

# Heritage walk reveals workshop treasures

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Calcutta: A 100-year-old telephone directory, a chair in a saloon car used by Rabindranath Tagore and a clock made in London in 1855 were some of the relics in a 125-year-old railway workshop in Liluah that fascinated a group of visitors on Saturday morning.

They were on a heritage walk through the Carriage and Wagon Workshop of Eastern Railway, which is spread across 74 acres near Liluah station. It is a short walk from the Hooghly.

The East Indian Railway Company established the workshop at Howrah in 1863. In 1900, it shifted to its present location at Liluah. The workshop celebrated its centenary year in 2000. It is used for periodic and intermediate overhauling of both AC and non-AC coaches.

Around 8.45am, the tour began from the brick water tank inside the workshop. The tank, which purified the river water and distributed it throughout the railway township, was in use till the mid-80s. "The railway authorities considered it necessary to provide a small township adjacent to the workshop for the benefit of staff and management.

The township consisted of a few spacious bungalows for officers and some staff quarters. The quarters are still in very good condition. The colony is steeped in communal harmony with a church, a mosque and a temple," Yatish Kumar, chief works manager at the workshop, told the group, which included diplomats and senior government officials.

They were taken to the heritage gallery in the main administrative building.

A chair in a saloon coach that Tagore would travel on during his trips between Calcutta and Bolpur was one of the attractions.

A coal hearth from 1902 — a traditional smithy furnace used to heat metal parts for forging, repairing, or bending — is in the workshop.

The century-old telephone directory also turned heads. The telephone num-



The chair from a saloon car used by Rabindranath Tagore; (right) the century-old wooden telephone directory



The working John Walker wall clock, manufactured in 1855. (right) the brick water tank

bers of the officers are written in the wooden directory. When an officer wanted to dial someone, he would rotate the directory to read the correct number.

A classic wall clock made by John Walker, the famous clockmakers from London, is still functional at the gallery. The base has the manufacturing year, 1855, carved on it.

Barbara Voss, German consul general; Maxim Kozlov, Russian consul general; Justice Soumitra Pal, former judge of Calcutta High Court; Adhip Palchaudhuri, chairman and managing director of Balmer Lawrie and Co Ltd; Pranav Prakash, regional director of India Tourism and Rajshekhar Nair, general manager of Braithwaite; were among the participants, alongside senior serving and retired railway officials.

"This walk enriched my knowledge and insight about the minute details of how a colossal 125-year-old heritage workshop silently contributes to running the humongous Indian Railways network of trains and engineering," said Voss.

"Today's walk is exemplary in terms of the vast subjects of heritage interest and offers a lesson on how to preserve and showcase them to all," said Kozlov.

The walk, curated by the Bespoke Architectural and Unique Legacies of Bengal Foundation, was organised on World Heritage Day, celebrated globally on April 18.

"Railways remain a gated community with little scope for outsiders. Today's walk opened up and answered lots of intriguing questions related to its heritage ensemble and precincts," said Samrat Chowdhury of the foundation.