

Crossness Sewage Pumping Engines 15th July 2016.

In the early nineteenth century, London's water supply and the Thames were heavily polluted with sewage. This resulted in several cholera outbreaks during which up to 20,000 people died annually. In 1858, Parliament instructed the newly formed Metropolitan Board of Works to remedy this situation.

Joseph Bazalgette, the then Engineer of the MBW, was charged with finding a solution to these problems. He built 85 miles of new sewers which intercepted the many smaller sewers that ran into the Thames, and took the effluent to the East of London where it was discharged into the Thames and flowed out to sea. This required a number of pumping stations. The shell of the pumping station at Abbey Mills, North of the river, still exists but none of the original pumping plant remains. South of the river there was a pumping station at Deptford, which has essentially disappeared, but the station at Crossness remains relatively untouched except for the ravages of time.

We had a great tour which started with a film/slide show and talk, followed by tea and biscuits. We then split into groups for a guided tour of this wonderful building. The steam engines are truly remarkable one of which has been restored to working order.

