

Wessex Stationary Engine Club. Newsletter. FEBRUARY 1984

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A DAY OUT AT OAKHILL MANOR

One day last summer, a friend said to me, 'you should visit Oakhill Manor, they have model engines there'. It was also reputed to have a nice garden, so, with parents staying for a long Bank Holiday weekend and the place only being about 5 miles up the road, it seemed like the perfect answer for an afternoon jaunt.

Well, I have discovered that to visit and fully appreciate this relatively recently inaugurated tourist attraction you require three attributes; 1. you must be rich; 2. you need to know an awful lot about models before you go, and 3. you must have a squirrel-like instinct for storing away in a safe place various fragments of your entry ticket or else you may be forced to form an escape committee in order to get out again! If you are beginning to get the impression that I was not too thrilled with the excursion, you are 'getting warm' as they say.

If you are disinclined to pay the £2.50, or whatever it was, per head for "Adults over 14" (can't vote, can't drink, but you have an adult wallet as far as this place is concerned) you can try standing around in a huddle making disrespectful comments about the price. Comments like 'your mother and I will sit in the car while you two go in', can be particularly effective when faced with such a cash crisis. On a not-too-busy day, you may get offered the OAP rate of £1.75 within a few minutes of employing this strategy. On a busier day you may need to stand around a bit longer, but not too long or else you might eventually qualify anyway!

At this point I must say that the train ride from the entrance to the house is probably the best miniature railway ride I have seen and, as I enjoyed every minute of its bridges, tunnels, canyons and woods, I must confess to feeling the odd pang of guilt at my earlier baulking at the entrance fee, especially in the knowledge there was another ride back at the end of the visit - but more of that later.

After a pleasant walk around the quiet, wooded, but not particularly spectacular garden, we made for the house. 'Tickets please' said the little old lady, between stitches, as she sat on the porch knitting something long and grey (a Dr. Who scarf for viewers with only black & white TV?). Panic set in fairly swiftly as pockets were emptied, handbags disgorged all over the steps and grandad's turn-ups thoroughly investigated. 'Why do we need tickets when the only way we could have got here is by paying at the gates?'. It did not seem such an unreasonable question at the time. 'Because you wouldn't like to have to pay again would you' was the totally illogical reply. Luckily, at this point while Grandad was weighing up the possibility of taking the old lady single-handed by storm, the crumpled tickets emerged from one of the kid's coat pockets. 'I was saving those' was the indignant remark as they were handed over. They were ripped in two without a stitch being dropped and the halves handed back. 'Why do we need these?'. Another innocent question. 'Because you might not get out without them!' came the tight-lipped, sinister reply. Nothing definite, just an inference that it would be in your interest to hang on to them for the duration, perhaps even as far as Stratton-on-the-Fosse, or maybe even further! It was either that or sneaking round the grounds looking for a hole in the hedge or a branch over the wall. Youthful memories flooded back of the Outward Bound School assault course where we developed the perfect technique for getting five people over a 25 foot wall in 30 seconds. Would Grandad stand the pace, I wondered!

I expect you are all wondering why I have, as yet, said nothing about the fantastic collection of models which fills the house from floor to ceiling - reputedly the finest collection of its kind in the world. Well, I guess that, when this fellow bought these models, he just forgot to pick up the labels for most of them. I have never encountered such a frustrating lack of information in any exhibition before. Models were as a boat, a ship, a plane, a railway engine, etc. but apart from a few whose previous owners were astute enough to put the label inside the glass case, or bolt it firmly to the object under scrutiny, that is all they were.

So, right from the ticket fiasco at the front door, the rest of the visit was down-hill as far as I was concerned. All that is, except the return trip on the model railway, and that was decidedly up-hill. So much so, in fact, that I really thought we were not going to make it. Out of all the 30 or so passengers being hauled protestingly up the grade by the beautiful model engine, its wheel slipping disconcertingly on the track, Grandad (73) was the only one who got out and pushed! Buster Keaton would have been proud of him.

The day's ration of vigilance had obviously expired by the time we reached the gate and we were most disappointed at not being asked for those remaining ticket halves which we had guarded with our lives for the last couple of hours. They really should get their act together.

Oh, and by the way, there was a model of a stationary engine in there, but don't ask me what it was!

Tom Randall.

THE TROWBRIDGE CHARITY ORGAN RECITAL

This recital took place in the town centre on Saturday, 10th December, the weather was super - as with all the other Trowbridge orientated events in 1983, being cold but dry and sunny.

The day started with Mike Dean arriving at 8.20a.m. promptly. After siting the organ, (with kind permission from Kwik-Save Supermarkets and the Midland Bank), the problems then started when Mike's generator decided to call it a day. The supermarket manager was approached but was reluctant to supply power so things were getting desperate. Off we went to cry on the shoulder of the manager of Smiths, the well-known stationers: with some gentle persuasion he agreed to us plugging into his supply.

Mike now had his latest 52 Keyless Organ playing some really super-powerful traditional old fairground tunes as well as some of the more seasonal Xmas ones; this brought an immediate response from the bustling shoppers and a crowd gathered in no time at all. We played continuously from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and got favourable comments from all the public. I would like to thank all the Wessex members who were present for their help in collecting, namely Mary Butler, Dave & Shirley Clack, Diana & John Amery, Herbie Gane, Wendy & family. All in all it was a very enjoyable day which I would like to repeat next year; so last but by no means least, I would like to thank the Club for their valuable backing enabling me to collect the super sum of £226.34 for CLIC. Mike Dean also donated £10 to help achieve this sum - a nice gesture on his part. A provisional date has already been arranged for 1984 with Mike, December 1st.

Generating Jones

THE NEWSLETTER COMPETITION

Early last year it was suggested that in order to encourage Club members to submit copy for this Newsletter, a small worthwhile prize would be offered on an annual basis. The term of the prize would coincide with the Club's subscription year and would be presented at the AGM to the Non-Committee member who, in the opinion of the majority of the committee, submitted the most interesting article during the previous year.

Therefore, after due deliberation, we are happy to announce the winner...Mary Butler of Trowbridge, for her excellent 'Diary of a weeks holiday in North Wales' which amused us all in the July 1983 Newsletter.

Mary wins a free subscription for her family for 1984. Well done, Mary and many thanks also to all those who have taken the time and trouble to submit copy.

The competition is open for 1984 so what about all you members who have not yet tried to give an account of your experiences at your favourite rally, your winter's restoration programme or whatever? Basically, all you must do is mention a few models of engine, and the Club members who were present, to perhaps win a free subscription for 1985. COME ON, have a try, give it a go, as they say.

CLUB MEETING - JANUARY 30TH - TROWBRIDGE CAMERA CLUB

There was a good turn-out despite the rather inclement weather and the evening started with some very good slides of stationary engines. Unfortunately the gentleman showing the slides, Mr. Mike Pall, did not know much about engines and the members had fun in identifying them amongst themselves. These were followed by some very clear and attractive slides of steam lorries, model engines, and vintage cars seen at various rallies around the area. Several slides of the youngest engineman ever, all of 2 years old and complete in oily boiler suit, brought sighs of 'aah' from the ladies. Slides taken at the Bath & West Showground followed, including some nice fairground Organs which brought the never-to-be-forgotten question: 'Are there any Organs in the Club?'.
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There then followed slides of various country crafts and steam railways. We were taken south to East Pool Winding Engine, Exeter Maritime Museum, and the Engineerium at Brighton. Next were some unusual slides of the Portsmouth area taken from the Goodyear Airship, the trip being the result of Mr. Pall winning with his entry in 'Flight' magazine's competition. This concluded the first part of the evening's entertainment and we all adjoined to the bar for a welcome pint!

The second half of the evening began with - wait for it - the RAFFLE, with Christine Rogers winning the gent's broolly, Mr. Tony Jones winning the tape measure (hope you measure up Tony!), Terry Heath won the hacksaw and Mr. Hoddinott won a dozen eggs.

Mr. Don Oakley took over the second half of the programme and gave a very interesting and informative commentary while operating the projector. His slides took the form of a travelogue of India and Nepal showing the richness and beauty of these amazing places. There was much poverty and hardship, contrasting with the beauty of Everest and the man-made beauty of the Taj Mahal. Scaffolding of bamboo was eyed with disbelief but relief was expressed when it was discovered that most of the labour was by women!

The evening was concluded with a vote of thanks by the Chairman and the presentation of a pair of crystal engraved goblets to our gracious hosts Penny and Gordon Marshall of the Old Down Inn for their hospitality to our Club.

Herb and Wendy Gane

A WINTER'S CAUTIONARY TALE - The Recovery of a Campbell Engine - Part Three

The scene, a deserted trunk road in East Wiltshire, one bitter cold and frosty February morning last year. A Land Rover lies on its off-side, its battery acid and engine oil mingling as it drains slowly into the gutter. Behind the vehicle and still attached to it only by its safety chain, is a largish trailer containing a 1909 Campbell of Halifax lamp-start engine in 'knock-down' form. Mark, the owner and passenger on this occasion, undid his seat-belt and promptly fell on top of Ian, the driver: along with sundry crow-bars, ropes, cameras tools, etc. Eventually disentangling themselves from each other, they managed to get the rear hatch open and fall out, somewhat shaken, onto the road.

Almost immediately, as if by providence, a large articulated lorry appeared in sight. The driver, a true 'Knight of the Road', stopped and offered assistance before, as he put it, "Mr. Plod comes along asking silly questions!". With very little ado, the Land Rover was quickly pulled back onto its wheels and the damage assessed. The lorry driver was profusely thanked and he vanished as quickly as he had arrived. The trailer was re-attached to the tow-bar and the load, which naturally had shifted somewhat, was rearranged and re-roped. Mark managed to get a lift from a passing car to the nearest garage (which happened to be closed) to try to obtain some more engine oil. However, next door was a scrap merchant who sold him some oil of high price and dubious quality. Meanwhile, Ian had checked over the Land Rover for further damage which amounted to bent door hinges, a rather distorted front wing, a loosened hard-top and a flattened roof gutter. The borrowed trailer lighting board had broken in to three but still functioned.

They decided that as they had got so far, there was nothing for it but to carry on to Maidstone but slowly; surprisingly they had lost little time. A couple of miles further along the road and just past the oil-vending scrapyards, fate dealt them a further unlucky blow when, with a loud noise and a lurch almost pulling the Land Rover up dead, the trailer shed a nearside wheel.....! The wheel was found, deeply embedded in a hedge, but upon examination of the hub, 2 of the studs were broken, the others stripped of most of their threads. Further perusal revealed the wheel to be buckled and the stud holes enlarged and elongated so Mark and Ian attempted to fit the spare. This was no easy feat with the brake drum resting on the ground, but eventually the trailer stood once more on two wheels. At the same time they examined the studs and nuts on the other wheel and found not only were they in similar condition but the wheel was too badly bent to continue their journey. At this point they decided that it was all too much for one day and that they would turn around and try to limp back to Bath.

All went well until they had retraced their steps as far as the black rubber marks on the road deposited by their first accident, when the second wheel gave up the ghost; the protesting trailer was dragged into a convenient field behind a hedge where after seeking the local farmer's permission, it remained for a couple of weeks. Ian and Mark returned home.

During the ensuing fortnight, while I worried about the well-being of my trailer, our two enthusiasts located another similar wheel, repaired the wheel which came off, by welding a thick plate inside it and re-drilling; this was to be an emergency spare and eventually proved useful. Ian, on his way back to Kent for the weekend, fitted the trailer with two roadworthy wheels and Mark towed the trailer, carefully, to the nearby home of David Hunt, a local enthusiast near Salisbury whom I knew and had meanwhile contacted.

At the end of the road where David lives was spotted....a trailer hire firm!

To be concluded next month..... (Yes, Honestly....!)

REMINDER

Jumble Sale, March 24th at St. Peter's Church Hall, Westfield, Radstock. Doors open at 2 p.m. Helpers welcome around noon to get tables up and price the goods.

FOR SALE

Two Lister air-cooled diesel engines, different types but both about 5 h.p. Offers to Bill Coombs, Belvedere Cottage, Gurney Slade, Bath. Tel 0434 840583 (evenings).

Lister 2½ hp single flywheel A-type, June 1924, complete, would make a nice exhibit with a rub down, repaint and new trolley. Good value at about £45. John DaCasto, 17 Greenridge, Clutton, Nr. Bristol. Tel. Temple Cloud (0761) 52766.

OFFERS for a Russian-built Cossack motorcycle, original paintwork, two-stroke, soon to be a collectors item. Original sidecar. Temple Cloud 52766 (as above).

Crossley open-crank engine with integral air-compressor about 4 hp, single flywheel, complete except float-chamber missing. Stuart Turner P4, ex. GPO unit, complete with generator 50 volt mounted on original bedplate. Offers for each or both to Stuart Ashman, Moorledge Farm Cottage Knowle Hill, Chew Magna, Nr. Bristol. Tel. Chew Magna 2655.

FOR SALE (continued)

TRANSIT, 15cwt, 1977. MOT and Tax until May. Resprayed, good rally vehicle. £550 ono, Tel. West Harptree 604.

Brockhouse President Tractor in good w/o, c/w trailer and engine lift. Offers to Mr. Bachigallupo, Tel. Cardiff 693723.

Lister DK, running order, will accept first offer of £25; also Bamford 3 hp, good runner, first offer of £35 secures. Ray Earle, Tel Bristol (0272) 673016.

WANTED

Any World War II souvenirs, memorabilia, etc. by collector....anything at all.
Mr. E. Coombs, Belvedere Cottage, Gurney Slade, Bath. Tel Oakhill 840583 (evenings).

Giles Cartoon Annuals, Nos. 1 to 15, 18, 22, 31, 35. Also set of four cast-iron wheels no larger than 8/9 ins.dia. Tel Eric Brain, 0761-52633.

Lister D or DK, must be 2 hp and have the 12" D174 or D74 flywheel. Bill Coombs address as above.

SERVICES

For small sheet metal jobs, fuel tanks, etc., contact Dave Wiles, Waterworks Bungalow, The Reservoir, Lulsgate, Nr.Bristol. Tel. Lulsgate 2286.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Cricket St. Thomas Rally, May 27th. Entrants are welcome to come to come the previous day and stay all over the weekend 26th-28th May. Entries and enquiries to Bill Foster, Fourways, Sandley, Gillingham, Dorset.

Yeovil Festival of Transport takes place August 11th & 12th 1984. Entries, etc. to Bill Foster as above with SAE please.

Petter Only Rally is combined with the Egham and Thorpe Royal Annual Show at Runnymede, Surrey on 25 & 26th August 1984. SAE please to Bill Foster as above. Smog masks will be provided on the day! (who said that??).

Melksham Meccari will take place again this year, but the exact date is yet to be finalised. Check with Bill Foster for full details.

Abbey Hill Steam Rally takes place on Easter weekend 1984 at Boundary Road, Yeovil, Somerset. To enter send SAE to Terry Heath, Ter-shi, Bradford Road, Sherborne, Dorset as soon as possible please as entries ostensible close of February 28th.

Ystrad Mynach Rally, August 5th & 5th 1984. Send SAE to Rally Sec., Gordon Jones, 48 Manor Road, Pontllanfraith, Blackwood, Gwent.

WSEC EVENTS

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| March 24th | Jumble Sale to help swell the Club's funds which are always at their most depleted at this time of the year. St.Peter's Church Hall, Westfield, Norton Radstock, Nr.Bath. Doors open 2 p.m. Help on the day or items to sell, especially bric-a-brac, would be greatly appreciated. |
| March 26th | Michael Cannon with an illustrated talk on the Narrow Gauge Railways of North Wales. |
| April 30th | A film show donated by the Shell Oil Company with many items of engine-related interest. |
| May 12/13th | Bristol Docks Rally, we hope soon to have some entry forms for this popular event. |
| May 21st | (NOTE this is not the last Monday in the month due to the Spring Bank Holiday). Car Boot Sale at the Old Down Inn. |
| June 25th | Annual Evening Crank-Up, bring along an engine and run it all evening with a pint in your other hand! A mini-rally on a nice summer's evening. |
| July, August, Sept., Oct. | Meeting arrangements are 'in hand'. |
| Nov. 26th | 'Call My Vintage Bluff', a sort of Quiz meeting for all the engine-going family concocted and chaired by John Forward of the Longhedge Collection, Corsley, Wilts. |
| Dec. 8th | Club Dinner & Dance, once more at Frome by popular request. Full details to follow later in the year. |

CORRECTION-On p.4 of last months Newsletter under the heading 'Thank-You', the word Crossley appeared instead of 'Campbell' thus making a complete nonsense of the sentence. No-one has yet had the courage to complain so perhaps this would be a good time to point out that the Club does not hold itself responsible for any errors creeping into the text of this Newsletter and that the opinions expressed are not necessarily the policy of the Club. Last month, p.2 end.of para.6 should read 'continued' not 'concluded'. Sorry...Ed.