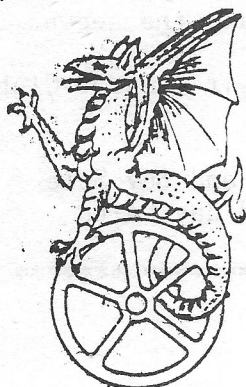


WESSEX STATIONARY ENGINE CLUB

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1988



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE.

Now that 1988 is drawing to a close your Officers and Committee hope that you have found the past years meetings and rallies have been entertaining and enjoyable.

We wish all members a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a PEACEFUL NEW YEAR. May your engines always start at the first turn and never run short of fuel.

Sincerely,

Brian Munt. Chairman WSEC.

THE SPANNER.

Looking to the future is always better than looking at the past, so currently I am planning the printing of next year's Newsletters. Up to now various committee members have the printing needs of the Club, including the Newsletter. Unfortunately circumstances have changed and we will have to look elsewhere for our printing in future. Thank you for past efforts; meanwhile negotiations are in hand with a local printing firm to undertake our work. He, like everyone else has to make a living so it is inevitable that costs to the Club will rise. At this stage things do not appear too bad.

While on financial matters, would you like the good news first or the bad. Ever the optimist..... the good news is that at the time of writing the Club subscriptions do not appear to be in for a rise in 1989. The Treasurer is still doing her sums at the moment, so it has yet to be confirmed but I will keep you posted. Now the bad news... Subscriptions are due on 1st January and the Treasurer will be pleased to accept all monies from that date. As usual some latitude will be given, but prompt payment does help.

There has been absolutely no interest shown in purchasing the Club's epidiascope which was advertised in a recent Newsletter. Emerson Salkeld who is also a member of the Gwent and Glamorgan NVTC, expressed some interest so the Committee has decided to make a long term, semi permanent etc. loan of the epidiascope to that Club. Let's hope they have more success with it than we did and it doesn't send their photographs up in flames.

This must be a 'metric' Spanner this month instead of the more substantial Whitworth variety, but I cannot end without adding the best wishes of the Newsletter team to those of the Chairman and hope everyone has their best Christmas ever with the New Year fulfilling all your dreams.

Cheers,

Claude Lowther.

CLUB DIARY

Monday 30th January. Monthly Club Meeting. A video presentation of two films depicting activities of the Foden Co. (Not the Shell films as incorrectly reported last month). The first film shows details of the Foden factory in the 1940's, while the second is dated 1954 and concerns Foden's Centenary.

Saturday 18th March. Skittle Match against the Cheddar Football Club at their Cheddar Club house. Arrangements have been completed for over night parking.

Saturday 18th March. Chippenham Vintage Machinery Club are holding a Bring and Buy Sale at the Castle Combe Race Circuit. The Sale starts at 12 o'clock mid day, with sale entries being accepted from 8 o'clock onwards.

CLUB ACTIVITIES.29th October. Oompah Evening.

For this years social gathering at Chilcompton we decided on something a bit different again; an Oompah evening with Karl Willheim and his band. One playing an accordian, one a trumpet the other a trombone and a drummer, all dressed in Bavarian costume as were some of our more daring members. The band was great fun if you joined in with their antics, clapping, whistling etc. No one seemed to master the yodelling though. This event was attended by approxiamtely 125 guests.

At the first break the food was served by four very able volunteer waitresses.. Eric, Rob, Herbie and Gerald, we must get some aprons for them next year. Thanks too to Hazel Getsom and Ann Kempson for their help and a special thanks to our caterer Klaz Munt for supplying and preparing the meal. Brian gave her a hand if only supervisory which in the hall kitchen comprised mostly of "Don't panic Queen". Anyway, well done Klaz it went very well.

Our second break brought our now famous Herbie's Raffle: to mention a few of the lucky winners, a tool box for Dennis Hodges, a fresh turkey for Mr. Barton and a bottle for Reg Butler. One or two prizes went over the bridge to Wales, Ann Salkeld being one lucky one. Sue Millard won a cake plate and when you see Carol Cox ask her what she won....

More music which sent Bill Appleby into the kitchen to offer his services to do the washing up.

The evening drew to a close just before 12 o'clock and every one wound their weary way home, amid a very hard frost, hopefully having enjoyed themselves.

JACKIE LAMBERT.

31st October. Members Models.

The theme of the meeting which took place on the 31st October was 'Members Models'. The meeting was well attended despite following hard on the heels of the Oompah Evening. The meeting was opened by the Chairman and then we were free to wander around the room to view the twenty or more models on display. First to catch my eye was Ray Earle's model quayside crane which he had made himself out of scrap bits by way of an experiment. Alan Carney brought along an electrically powered garden railway engine fitted out to produce the smoke and sound of a real engine. Rob Lambert brought an agricultural traction engine that he had been making from a kit and was very near completion. Other interesting items were Tom Randall's hot air engine and Brian Verrall's very nice mill engine believed to be dated 1880.

Ivor Yeo's first attempt at machine work produced an extremely well crafted reciprocating beam engine, (Does this account for his absence from recent meetings?) Derrick Watt's Stuart Turner boiler was complete with vertical steam engine, condenser and boiler feed pump whilst Derek Maybee's contribution was a solar powered helicopter, an unusual item for the mantel piece.

The youngest exhibitor Andrew Harris brought possibly the oldest item, an interesting model of a horizontal mill engine.

The inevitable raffle was won by Marlan Benny who took home the box of crackers, Mary Verrall won the biscuits and Shirley Tuffley won the bottle of wine.

It was an enjoyable evening and it was nice to see that we have so many talented model engineers in our midst.

HERBIE GANE.

THE MARKET PLACE.

FOR SALE. 1955 BSA 650cc Twin Golden Flash (First of the Swing Arm Models) Combination with Watsonian Monza Sports Chair.
R.M. Payne Tel. Trowbridge 761795

IMPROVISATION PART II

Readers of the first part of the story of the 'armoured Motor Boat' will recall that the 'can't sink it' side of the arrangement came unstuck, for sure enough, on its third night trip, laying telephone cables across the river, the little yellow gents got the range with their 75mm guns and an HE burst in the water right alongside the Bren Carrier tipped it right over and its nose dived to the bottom like a stone.

The Signal Sgt. and myself (who was fool enough to be driving the darned thing) got out fast and scrambled ashore as if our tails were on fire; they almost were.

Half the Officers Mess were delighted, they had called it 'Tony's Folly and had taken bets that it would, first, never float, second it would never sail, and if it did would sink in a few yards.

We in the workshops, promptly swore that we would find it and get it up if it was the last thing the Indian Army Workshops ever did against the Japanese.

The first job was finding the wreck, we thought that it was not more than forty feet out but the Irrawaddy is a deep, fast and muddy river and even near the bank the depth could be twenty feet or so, a swimmer working in the dark waters and against the currents would have little chance of locating the 'boat' let alone attaching lines to it.

The next morning one of the fitters reported that he thought he could see oil rising through the water about thirty feet out. To be sure I talked the medico's into letting me go up in their Piper Cub plane used to fly out the wounded and, after stationing three officers, armed with prismatic compasses spaced out down the river bank, I flew low over the water and dropped beer bottles, half filled with water, as soon as the oil slick was located. The shore based compass boys took several bearings on the splashes which we then plotted to a definite point and, sure enough the first grapple lowered from a Royal Engineers canvas boat hit the carrier and held fast.

Now we needed a deep sea diver so that was the next improvisation on the list. A standard army gas mask had the charcoal canister cut out and the corrugated air pipe sealed with tape and latex rubber into the end of our compressor line. This linked up to a light compressor from the workshops made an efficient diving helmet, the air being exhausted by its own pressure past the sides of the mask. It was rather oily and tasted like old copper coins but it worked well.

Equipped with mask and a belt weighted with 25lb shells a diver went down the grapnel line and onto the carrier. Working by feel in the muddy water he reported that the vehicle was upright on its tracks, it was in eighteen feet of water and lay parallel to the bank.

Next we floated out a steel line, bouyed up with three spaced out empty oil drums, and sank the hook down to our diver who attached it to a front towing eye. He gave us the thumbs up and by slow and steady winch work the carrier was first slewed to be nose onto the bank and then foot by foot we dragged it over the bottom and up the bank to dry land.

We could not have been more pleased if we had salvaged the TITANIC and all hands swarmed all over the job whipping out engine transmission and battery for replacement by service units we had waiting.

Believe me nothing gave me greater pleasure than driving that carrier up to the dugout of the Officers Mess and walking in with the casual remark "Oh, when there are difficult problems we 'dirty mechanics' just improvise".

'OTAN'

RALLY REPORTS.The Tencrest Rally - Follow Up.

With interest I have just read the report of the Tencrest Rally and find one of my engines being described as a 'blue Anon'. This of course is not an Anon but a Madison, instantly recognisable by many, and self explanatory to others by means of the brass plate affixed to the side. Aware as I am that this is a small engine, close to the ground and with a small brass plate, I had completely overlooked the fact that it may not be easy to perceive by the aged and lofty in stature. Many thanks to the writer, for tactfully prompting me on this issue.

In consequence therefore, I have given this some thought and decided that the remedy would be either to raise the engine on a pedestal some four or five feet high or, alternatively, write an inscription in large bold letters describing its name and other relevant details. Instinct tells me that the former might meet with some insoluble technical problems, so I have opted for the later. May I assure C.H.L. that there will be no identification problems next year.

JOHN EMERY.

Sorry John, I promise to look much closer next time. A third solution has, however, occurred to me. Why not cut all spectators, and Rally Reporters in particular, off at the knees.

C.H.L.

THE MENDIP DEEP WELL PUMP (AMONGST OTHER THINGS!)

During my researches into C.W. HARRIS & CO of Chewton Mendip, the precursor of the MENDIP ENGINEERING CO., I have become acquainted with some of the more recent history of THE MENDIP ENGINEERING CO., of Atworth, near Melksham. The founders of this company in 1923 were brothers George and Arthur Thatcher. George Thatcher was the chief designer of the 1919 model Mendip Car, of which about 500 were built at their works at Southmead, Bristol until the death of the owner of the company brought about its closure in 1922.

Amongst the earlier products of the NEW MENDIP ENGINEERING CO., was a milk-bottling machine, an improved lawn mower and a three-wheeled light car. In the late 1930's the company produced tooling for the manufacture of the fuselage ribs for the first Spitfires and this was followed by experimental work for Westlands on the Lysander and Wapiti aircraft and the Whirlwind helicopter, then known as the P.9. As sub-contractors to Parnall Aircraft Ltd. during World War 2, they not only manufactured the well-known Parnall gun turret, but also repaired damaged ones, sometimes over 200 a month. By 1946, components for the top secret jet engine were being produced, mostly on machinery designed and built by the Thatcher brothers.

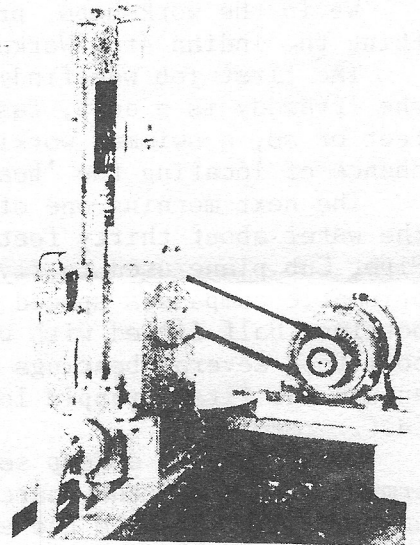
One of Arthur Thatchers best known inventions was the MENDIP Deep Well Pump. The NEW MENDIP (WATER) CO LTD. was formed at the start of the war as a subsidiary company when the rights to a large well, about three-quarters of a mile from the works, was acquired. This secured the water supply to the factory, but also supplied part of the nearby village so until 1952 when the Trowbridge Water Board took over, four farms, thirty five houses and a boarding school with 190 boarders were billed for their water supply by this new company.

The original well pump proved to be extremely troublesome so Arthur Thatcher designed and built a new pump to replace it. This pump proved to be such a success that it was put into production as the R.2000 and marketed on a commercial scale. Several were sold, but in 1947, when the company was bought by the Dowty Group, pump manufacture ceased, although the unit installed at their well, with its 130 foot wooden connecting rod continued to serve for many years without even an oil change!

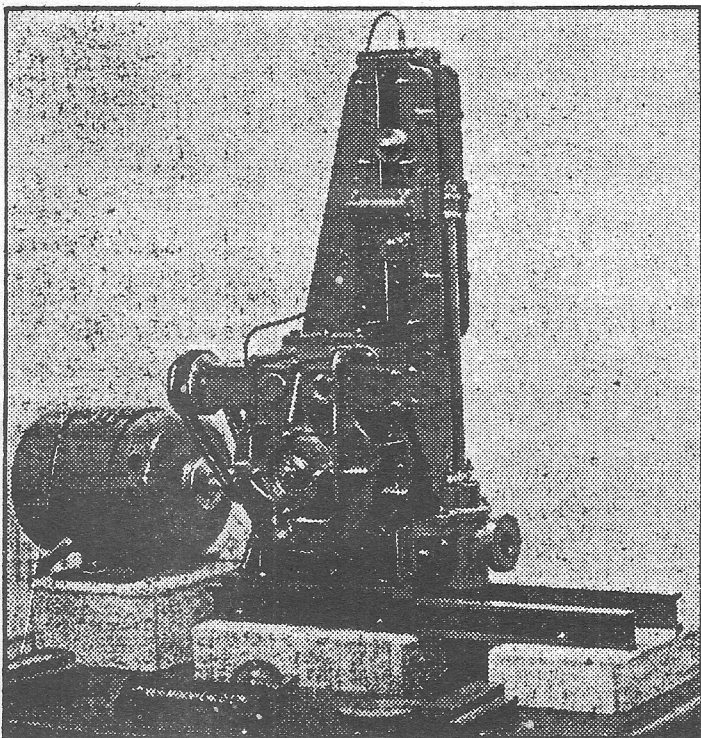
One picture here shows an actual pump unit and the other, taken from the Wiltshire Times, March 8th 1946, shows a working model made by one of the employees.

I would be very interested to know if any of these pumps has survived, if only to get some better photographs! Are there any in preservation? Will I one day see one on the rally-field, minus its 130 foot con-rod of course!

Tom Randall
(Tel: 0761 418926)



Here's the item that had to do all the work - the New Mendip deep well pump.



A WORKING MODEL of the firm's R 2,000 pump head, made by Mr Percy Payne, an employee, at his home at Keynsham.