

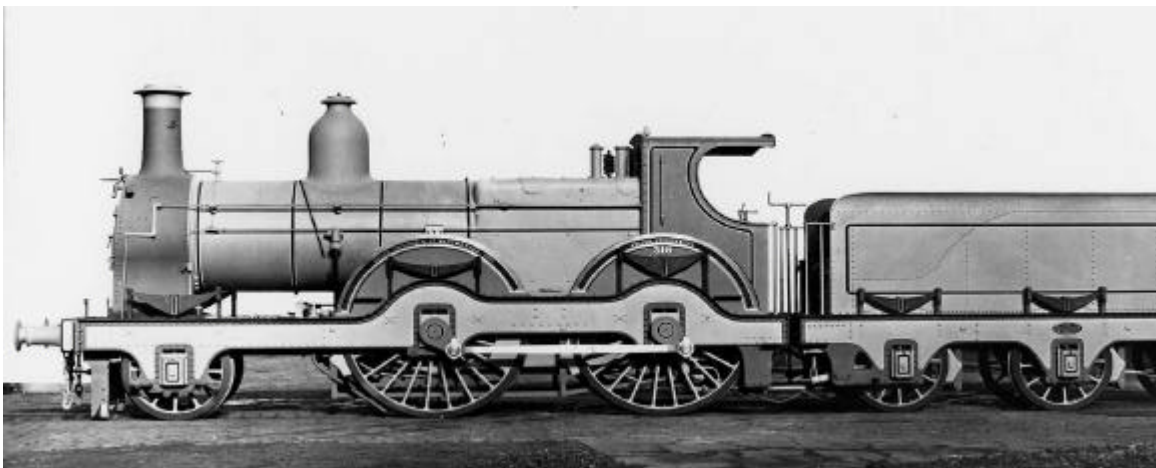
Beyer, Peacock

The Museum holds the records of Beyer, Peacock, whose locomotives still have an international reputation 35 years after the closure of the Gorton works. The Beyer, Peacock archive includes minute books, order books, engineering drawings and photographs.

In 1854 Charles Frederick Beyer and Richard Peacock founded Beyer, Peacock. They started the firm as a mechanical engineering company to make locomotive engines and light machines. They chose to build their factory in Gorton, then a village of 2,000 inhabitants set in meadowland on the east of Manchester.

Beyer (1813-1876) was born in Saxony. His parents were poor handloom weavers but fortunately Beyer was able to attend Dresden Polytechnic. In 1834 Beyer moved to Manchester and began to design locomotive engines for Sharp, Roberts & Co. Richard Peacock (1820-1889) was the son of Ralph Peacock, a Yorkshireman who worked as a foreman in lead mines. In 1830 Ralph left mining to go into railway construction, so Richard Peacock was brought up close to railways. He became an apprentice to Fenton, Murray and Jackson (later E. B. Wilson & Co.), an engineering firm. In 1838 Richard became superintendent of Leeds and Selby Railway, a great responsibility for an 18 year old. In 1840 Leeds and Selby Railway amalgamated with Yorkshire and North Midland Railways and Peacock went to London where he worked briefly for the Great Western Railway.

In 1841 Peacock moved back to Manchester to work on the Manchester and Sheffield Railway, where he was in charge of the locomotive department. Thirteen years later he resigned to go into partnership with Beyer. After some initial problems getting funding for their new company, Beyer and Peacock were joined by Henry Robertson as a sleeping partner. Robertson (1816-1888) was born in Banff, Scotland and had worked as a mining engineer.



Locomotive bound for the Dutch State Railway, 1880.

In July 1855 the first locomotive engine left Gorton. It was made for the Great Western Railway Company and was used on the Paddington to Oxford route. Between 1854 and 1868 Beyer, Peacock built 844 locomotives, of which 476 were exported. The company sold mainly to the colonies, South Africa and South America, but never broke into the North American market.

One of Beyer, Peacock's most successful locomotives was an articulated locomotive called the Garratt. Its designer, H. W. Garratt, had a wide knowledge of locomotive design and construction from his work in various countries including Argentina and Cuba. In 1908 Garratt was granted a patent. Beyer, Peacock had sole rights of manufacture in Britain.

Faced with competition from tramways and electric railways, the company began to look for alternatives so that it was not dependent on one product. It built a few electric locomotives and experimented with road steam wagons but steam locomotives continued to be the firm's main product.

The late 1950s brought a rapid transformation in locomotive manufacture. In 1955 British Rail decided to switch from steam to diesel and overseas railway companies followed suit. Beyer, Peacock all but closed down the Gorton plant at the end of 1958. It had chosen to make diesel-hydraulic locomotives but British Rail opted to use diesel-electric locomotives.



Locomotive for Assam Bengal, c. 1927.

In 1960 Beyer, Peacock's subsidiary companies became members of the Beyer, Peacock Group and Beyer, Peacock Co. Ltd became the holding company. In 1966 all production ceased at the Gorton foundry. Shares in Beyer, Peacock were eventually bought by National Chemical Industries Ltd and in 1980 Beyer, Peacock and Co. Ltd became a dormant company. The name was resurrected in the 1990s as a trading name, based in Devon.

For more information:

- Read** Hills, R. L. and D. Patrick. *Beyer, Peacock: Locomotive Builders to the World*. Glossop, Derbyshire: Venture Press, 1982.
Durrant, A. E. *Garratt Locomotives of the World*. London: David and Charles, 1969.
Heap, Christine J. *Costs, Prices and Profits: A Case Study of Beyer, Peacock & Co., Gorton*. Unpublished MSc thesis, UMIST, 1983
'The Early History of the Company', *Beyer-Peacock Quarterly Review*, April 1927, July 1927, Oct. 1927, Jan. 1928, April 1928, July 1928, Jan. 1929, Oct. 1930, July 1931.
- Visit** The Museum's Power Hall where two Beyer, Peacock locomotives are displayed.