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IN MEMORIAM RICHARD HILLS MBE (1936-2019)

Richard Hills, one of the founders of BAPH thirty years ago, sadly died in May of this year. He was a truly remarkable man who I was proud to have known for forty years. Richard Hills was born in Lewisham, south-east London, where his father, Leslie, was an Anglican vicar, but spent his childhood in the care of an aunt in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, after his mother, Peggy, died of cancer when he was two. (Figure 2)

From an early age, he was fascinated with mechanical toys, whether making model aircraft on the nursery window sill, arranging layouts for model trains or taking clocks to pieces. At school, he started making a 3½ inch gauge working model of the 1830 *Invicta* steam engine. Richard was educated at Charterhouse school, in Surrey, read history at Queens' College, Cambridge and served as a lieutenant in the Royal Artillery on national service from 1955 until 1957. As a Second Lieutenant during the 1956 Suez crisis from where he was sent to Lydd-on-Sea to supervise the accommodation for Territorial Army units practising shooting on the Dungeness ranges.

He started training as a teacher at Cambridge and became a keen mountain climber (Figure 3) but nearly lost a leg in a rock fall while leading an Outward Bound party on Great Gable, in the Lake District. He returned to teaching after bone and skin grafts and a year's convalescence. After stints at schools including Worcester College for the Blind (now New College Worcester), he took a diploma in the history of science and technology at Imperial College, London, which led to the first of his 15 books, *Machines, Mills and Uncountable Costly Necessities* (1967), a history of the drainage of the Fens. Meanwhile, he continued to develop his passion for rebuilding ancient machinery, which had started at school with work on his personal transport graduating he graduated from a vintage motorbike through

various old Alvis cars to a 1924 Lancia Lambda which he repaired, maintained and ran for 52 years.

Richard Hills has made a remarkable contribution to many different fields in the history of technology over the past fifty years, and in the field of the history and analysis of paper and its making, his contribution has been extraordinary. He was a stalwart of the International Association of Paper Historians, being President of that organisation from 1984-88 and then Honorary Vice President. Together, with a few others, we founded the British Association of Paper Historians in 1989 with Richard serving as our first Chairman and later President.

Besides his numerous articles and international conference papers on various aspects of the history of paper and its making, Richard is author of what has become the standard text on the history of papermaking in Britain, *Papermaking in Britain, 1488-1988: A Short History*, published by The Athlone Press in 1988. He was closely involved with The Paper Publications Society (The Labarre Foundation), publishers based in Hilversum and Amsterdam

who between 1950 and 1993 produced a major series of reference works dedicated mainly to watermarks, under the title *Monumenta Chartae Papyraceae Historiam Illustrantia*. He edited *Paper Mould and Mouldmaker*, the groundbreaking work on the history of the hand papermaking mould by his good friend, the Dutch paper historian, Edo Loeber, which was published by the Paper Publications Society in 1982, which has proved invaluable to paper historians around the world.

Having always possessed a wish to know and discover how things work, particular those of a mechanical nature, led Richard into a working life much dominated by engineering and the history and development of technology and the desire to pass that knowledge on to oth-



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Notes to contributors

The journal exists to publish your researches, so please let us have your contributions: articles, reviews, letters and miscellaneous items, however long or short. For the best ways of submitting your contributions please contact the editor. I look forward to hearing from you.

BAPH now has a reciprocal publishing agreement with the International Association of Paper Historians. All articles published in either BAPH's *The Quarterly* or IPH's *International Paper History* can be published in the other journal. Contributions to *The Quarterly* are accepted on this understanding.

The views expressed in individual articles are not necessarily those of either the editors of *The Quarterly* or of The British Association of Paper Historians.

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Figure 1: Richard Hills MBE (1936-2019)

ers. It was after his move to Manchester in 1965, following acceptance of a Research Assistanceship to study the history of the textile industry, offered by Donald Cardwell, then Reader in History of Science and Industry at what was shortly to become The University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), that he became aware, from Cardwell, of plans for a new science museum in Manchester. A project to bring education in science and technology for all ages and abilities had been of great interest to Richard for many years and thereafter he was closely involved with the scheme.

This was to become the North Western Museum of Science and Industry which opened during 1969 in Manchester. As the museum's first curator Richard amassed a hoard of mechanical marvels with unflagging skill and enthusiasm. "If we can't sell it, give it to Dr Hills," became a standard line for modernising businesses, including for example *The Guardian* newspaper, faced with the question of what to do with redundant machinery. Although primarily an academic and teacher, Richard became Britain's expert on where to find space for historically vital but temporarily unloved leviathans, gifting Manchester knowledge mixed with fun. Patient and meticulous, he also tracked down archives telling the story of the world's first industrial city and found



Figure 2: *Richard at the age of 3, after the death of his mother.*

display room for humble components, pins or spanners, that had played their part. But his heart was in exhibits that actually worked, engines puffing, looms spinning. An infectious networker, he brought home a Manchester-built locomotive from the Isle of Man in 1975 with the help of a cousin who was a member of the House of Keys; he later flew to South Africa to secure a 120-ton Beyer-Garratt locomotive, dating from 1929, one of the 1,116 built in Gorton, the industrial quarter of Manchester. He arranged the engine's passage just in time on a boat that had been due to carry oranges.

Once acquired, a major task was to plan how to put them on display when the positioning and describing of a wide selection of exhibits on display was vital and needed accuracy in their description; this was particularly so where there were active demonstrations of such as steam engines and mill machinery in operation and the manufacture of paper and textiles. To include this element of a working museum was of particular importance if a primary objective of the Museum, the introduction of the general public (and not least its children) to an interest in industrial history and archaeology (subjects hitherto much neglected), was to be realised. The success of the venture was evident for, by 1983, when it eventually moved from its cramped accommodation in Grosvenor Street, the Museum had been visited by over half a million people, enthusiastic in particular about the many working machines and demonstrations on display.

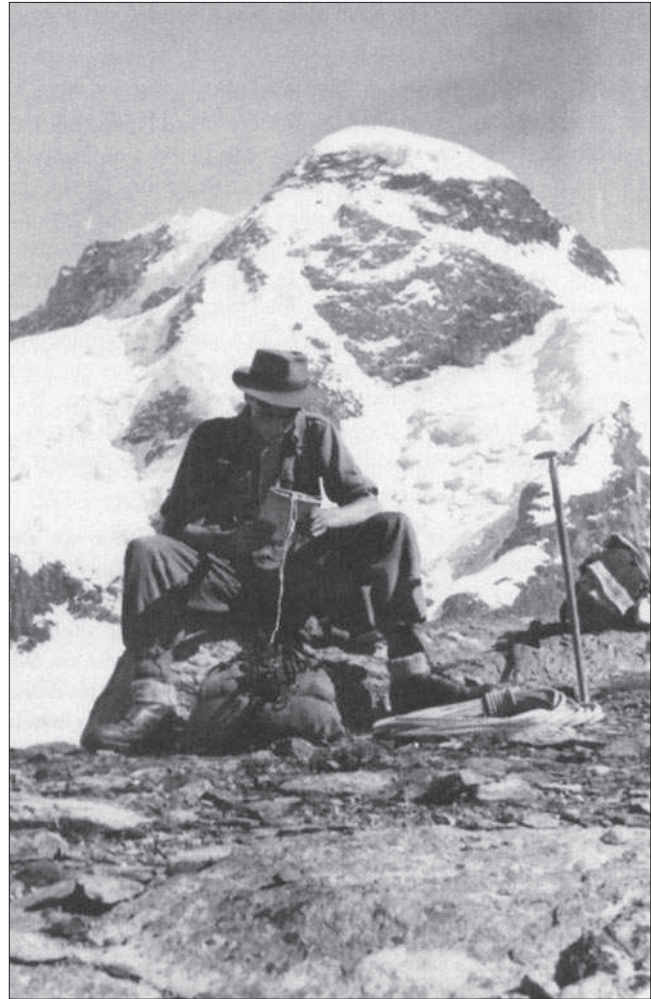


Figure 3: *Richard in the Alps in 1958.*

In 1964, before the North Western Museum was opened, the Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society (MRIAS) was founded, also by UMIST, for which Richard again assumed responsibility. This was a pioneer society aimed at one of his principal objectives – making available to a general public becoming interested in the comparatively new study of industrial history and archaeology monthly meetings and lectures, site visits, on-site recording, etc. in pursuance of that interest. After 50 years, MRIAS continues as strongly as ever, with regular monthly meetings and visits to sites. In fact, over this period a significant interest has developed nationally in industrial history.

By the late-1970's, the original museum buildings in Grosvenor Street had become seriously inadequate to cater not only for growing numbers of visitors, but also the number of its exhibits and the size of some of them, necessitating storage until larger premises could be found. At that time, a large site originally that of Liverpool Road Station, within a half-mile of Manchester city centre and famous as terminus in 1829 of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway the World's first railway station, with its original 1st Class Waiting Room and its 1830 Warehouse, had become vacant. In the first place, it was essential that such an important site in the city's history be preserved, but iconically as the future location of what was to be renamed as the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI). In negotiations for its eventual pur-



Figure 4: Dr. Richard Hills, Dard Hunter III, Henk Voorn, Dr. Peter Tschudin (partly hidden behind) George Mandl, at the 1988 IPH congress held in Durham and Hertford, where the idea for the British Association of Paper Historians was conceived.

chase by Greater Manchester Council, Richard's pioneering work in particular in establishment of the museum originally in Grosvenor Street and his active work as a member both of the Victorian Society in Manchester MRIAS played a vital role in securing such an appropriate site for this museum on a site with such potential for future expansion (it already boasts an aeronautical museum with aircraft displayed including a 4-engined Avro Shackleton).

In 1983, after existing buildings had been adapted or new ones built that the whole collection was moved from Grosvenor Street and previously-stored acquisitions put on display at MOSI. It was very appropriate that the former Goods Shed of Liverpool Road Station was adapted, at Richard's suggestion, to become the revisited museum's impressive Power Hall with the capacity to accommodate some of the largest textile mill steam engines and the like and it was therefore very appropriate that he had the honour of conducting HM the Queen around it on her visit to MOSI in 1983. Of the many impressive exhibits now on display with which he has been connected, one of his last has proved to be one of most attraction to visitors. For several years, he had been involved in securing for the museum the archives of the famous Manchester locomotive-builders, Beyer, Peacock of Gorton, having also published a history of the company.

In 1983, with the move to Liverpool Road secured, he retired as director. He wanted more time for writing: the resulting books included a three-volume biography of James Watt (2002-05) and for leading hill-walking groups, and to train as an Anglican priest. After ordination in 1988, he worked in parishes in industrial Urmston, Trafford and Great Yarmouth, and finally in Mottram in Longdendale, on the edge of the Peak District, where he lived in a 17th-century weaver's cottage full of industrial relics in various stages of repair.

What distinguishes Richard Hills is not just the range of his interests, from papermaking, engineering, mills, railways, industrial archeology and the history of technology, but also the depth of his scholarship in all these different fields, and in his modesty regarding his own achievements. But above all it lies in his generosity of spirit, in his co-operation and collaboration with other researchers around the world. Over the past thirty years most of the important paper history publications, by other authors, whether books or learned articles, have acknowledged his contribution. The essence of the man can be seen in what he has given, without thought of any reward, save knowing that he had moved his field of study on.

The education of the public, in particular children, into the simple mystery of how a sheet of paper was made was always been very important to him. On a different level, his researches into early Spanish papermaking practices, the interrelationship between the technology used and the resulting paper, have been groundbreaking. This is not just an esoteric, academic byway, but has had profound implications in a much wider world, that of the attribution and dating of works of art, books and documents. Museums, galleries, paper conservators, art historians and curators have benefited, either directly or indirectly, through Richard's researches and those of others whom he helped with his knowledge, clarity of mind and above all his generosity. One of his important services to our field was editing and seeing through to publication, by Variorum, in 1993 of *Studies on the History of Papermaking in Britain*, the collected essays of Alfred Shorter, which brought together all Shorter's articles from many different, often quite obscure, Journals. Besides his involvement with the International Association of Paper Historians and the British Association of Paper Historians Richard was also a Member of Council of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, Chairman and then Secretary of the Manchester Region



Figure 5: Richard and Bernice in Richard's lovingly restored 1924 Lancia Lambda.

Industrial Archeology Society, Member of the Council and Chairman of the North West Branch of the Newcomen Society for the History of Engineering, Member

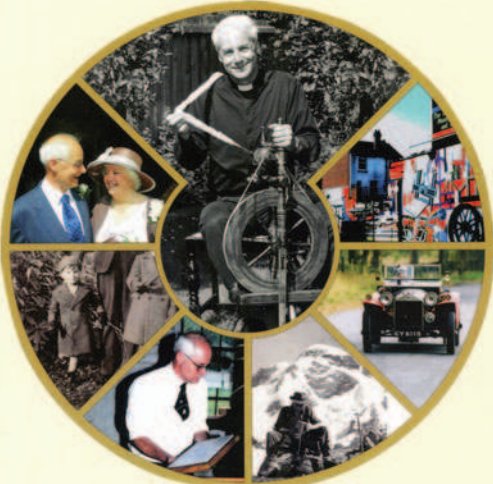
of the Council of the Manchester Association of Engineers and Secretary of the Society of Ordained Scientists.

On a personal level, I was first in contact with Richard in the late 1970s, when I was making paper by hand commercially in Hertfordshire, but it was not until the February 1989 BAPH founding meeting at Butlers Court that we actually met. Over the years we collaborated on several areas of research, including the early nineteenth century French, Austrian and German forgeries of Whatman paper and the development of early wove paper for James Watt's copying machine by Harriet Lea of Hurcott Mill in Worcestershire. Richard Hills was a remarkable man, whose scholarship, enthusiasm, modesty and quiet humour need to be honoured. His contribution to the understanding of paper and its making has been immense. He has been a major force for changes in understanding, education and collaboration throughout the world, which has seriously altered how the use of paper and its manufacture is understood. In terms of the study of paper history Richard Hills was unique. He brought a technological clarity to the intricacies of a very complex subject, making it understandable to those that need to know. For all his work in various fields he was awarded the MBE for Services to Industrial Heritage in the New Year's Honours List of 2015.

When he was 72 Richard met and married Bernice Pickford in 2008 and they had 8 years together before she died from cancer in 2016. As therapy after her death he was encouraged to write his autobiography, *The Seven Ages of One Man*, which was published in 2018. The book takes you on his journey from his childhood right through to the death of Bernice and the start of writing the book. (Figure 5) It gives you a wonderful picture of a kind and complex man.

Peter Bower

The Seven Ages of One Man
or
**How one man started the Museum
of Science and Industry in
Manchester**



Richard L. Hills MBE
Ph.D., M.A., D.I.C., Dip.Ed., C.I.Mech.E., F.M.A.
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