

Don't you just love it when a plan comes together?



Systems company ISTEEL provided automation & management system to support Metro manufacture.

Today was our fourth session of volunteering at Gaydon to assimilate the ISTEEL artefacts into their impressive archive of British motoring history. Today's session in modern parlance was focused on "data cleansing", revisiting the archive data records we have created so far to correct typos, ensure every artefact is recorded correctly and add details where appropriate to give our future audience a more rounded view of ISTEEL as it was.

Quite a bit of the session today was spent identifying, and distinguishing between the "Creator" of the artefact and its "Donator". This is an area where we had been a bit lapsed when we documented the artefacts last year, but an area of importance to an archive such as BMM's where adherence to standards is key to maintaining its accreditation as an archive.

We also learnt about the Creators Profile facility in Axiell so spent some time reviewing the creator we had identified, nationalising the names to remove near duplicates and then extracting from the Remembering ISTEEL website data that can be used to populate the Biography/Description field which will also be added to Axiell. So another very productive session and we now have a total 651 artefacts of which 286 are designated to go in the archives, 356 will go in the artefacts available for display in the museum galleries. There are 9 recorded artefacts which we still have to process and 225 for which we only have electronic copies and their future is yet to be decided.

As well as the detailed work on the archive data we were pleased to have several conversations with the BMM archive staff which highlighted their view of the significance that a small organisation such as ISTEEL has in terms of the whole motor manufacturing industry story.

For example, they recently welcomed around seventy visitors to an evening of guided tours of the archives and put on display some of the ISTEEL artefacts to show what is typically the archives.

Another conversation was had with one of the museum curation staff concerning a planned exhibit of the "Hot Hatch" period in the 1980s/90s and how the ISTEEL staff sought the MG Metro Turbos and MG Maestro's as their MCP cars of choice.

Perhaps of more significance to the objectives of our Remembering ISTEEL project was the discussion we had about loading the ISTEEL collection details to their Archive Management system Axiell. The Calm-Axiell archive management software is built on a foundation of international standards for archival and curatorial collections management and represents

a significant step in the future of the museum's overall archiving strategy. We are therefore pleased that the archive team see the ISTEEL data, and the interest we are showing in securing its future, as a good, representative data-set to load to the system to validate their use of the system facilities.

Further, BMM archivists are talking about loading this data within weeks which means we will be seeing tangible benefits from the work we are doing today.

So a really satisfying day all around with enthusiastic talk of "Next we we can....." giving us the incentive to come back next week and see real progress in ensuring the ISTEEL name will survive and the achievements the company are recognised with the history of the British motoring manufacturing industry.

Finally, reflecting on the day back home in the evening, it suddenly struck me that this year it will be forty years since I started work at ISTEEL and relocated my family to Redditch. Moreover, that this year, 2026 for those examining the ISTEEL archives in the future, that long forgotten day now also represents the midpoint of my life.