

Cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions

When the first trains arrived at Crewe on 4 July 1837, Queen Victoria had been on the throne for just two weeks. Crewe therefore developed as a Victorian town with all the ideals associated with this period. Although best known for its rail industry, Crewe had a strong link to the surrounding agriculture as a centre for cheese markets and livestock trading. It was also home to Rolls Royce and now the Bentley motor factories.

The heritage of the railway is celebrated at the Crewe Heritage Centre which was established in 1987, as part of the Crewe Heritage Festival on the original Crewe Works. The centre is home to three signal boxes making the site unique as it spans the history of rail signalling. It also houses a miniature railway, model railway a number of locomotives. These include the only surviving Advanced Passenger Trains, including the UK railway speed record holder which was set in December 1979 at a top speed of 261km/hr. Other exhibits include the high-speed power car 43081 which was the 8000th locomotive built at Crewe.

Notable architectural survivals from the development by the railway companies include:

- Thirty Railway Cottages (Grade II listed) built in the 1840s for the workmen who relocated from Edge Hill to establish the Works. The cottages are cared for by the Railway Cottages Residents' Association.
- A Congregational Chapel built in 1847 (Grade II listed), it was purchased in 1931 by the Christadelphians who still worship there.
- The only surviving remnants of the Crewe Works are a trace of the old forge in the wall near Chantry Court and part of a wall at the Heritage Centre.
- Block Houses on Prince Albert Street which housed the families of four engineers per building.
- Christ Church which was begun in 1843 and consecrated in December 1845. The cost was met from the profits from running Sunday trains. The tower was added in 1877 and is Grade II listed. It now houses a ring of 10 bells, recast from the original eight bells. It is one of only five towers to have ten bells in Cheshire.
- The Market Hall built in 1854 as a cheese hall which could handle 2,000 tons of cheese and linked directly to the railway to assist transportation. Now Grade II listed, the Market Hall also traded in corn, butter and bacon before becoming a general market and now a food hall.
- The Municipal Building built in 1905 is also Grade II listed. Needing a permanent home after Crewe became a borough in 1877, the building cost £20,000. The entrance hall and public rooms are still decorated in the original style.
- The current Lyceum Theatre (Grade II listed) was built on the site of the original theatre and opened on 4 September 1911. The original theatre opened on 26 December 1881 but was destroyed by fire in 1910. The theatres have hosted stars including Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel. It is the only Edwardian theatre in Cheshire East.
- Queen's Park was created in 1887 by LNWR to mark Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee and the opening of the Grand Junction Railway. The Park is Grade II* listed.

Other historic structures of interest include:

- Ruskin School, built in 1909.
- Flag Lane Baths, built in 1937.

- The Ursuline Convent, founded by Ursuline Nuns in 1907 and constructed in 1910 in the Arts and Crafts style. The building is Grade II listed.
- Webb House, built in 1911 (Grade II listed) as an orphanage at the bequest of FW Webb to house children of railway workers employed by LNWR who had lost one or both parents due to an accident at work.

In total, there are 33 listed buildings in Crewe, all Grade II.

The most famous part of Crewe's sporting heritage is the Football Club which was established in 1877. In 1892 they became a founding member of the Second Division. Notable players include Frank Blunstone, Bruce Grobbelaar, David Platt and Danny Murphy. There is also a rich tradition of cycling in Crewe. At one time, the town had the second greatest proportion of cyclists in the country, second only to Cambridge. Notable cyclists include Albert Crimes who died in 1985 and still holds three world records and Shanaze Reade who won the UCI BMX World Championships three times after beginning racing at TipKinder Park in the town. Beth Tweddle began competing in gymnastics at the Crewe & Nantwich Gymnastics Club and went on to become World Champion in the uneven bars and floor exercise. While Count Bartelli held the British Empire Commonwealth Heavyweight title in 1969, 1972 and 1981, one of only two men to hold it three times.

Crewe Male Voice Choir and Crewe Brass continue traditions that date back to the 1860s.

The heritage of Crewe is held in public and private collections including Crewe Heritage Centre, the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Service, the Crewe Family History Society, Crewe and District Local History Association, National Railway Museum, The National Archives, Bombardier, Rolls Royce and Bentley. There is a keen social media presence within locals including Crewe Memories, Crewe Then & Now and Crewe in the Past. A Cultural Forum has been running for three years and a Heritage Group advises the Town Council's heritage development. The Cheshire Archives Service are developing stage 2 plans for a state of the art History Centre in the heart of Crewe to be completed in 2025.

Record of innovation

Crewe was a hub of innovation in engineering, design and organisation of large-scale industry. The establishment of the Railway Works secured Crewe's position as a centre of innovation. LNWR wanted to be self-sufficient so by the 1860s, the range of products had expanded from the creation and maintenance of locomotives to include the creation of signals, a soap maker, a leather works, an iron foundry and a brick works, all required for locomotive production. Other products included footwarmers and artificial limbs, developed for staff injured during company service. Crewe became a leading expert in artificial limbs and the hospital's expertise were invaluable during the First World War. By the 1930s the Crewe Works were said to be the biggest in the world.

The issue of industrial diversification was of great concern to the town from as early as 1848 and in the 1890s a sub committee of the Town Council was established to develop a strategy to attract new industries to Crewe. A cloth industry grew up around the production of staff uniforms including fustian cutting factories. By 1919 there were 13 clothing factories.

In the 1860s JH Day relocated his chemical works to Crewe and went on to become the world's leading manufacturers of veterinary pharmaceuticals.

The establishment of the Rolls Royce Aero Engines factory at Crewe in 1938 secured Crewe's place in engineering and innovation. The Rolls Royce Merlin engine powered the Fairey Battle, Hawker

Hurricane, Supermarine Spitfire and Avro Lancaster. The factory in Crewe was built to meet increasing demand with the first leaving the factory in 1939. In total, Crewe produced 26,065 Merlin engines. After the war, the factory moved to car production with the first motor car, the Bentley Mark VI emerging in 1946. It was the first Rolls-Royce Bentley with a standard pressed steel body rather than different bodies. Crewe produced more than 5,000 Mark Vis making it the most successful ever. The site continued to produce dual branded cars until 2002 when Rolls-Royce left Crewe. Bentley continue to produce cars onsite and state they are constantly looking forwards, and in 2020 launched their Beyond 100 manifesto to become the most sustainable luxury automotive brand in the world.

In 1939, production began on Covenanter Tanks through the London, Midland and Scottish Rail Company (LMS) based in Crewe. A mild steel pilot was built at Crewe to enable testing before large scale production began. In 1942, completed 150 revamps of Mk I tanks to Mk II standards in just two months.

In 1962, Bryan Whitby founded Whitby Morrison which is recognised as the world's leading manufacturer of ice cream vans and associated vehicles. Now in its third generation, the company provides vans all over the world from London to Azerbaijan.

Other notable innovations include Owl Telescopes which are on beaches around the country allowing views for 20p.

Associations with Royalty

Royal Transport:

There has been a royal train since 1842. Crewe Works manufactured the London & North Western Railway's Royal Train and were visited by King George V and Queen Mary to see all phases of vehicle manufacture and servicing.

The Royal Train regularly stopped at Crewe and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, were the first royals to stop here in 1848. They stayed in the Crewe Arms Hotel as a first night stopover from London to Balmoral.

Her Majesty the Queen's State Limousine was created by Bentley to mark the 50th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne in 2002.

Royal visits:

- 24 October 2016 – HRH the Princess Royal opened a new research and development building at Bentleys and confectionary manufacturing facility at Wrights Food Group
- 16 April 2013 – HRH the Earl of Wessex visited Bentley and met Cheshire East Council Apprentices
- 19 July 2011 – HRH The Duchess of Gloucester opened the refurbished Queen's Park
- 10 June 2010 – Her Majesty arrived at Crewe Station for a tour of Cheshire
- 9 June 1995 – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- 24 July 1987 – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II & HRH the Duke of Edinburgh opened the site.
- 5 May 1972 – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II opened Leighton Hospital
- 29 August 1940 – George VI and Queen Elizabeth
- 21 April 1913 – King George V and Queen Mary inspecting the new Royal Train

Distinctive features, age, residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure

There is a crater on Mars named after Crewe. It's just under 2 miles wide at 25° South and 10° West.

Ada Nield Chew, a women's rights campaigner began a career of national political significance with her letters as a "Crewe Factory Girl" in 1894.