RACHAEL HOYLE:

Rachael Hoyle believes legendary toolmaker, Sir Joseph Whitworth, used his core skills to make the world a better place. Modern day engineers, she says, should aspire to do the same.

Hoyle, a scholar since 2013, did her apprenticeship at BAE Systems and decided to study further because she craved knowledge about the engineering industry. The firm supported her and, over the years, she has used her background in mechanical engineering to move into a project management role at the company.

When Hoyle discovered the Whitworth Scholarship she felt inspired by Sir Joseph’s life. She saw him as someone who may have been an “abrupt and direct character”, but also a man whose intentions were always to advance engineering. In her eyes, Whitworth had the right idea: to merge the spheres of practical experience and theoretical learning.

“Having an understanding of the practicalities of how engineering works, and then to be able to apply the theory in an academic approach, gives a different perspective to problem solving,” she says. “Diversifying how we solve problems can only give us better solutions in the long run.”

Hoyle says obtaining her Whitworth Scholarship had a “massive impact” on her life. It introduced her to a wide group of people who share core values and who want to see progress in the industry.

“It opened my eyes to a world beyond North West England,” she says.

Looking at the wider engineering sector, Hoyle sees perceptions changing. No longer is being an engineer considered “dirty work”, she feels, but rather an “intellectual challenge”. With more diverse role models emerging, diversity will also continue to flourish. She thinks Whitworth would likely be overwhelmed by the progress made over the past 150 years, if he could somehow see it.

“I would hope he would be impressed… but we can always do better.”

Hoyle encourages others to apply for the Whitworth Scholarship.

“It’s a great opportunity,” she concludes. “It brings different kinds of people into the industry. So it’s what you make of it. You get out of it what you put into it.”