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The second thing the museum wrote down was a clockwork thresher

A typographic fact sheet. No photographs.

In January 1951 the Museum of English Rural Life formally recorded its second object. The number it was given, 51/2, is a date and a place in a queue. The object was a small clockwork model of a threshing machine.

From Katesgrove Lane to a handling trolley

It was made around 1847 by Barrett, Exall & Andrewes, at their ironworks in Katesgrove Lane, Reading, as a scale demonstration model of a four-horse-powered thresher. Around 1946 it was transferred from Reading Museum to the University of Reading's Faculty of Agriculture, and spent nearly five years as a teaching aid before joining the new museum. It has since gone out on the Museum's handling trolley. Dr Ollie Douglas tells the story as Object 1 of 51 Voices.

A careful "perhaps," and a harder history

In 1851 the firm "exhibited similar machinery (perhaps including this very model)" at the Great Exhibition. The Museum's object page says they showed "this same type of thresher." Type is certain; this exact model is not. The same essay also records that of rioters in 1830s Berkshire tried for protesting against such technologies, most were imprisoned, a few were transported to Australian prison colonies, and "one was even executed by hanging." At least one, Thomas Mackrell, "would later turn his hand to farming in Tasmania." The Museum links this carefully to settler-colonial land appropriation.

Sources, checked 17 November 2026: Ollie Douglas, "Model Thresher," 51 Voices, Object 1, The MERL; The MERL, "Model thresher," object 51/2. This is not a MERL publication. combine-harvesters.farmyard.im is part of the ReallyByte network, run by REALLYBYTE, based in the Isle of Man. ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless.