

ALC/R/9

Councillor T. McEwan • Milton Keynes

The Secretary,  
The Institution of Mechanical Engineers,

LONDON, SW1

26th April 1978

Dear Sir,

RE: BUST OF MR. JAMES McCONNELL

I am writing to enquire if you could assist me in locating the bust of James McConnell, who was an outstanding Locomotive Superintendent at the Wolverton Railway works for about 20 years during the mid-19th century.

The bust of James McConnell was displayed for many years in the old Mechanics Institute in Wolverton and I have been reliably informed that it was donated to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers when the Mechanic's Institute closed down in the 1950's.

Largely as a result of a highly successful musical documentary which was presented at Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, last year, it is now more widely realised that the town of Wolverton probably owes more to James McConnell than to any other man. He was an enlightened employer by modern standards, let alone those of the 19th century, who, amongst other things, negotiated the purchase of land for the expansion of Wolverton, authorised the design and construction of numerous houses for railway workers in the suburb known as New Bradwell, founded the Mechanics Institute, and was also responsible for building the famous Bloomer railway-engine at the Wolverton works.

Despite these and other achievements, little trace has been left of McConnell in Wolverton, chiefly because he clashed with Richard Moore?, one-time chairman of the old LNWL, who was set on closing down Wolverton and building smaller, cheaper, but less reliable railway-engines at Crewe instead, in pursuit of higher profits.

A growing number of people in Milton Keynes think that recognition of James " McConnell's achievement is long overdue. Later this year a new shopping and community centre is to be opened in Wolverton, and one would be hard-pressed to think of a better place to display the bust of James McConnell than in this Agora, which is in the centre of Wolverton and yet less than a stone's throw from the railway works which McConnell developed over 120 years ago. Any assistance that you could give in tracing McConnell's bust would be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

T. McEwan