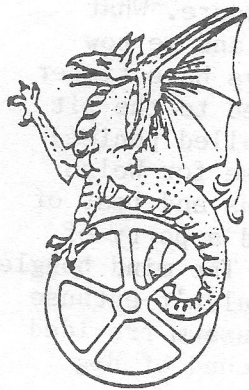


# WESSEX STATIONARY ENGINE CLUB



## NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1989.

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### THE SPANNER

As reported previously my Amanco did not recover from it's lethargy at the Engine Clinic the Club organised at the Old Down Inn a few weeks ago. That was through no fault of the experts who were on hand with much appreciated advice, but the weather closed in on us and time was limited.

There are only two things which prevent such an engine running and those are a) lack of go juice or b) lack of sparko. In my case there often is a third cause... lack of muscle in the arm. However a few nights after the Emborough do, Les Emery came up to Garthside prepared to do battle with the reluctant Hired Man. We had a few swings but apart from some bronchial coughs, no joy resulted, so down to serious thinking. First off we proved the fuel side of the business to be in order with valve and jet both working correctly. That left the ignition being suspect. The magneto was producing a spark alright, albeit a little on the yellow side, while the timing was in line with the recommended tolerance. Although tests with a meter showed no breakdown of the igniter insulation we could not prove this conclusively without a Meggar, and I'm not lucky enough to possess one. Darkness again ensued while both our right arms were several inches longer than the left ones. Next day, after the rush for 14p stamps was over, John Emery very kindly re-energised the magnets from the mag for me. They are strong enough now to extract a five pound note from a Scotsman's sporran, and give a really healthy blue flash. John also let me have a sheet of Paxolin from which I cut a set of new insulation washers for the igniter replacing the old mica set which were cracked and impregnated with oil. All was reassembled and joy unbounded...with the first swing the familiar Amanco banging resounded around the garage. With the engine running again I experimented with timing settings and found that with the timing set any where between half past June and a quarter to Christmas the engine was perfectly happy.

The Hired Man had it's first rejuvenated outing at Timsbury Fete where all went well. My only concern now is, how long will the Paxolin insulation last before it burns away. Still when it does I will at least know what the trouble is. Anyone got any suggestions for more suitable material? Finally thanks for all the help received.

One advantage of being on a continuous holiday (in other words retired from the battle of earning a living) is that it is possible to arrange outings at the less busier times. Our latest was to The Big Pit Mining Museum at Blaenavon in Gwent. I apologise to our South Wales members in advance but I do find the S. Wales valleys rather depressing and it was just my luck after weeks of sunshine to pick a day for the visit when the heavens opened, which made the grey valleys even greyer. As we journeyed up the valley so the clouds appeared to close down on us and all thoughts of a picnic lunch had to be abandoned.

Big Pit was once an NCB mine but closed in the 70's. Now it is run as a charitable trust, staffed by ex-miners and is open to visitors. As mines go, I don't think it is very deep at 294 feet, but the ride down in the cage still has all the thrill one would expect. Visitors are subject to all the mining regulations having to be equipped with hard hat, mining lamp and carbon monoxide mask.

All battery operated watches and cameras together with lighters have to be given up on the surface. Our guide explained that such precautions were not gimmicks for the tourists but a requirement of the Mines Inspectorate. The tour underground lasted about an hour, after which I at least had an appreciation of the harsh conditions miners had to endure. What modern equipment had been installed in Big Pit has long since been recovered and we now see conditions as they might have been some 50 years ago. Many of the roadways have timber supports, and instead of conveyor belts the coal is supposed to be transported to the pit bottom in tubs hauled either by horses (our guide emphasised they were not called ponies) or by cables. Incidentally our guide - appropriately called Trevor - what else for Welsh miner, was first class, being knowledgeable, happy to answer all our questions and best of all a wonderful sense of humour. He told a wonderful tale of how he conducted a party of Chinese visitors, talking to them in Welsh, which he swears they understood. The mind boggles.

The surface exhibits are equally interesting, although I must admit I couldn't enthuse over a hundred odd pit head baths. Never the less the winding gear and museum provided plenty of interest. There is also a souvenir shop where one can purchase a pound of Big Pit coal, gift wrapped for 50p, that's what I call enterprise.

There might even be scope for the engine preservationist as amongst the piles of scrap iron littered about, I spotted one or two pumps with engines, or parts of engines, attached. The rain and black mud prevented proper investigation.

All told it's a well worth while place to visit, but if you have a vivid imagination and think about the millions of tons of rock above you making the timbers squeak as they compress be reassured they haven't lost a visitor yet.... although there's always a first time. Pick a fine day though, and if possible one on which there isn't the inevitable hoard of French school children puffing their Gaulois.

Cheers for now,  
Claude Lowther.

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CLUB DIARY.

Will members please note that the programme of monthly meetings has had to be altered for the next two months and will be as follows:-

- Mon 25th September. The Kennet and Avon Canal. Michael Horsman of Clutton will give a short introduction to canals generally, followed by an armchair journey, using slides, along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Reading to Bristol. Proceeds from the evening talk will go to the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust who are working very effectively with the British Waterways Board towards the restoration of this important inland waterway between London and Bristol. Reopening is due in 1990.
- Mon 30th October. Jim Wilkie makes a return visit to the Club with more of his 'Dustbin Films'. These are vintage films and others from the cutting room floor which he has rescued, the subjects are wide and various.
- Sat 4th November. WSEC SOCIAL EVENING at the Chilcompton Village Hall. A formal dinner is being arranged with outside caterers complete with waitress service. Entertainment will be in the form of 'Music from the Sixties'. There should be an opportunity for dancing if desired. The Committee are still working on the plans so no details of costs are yet available, but please note your diaries.
- Mon 27th November. Slide shows are ever popular and arrangements are being made to meet this demand. If any members have suggestions concerning this evening meeting would they please contact a Committee member.

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THE MARKET PLACE.

FOR SALE Lister 'L' 1913 No. 7258 with Bosch flick mag. Mounted on a good road trailer.  
Has been rallied. £300.

Vic Walton. Bristol (0272) 622025.

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CLUB ACTIVITIES.

Monday 26th June. Emborough Crank Up and Engine Clinic.

After two weeks of scorching weather the evening Crank Up commenced as the weather started to break. It was overcast and cold.

I arrived at 7.30pm to find several engines already running, by the time I had unloaded and set up a few more had arrived. Don Roger's 3hp Petter 'M' was running nicely. Phil Harris was showing for the first time his newly acquired Amanco 2½hp while Eric Gay had his immaculate Amanco 2½hp. Roger Pike's Villiers MK20 Pumping Set didn't need any attention neither did Jeremy Adams Lister 'A'. Next we had a new Club member out for only the second time, Michael Roberts with his immaculate Lister 'D', which saw a few hiccups being sorted out by the 'engine clinic' headed by Eric Gay. No amount of coaxing could keep Claude Lowther's Amanco running, John Emery was spotted on several occasions having a go but it was eventually abandoned. I took along my Petter Universal 2hp and two mowers from my collection, a Shanks Caledonia dating from 1895 and a Green's 'Silens Messor' from 1880.

John Emery went on to win the raffle. As 9.30pm approached most had packed up their engines as the much wanted rain started to fall. All told a most enjoyable evening.

ROY POINTING.

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REVIEW.

THURLOW RALLY - 1987. A FUND RAISING VIDEO

As an avid reader of the Stationary Engine Magazine (especially the advertisements) I had seen some time ago that the Vale of White Horse Preservation Group, based in Abingdon, were advertising video tapes of rallies for club-night entertainment and I thought how enterprising this was as a fund raising activity. Imagine my surprise then, when a few weeks ago I arrived home from a hard day's book-selling to find this video tape on my desk with a note saying "Thought you might like to review this for the Newsletter".

So, to hell with East-Enders, its on with the video to see what it's all about. Well, an hour later I'm thinking that I'd rather have watched Charlie Cotton rip Dot off another fiver, and Frank Butcher flog another dodgy motor than waste time on this incredibly amateur video. I couldn't even see Charlie Cotton flogging these out of a suitcase on the corner of Albert Square.

For starters I could hardly read the out-of-focus title, which was closely followed by a series of close-up shots of bits of people, mostly hands and hats...There was no commentary on the tape. I acknowledge that to produce a meaningful commentary would be difficult on an amateur video, but an unfortunate side-effect is that, at times the ring events commentary comes over load and clear. It of course, bears no relation to any of the shots in view at the time and is broken up by the lapse in time between shots. I found sheep shearing commentary accompanying vintage motorcycles somewhat bizarre.

There are some very good shots of traction engines, both parading and standing, with some equally good quality close ups. However as the video progresses, the shot times tend to get shorter, presumably as the cameraman realises (as we all do) that time is passing and he hasn't seen half of it yet. This poor time planning is presumably the reason for a lot of rather hasty shooting which is marred by a lot of fast focus pulling. Most of the zooming in and out is badly blurred and tends to strain the eyes as they try to compensate.

This particular tape was also faulty about ten minutes from the end, with a few seconds of picture break up, and the end, when it came was just the tape running out. There were no credits, and I could hardly blame whoever was responsible wanting to remain anonymous. For the stationary engine enthusiast there were just eight minutes of stationary engines, mostly spoiled by poor focussing, blurred zooming and over rapid panning. The only consoling thought was that since this video was made in 1987, the cameraman has had a couple of years in which to have hopefully improved his technique. I hope this is the case since at £10, I simply would not recommend this offering as any sort of value for money. An evening of good slides promises more entertainment value than this tape.

TOM RANDALL.

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Club Activities con'd.Mon 31st July. Call My Bluff.

This meeting was not very well attended, about 30 members in all, though this was quite normal for July meetings as it is the peak holiday weeks.

For the ones that did attend, I think the evening was enjoyed by most. "Call My Bluff", a very interesting game of guessing the item from three different explanations given by our three panelists who were Brian Munt, Brian Verrall and Hazel Gitson. Claude Lowther was Chairman.

Seventeen items in all were presented, which ranged from an ointment measure to a belt joiner, a servants whistle to a pump inspection plate, a cork diminisher to a sash weight and many more.

Item Number 10 had to be abandoned as the three explanations were all thrown out by Tom Randall who insisted that the item was an egg inspection device and not as Brian had said. a magic lantern night light. He had paid a fl for this 'magic lantern light'. Someone was calling his bluff I think. However this little deviation caused some hilarity for a while then the game continued.

no one got the maximum points, but John Wheelwright was the highest with 12 correct and won a bottle of wine for his fine effort.

The raffle then took place and a bottle of wine was won by Eric Gay, Chocolates for Mary Verrall, and Jackie Lambert 4 cans of Guinness.

J.J.L.

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The MARKET PLACE 2nd Edition

Wanted. Issues 1 and 2 of Old Glory Magazine  
 Tom Randall Tel 0761 418926 evenings please.

Wanted. Loan of exhaust Rocker Arm from a WITTE Dragsaw engine to use as a pattern for casting a replacement. Any time would be convenient, will collect and deliver.  
 Tom Randall Tel 0761 418926 again evenings please.

Services. Component Cleaning Sevices.  
 Helen Moody is a skilled conservator of all kinds of social history material, principally for museums. Helen now has facilities for Glass Bead Blasting, and chemical cleaning for all types of metal parts. Blasting cabinet capacity is 28" x 30" x 21" and upto 56lbs weight. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this valueable sevice can contact Helen at:- The Radnor Business Centre, Radnor Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 8QS. Telephone Bristol (0272) 662710. Ansaphone service outside normal business hours. All enquiries welcome.

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THE STOP PRESS SPANNER.

It's back to drawing board as the Paxolin insulation in the Amanco igniter broke down again during the afternoon of the Tencrest Rally. Oil seeped in between the wasshers shorting out thespark. However all is not gloom as I've been offered other material from which I can fashion a sloid bush preventing a recurrence.

While at The Tencrest, or as Bill Coombes advises it should be called... The Mendip Rally, I learned that some members have the impression that rally reports are not welcomed by the Newsletter. This is just not so. All the 'doings' of the Stationary Engine Fraternity are of interest to the membership. However I did suggest that these reports would be of greater interest if they gave details of engines, folks attending and their experiences rather than the jam making exploits and how the dog enjoyed it's walk.

Apologies to The Mendip Rally organisers, and to those who may have been deterred from making contrbutions to the Newsletter, meanwhile your Editor will carry on trying to get it right.

Cheers

a chasened Claude Lowther.