

The History of Didcot Power Station by Madeleine Loynes January 2015

Didcot Power Station

The talk given by Madeleine Loynes, former Power Station Guide, was extremely informative and delivered to a larger than normal audience, including former employees of the station.

In the 1950's, the government of the day searched for ways of producing clean energy for the nation. Finally, after much debate, in the early 1960's the former Ministry of Defence depot near Didcot was earmarked as a site for a 2000MW Coal Fired Power Station as it was near to the railway for the carriage of coal and the River Thames to provide water. Completed in 1968, it became part of the National Grid in 1970. Over the past 40 years it has provided employment for many thousands of workers and has become a prominent landmark in the Oxfordshire countryside, and for many locals a welcome sight as they realise they are nearly home. The architect was Sir Frederick Gibberd who was also responsible for the Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool and the Central Mosque in London.

Madeleine went on to explain how the station worked, giving out facts and figures such as 4m tons of coal a year was used by the station and technical details about what happens before the electricity is fed into the grid. Didcot could also burn oil and biomass but, after falling foul of a 2001 EU directive, various upgrades allowed the station to work for only a further 20,000 hours and it would have had to close completely by the end of 2015. The very visible community work carried out by the station was also mentioned. As we know, last summer saw the 3 South towers being demolished and the North towers are due to come down this summer.

Thursday February 12th is our next talk to be given by Martin Way and titled "The Agincourt Archer"