



## *Mayfield Heritage Group*

On Monday 18th April thirteen members and guests visited the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust Exhibition in Derby. The Heritage Trust was formed in 1981 to preserve and promote the history and engineering excellence of RR and now has 2,500 members worldwide.

The exhibition we visited is on the site where several foundries once stood and is housed inside the buildings of what remains the Light Alloy Foundry. Our group was welcomed by visits officer Jayne Rogers who introduced us to our guides. We were split into two groups and started the tour with a brief history of origins of the famous RR brand.

Charles Stewart Rolls was of landed gentry descent, he was a founder member of Automobile Club of Great Britain. Rolls was also a pioneer aviator. In 1910 he became the first man to make a double non-stop crossing of the English Channel. The following month, aged 32, Rolls was killed in an air crash.

Henry Royce was from more humble stock. He had just one year of formal education. In 1878 Royce started an apprenticeship with the Great Northern Railway company. In 1884 he started a business in Manchester making electrical fittings. Royce bought a French motor car in 1901 and as the car did not meet his exacting engineering standards he decided to make a car himself. Rolls and Royce were introduced in 1904 and as they say; "The rest is history"

The Trust has acquired, and displays, in chronological order, aero engines and memorabilia from many different manufacturers dating back to the earliest days of aviation. The early engines were so heavy and cumbersome they caused us to wonder how the flimsy aircraft ever managed to get off the ground. Our group slowly worked our way through the history of the aero engine, from the early heavy cast iron models right through to the huge jet engines of today. It was mentioned that the Tiger Moth frequently seen in the skies over Mayfield has an 'upside down' Gypsy engine - John, our guide, soon showed us two of these.

The RR piston engines were named after birds, probably the most well known of these is the Merlin. More than 160,000 Merlin engines were produced during WW2, several thousand were made under license in America. A modified version of the Merlin was produced to power army tanks such as the Comet and the Centurion.

One of the first jet engines designed by Sir Frank Whittle was on display along with rocket motors and a full scale model of a Spitfire. Several cars are on display, in addition to the RR cars there are various models from Armstrong Siddeley.

The final leg of the tour was to view the huge jet engines. RR named all the jet engines after rivers 'running freely and smoothly' The largest engine we saw was the Trent.

In 1971 the company produced the RB211 turbo fan engine. Orders were placed by Lockheed with strict dead line penalties. These were not met resulting in RR going into liquidation and consequently being nationalised. David Holt was personally involved in the transaction. David was a junior manager at Lloyds Bank in London, he was tasked to get to Derby by first class rail, pick up a cheque for millions of pounds and get back to London the same day. RR remained in public ownership until 1987 when it was privatised as Rolls-Royce plc.

In addition too the aero business RR design and manufacture diesel engines and design boats for use by the oil industry. The last display featured an overhead crane, electric motors and electrical fittings all designed and manufactured in Manchester by Henry Royce before he entered into the car and aviation business.

The interest shown by the group resulted in the tour taking almost twice the time allotted.

*F. P. S.*