-11.00            Tea & Coffee*

11.00-11.35**Helen Taylor** (Acting Curator of Domestic & Cultural Life, Black Country Living Museum)

*Myths & Legends – Black Country Identity.*

The Black Country is an area in the West Midlands, defined by its history of heavy industry and abundant useful minerals, including its famous ‘thick coal’ seam. It is also an area often considered by its inhabitants to be separate from Birmingham, despite its close interdependence in trade. The physical boarders of the Black Country are endlessly debatable, as are many of the other myths and legends that surround Black Country identity. Are Black Country accents the same as those from Birmingham? Did the name Black Country really come from Queen Victoria herself? Does the region still maintain a powerful local identity even after the reduction in heavy industry which gave it its name? Does its industrial past still inform its current sense of place? This paper will explore some of these issues, and reflect on the role of industrial graft in the culture of a region that still thinks of itself as distinctive and different.

11.35-12.10            **Sarah Blowen**

*Spies, debtors, Jacobites and cross-dressers: French industrial espionage in eighteenth-century Britain*

Technological innovation – the ‘Industrial Revolution’ - had made Britain the envy of Europe, especially our neighbours across the channel. This paper uncovers French efforts to emulate British successes during the eighteenth century. From state-sponsored espionage to daring raids, attempts to bridge the commercial gap were well organised and orchestrated. Smuggling out machines and lifting industrial processes is only half the story: artificers also had to be ‘enticed’ to France in order to run and make them. This was a skill necessitating a very special kind of spy and artisan. Debtors, Jacobites, misunderstood geniuses and cross-dressing nobles: fascinating human stories reveal much about the culture of Britain and France at a time of great social and economic change. We will see how espionage activities played a fundamental role in shaping the direction taken by industrial production in Britain and how it sharply transformed trades which had been gently evolving in regions like the Black Country for decades. This paper will reflect on the way in which this marks a significant shift in our relationship with material culture and how craftsmanship and community are fundamentally changed. So, how exactly does a researcher track down shadowy spies and smuggled spinning machines?  This is also the tale of research outside the comfort zone, with code-breaking in the archives, lock-ins in after-hours museums and priceless discoveries in cupboards at Royal Brierley Crystal…

12.10-12.45            **Dr Dafydd Roberts** (National Slate Museum, Llanberis)

*Banbury - Birthplace of the Railway Preservation Movement*

The Castle Quay shopping centre in Banbury describes itself as ‘The hub of Banbury’s community’, and includes all you would expect to find in a busy, attractive shopping centre that straddles the Oxford Canal. Also encased within it is something far more unusual : this is Tooley’s Boatyard, the oldest working dry dock on the inland waterways system in the UK. The links with canal usage, past and present, are obvious. There is, though, another link here with heritage transport, and specifically with the west coast of Wales.

12.45-13.00    Concluding remarks.

*13.00            Lunch at the Black Country Living Museum*

*End of conference*