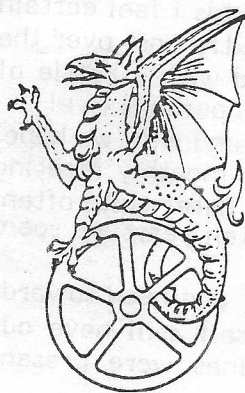


WESSEX STATIONARY ENGINE CLUB

NEWSLETTER



January 1987

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The Wessex Stationary Engine Club is **TEN** years old this month; many thanks to all those who have expressed their good wishes and thanks to all those who have contributed to the Club's success over the years.

***** 'IN THE BEGINNING

Since the Club was started back in 1977, we have seen many new faces. Some have come and gone - others have stayed, helping to swell the membership now currently running at a record 260 or more. For the more recently joined members or those with not quite such good memories who enjoy a trip down memory lane. I will try and piece together the how, why and when of the formation and first year of the WSFEC.

I suppose really it was the 1976 Camerton Rally which brought it all about. We were regular Camerton entrants, that is Stuart & Ted Ashman, John Spear and his cousin Phil Lane, Dave Chapman, Rod Perkins, Tony & Wilf Andrews, Michael Cannon, Roger Parsons, Ann & myself with 'Myrtle' our 1930 Austin Seven, and a jolly character called Phil Wookey and his family with 'Doris', their Ford Eight. There were many more, we all enjoyed the annual weekends and had made the acquaintance a couple of years previously of Tom Randall and Geoff Bryant.

A couple of months later, the majority of us met once again at Selwood Steam Rally where we met Mike Harris and Bill Appleby. A few of us had joined a local Steam Club at around that time and soon it became apparent that it was a shambles; I remember that my one and only Newsletter was six months late, I was Lucky as some never even got one! The need for a Club became obvious so during a social visit to Dave Chapman's home one evening, we decided to do something positive and form one. The local press was informed of our intention and they gave us a paragraph inviting anyone interested in Stationary Engines to come to the inaugural meeting which was to be held at Dave Chapman's rather large house at Midsomer Norton. We also verbally invited anyone else whom we thought might like to come along with whom we were in contact having engines. I painted a Petter Handyman-style engine on an old tabletop and we stood it on the front lawn, floodlit by a car headlamp and battery.

The Stationary Engine Magazine was two years into its stride around then so David Edgington was contacted and, to him we owe an eternal debt of gratitude, he was to be a tower of strength in those early days. On the other side of the coin, however, one erstwhile regular Camerton entrant when contacted, merely snorted and said 'only stationary engines?.....it'll never get off the ground'. How wrong and short-sighted he was proven to be!

The first meeting was a success; it was chaired by David Edgington (- whom Dave Chapman's wife failed to recognise at the door) and drew about 20 interested people, including a few new faces, Roger Greenhalgh, David Farendon and someone who has become a pillar of the Club - Herb Gane. It was agreed that we should start by thinking big so Phil Lane's suggestion to call the Club 'Wessex' was immediately adopted. I was voted Chairman, Ann, my wife, Treasurer and Mary Chapman was Hon. Secretary. Most importantly, we drew up a 'Constitution' which has survived with few changes over the ten years and is available for any Club member's scrutiny. It was agreed to hold the first monthly meeting in February 1977 and Stuart Ashman was to see the Landlord of his local in Chew Magna for a room. Once more we approached the local press and they gave us a little free publicity and by the time of the January meeting our numbers had swollen so much that there was, in fact, topically, 'no room at the Inn....!' Roger Greenhalgh gave us a talk on Narrow Boats and I struggled to find space for my projector for a slide-show of the National Stationary Engine Rally at Beaulieu.

Drastic measures were needed; out came a map of our area. Bristol, Swindon, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare....what was fairly central and not too far away? Mendip Hills? 'Emborough, the Old Down

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Inn, they have a fairly large room'. John Spear and Phil Lane were detailed to investigate and sound-out the Landlord with a view to regular monthly meetings. We discussed the possibility of Public Liability Insurance and contacted the company with whom we still do business. In this I feel certain that we were the first Club to have our own insurance though it was an option at extra cost over the annual subscription. We agreed to hold a first rally and a local farmer was bribed with a bottle of Scotch to loan us a field. I think we had four members of the public - or was it more, perhaps five!

The Landlord of the Old Down Inn welcomed us with open arms - and still does, and will, we hope, for many years to come. Possibly, with hindsight, our first mistake was to hold our monthly meeting at the END of each month on a Monday. This, of course, involves having to change dates quite often, due to Easter Monday, Whit Monday, Christmas, etc., etc. but in practice over the ten years we seem to have coped with it well.

The Rally turned out a success even if my Crossley's flywheel did detach itself and head towards Tom Randall's newly restored Hobbs. Disaster was luckily avoided; Tom and myself still have our twelve year old friendship.....and Bob Hallam has the Crossley! Eleven engines were present including Roger Parsons Lister L-type which he still rallies.

By April we had thirty members, we had discussed the Club Badge, and had visited our first rally as a Club, at Wooton Bassett. The Newsletter was regular in its frequency but **not** in its quality and we were to hold our first fund-raiser, a jumble sale which raised £58. We had been invited, again as a Club, to exhibit at Midsomer Norton and District Leisure Activities Weekend at Somervale School which also helped put us in the public eye and drew new members. The April meeting drew 90% of the membership along to see a slide show and talk on Petter engines; if we had 90% these days it would be very encouraging, as well as a bit embarrassing!

At the end of May we were invited to exhibit at the Royal Bath & West Show and experienced our first taste of being invited and then charged admission for all the week! However, as Chairman, I was invited by an old school friend who worked for the BBC then, to go 'on air', live on Radio Bristol, to discuss the reasons for collecting stationary engines and thence to publicise the Club.

At the Bristol & West, we were given a cup by a donor who wished to remain anonymous. This plus one already generously donated and a Junior shield which we purchased, suggested to us that we should hold our own rally and, contrary to general opinion, appoint judges to encourage a little competition. As the year was fast progressing we had to act quickly to find a suitable site and the East Somerset Railway at Cranmore was chosen. At the rally, I spotted a bearded and bespectacled spectator carrying innumerable cameras and assumed him to be 'Press'. Later a walk around the car park revealed a VW Beetle formerly belonging to a near neighbour of mine and as I examined it, the gentleman approached to see what I was up to. This meeting resulted in Tony Jones joining our Club - and later on Reg and Mary Butler, Ian Craddock, and many, many more from the Trowbridge area.

It was agreed that any club worthy of merit should hold a formal event at least once a year - many motor clubs do for instance - so that the awards could be properly presented. The Star Hotel at Wells was the venue, a free sherry at the door, dress was formal; men to wear suits and ties, ladies, long dresses. The dancing was to a Disco, not the cacophany of recent years but one which you could **listen** to if dancing was not your scene and there was a proper top-table with a guest speaker. We even got press coverage, I still have the report in my records.

The Hon. Secretary had resigned during the latter half of the year to concentrate her efforts on an abortive 'Engine Register'; a list of all member's engines, and her place had been taken by Ailene Conybeare who organised the Dinner & Dance and also edited the Newsletter at that time.

A storm cloud broke over the Club near the end of that first year. Briefly, a couple of Club members had been loaned an engine to restore in the Club's name and to enter it in rallies as the Club's engine. They failed to inform the club that they had the engine, turning up with it at the Cranmore Rally as if it was their own. It was found to have been entered at rallies the following year in their name not the Club's so when the first AGM came around, they were asked to return the engine to the lender (an engine manufacturing company) and to leave the Club. We entered our second year with a new committee, a new chairman and 100 members. It is interesting to note that of that committee of ten, six are still Club members, two are still committee members and one is now President.

In conclusion, may I add that often when looking around the Clubroom at the Old down Inn or the rallyfield with so many Wessex Wyvern logos present, I feel a great sense of satisfaction tinged with more than a little pride at being involved with the start of The Wessex Stationary Engine Club ten years ago.

Eric Brain

THE ANTI-FREEZE CRANK-UP December 7th

A cold December morning with intermittent showers was not a good recipe for a Sunday Lunch-time rally on Mendip top. Having often been labelled as a 'fair-weather rallyist' true to type I abandoned the Petter M 1½ series onw and Wolseley WD2 to the dryness of the garage and headed off to the rally as a spectator.

On arrival I found that a few hardy souls were willing to subject their magnetos to the depredations of the British winter weather. These included Jeremy & Simon Adams, Bill Appleby,

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Andy Gale, Dave Large, Cecil Giblett, Don Rogers, Reg Butler and Stephen, Eric Gay and Tony Marlow. Between then they had brought a variety of engines but the one which created the most interest was the small JAP or Villiers -(!)- engined derrick crane, a model which was found in a junk shop and restored and finished by John Wheelwright. Graham Raymond had forgotten to bring along the drive belt between his Lister D and his water pump; his mum must have suffered more than most from the cold December air as it seemed that he had adapted a leg of her tights as a means of power transmission. Still, that's what mums are for...!

Dave Clack's Lister A did not like the 'camber' of the car park, requiring much use of the cranking handle, followed by repositioning. However, he did take Shirley off to the bar and buy her a lunch; either as a rest from cranking or just as a peace offering - who knows!?

Other visitors included Bill Coombs, Ray Earle, Brian Munt and Mark Tilly whose interest in the little Madison - Butler in my car boot was more than just cursory, whilst Phil Harris turned up with a 3 hp Bamford open crank which was recovered only recently from where it was found with an elder bush growing up through the crankcase. Deprived of its vegetation, it ran extremely well!

A nice little gathering, which should be repeated more often; a bit damp and chilly but Gwen Large's kind offer of an excellent and warming cup of tea was most welcome - thank you Gwen.

Eric Brain

THE MONTHLY MEETING, November 26th

'Hot-Air Ballooning'

A cold November evening saw a good proportion of our regular members at the Old Down Inn to hear an illustrated talk by Major Christopher Davey who is the holder of the World Altitude Record and a renowned expert in hot-air ballooning.

Michael Cannon introduced Major Davey who proceeded to give us an outline of the pleasures and pitfalls of the sport, followed by a short general film on the subject. During the interval, Herb Gane relieved us of our change in return for raffle tickets and made the draw. Unfortunately the lucky prizewinners are not recorded this month.

Major Davey then gave us some background behind the next film, which was pieced together from BBC news bulletins of the epic flight across the Atlantic, never before undertaken by balloon. This specially constructed (in Bristol) craft was sponsored by Zanussi and used helium gas as its means of lift. Zanussi wanted to increase public awareness of their name; this they succeeded in doing by about 75%, an achievement almost as great as the flight itself. It was interesting to see our audience become visibly more attentive as they recognised our speaker as the crewman along with Don Cameron.

During the crossing, the balloonists 'met' the Royal Aircraft taking the Queen and Prince Phillip to America on an official visit and mutual greetings and good wishes for a safe landing were exchanged. Nevertheless, the intrepid pair were forced to ditch just short of their goal as the wind diminished plus the fact that they had lost so much height due to a tear in the envelope of the balloon. The accommodation cabin of the balloon was in the form of a boat-like gondola but even so, a touch-down in the rough swells of the Atlantic was extremely hazardous but the balloon was saved only to be completely lost later on while attempting to cross the Alps.

Certainly an evening well spent; the best 'non-engine' evening this (last) year and enjoyed immensely by all present. Major Davey has subsequently commented that he has never had a more attentive audience and one whom had asked so many varied and interesting questions. He wishes to thank the WSFC for the interest shown.

Emerson Brantingham (standing in for November's appointed reporter)

PLEASE send all contributions for this Newsletter, articles, adverts, etc., to Eric Brain, 5 Greenridge, Clutton, Nr. Bristol.

The Secretary's address is Mrs. A. Gale, 18 Church Lane, North Bradley, Trowbridge, Wilts. Tel. Trowbridge 67095.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 1987 are now due:- £5 single membership, £6 for joint or family membership and £1 for juniors under 18 years. Juniors are NOT covered by our insurance policy but can rally if accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who is a full member. Payment please to the Treasurer, Mrs. R. Lambert, 15 Beechwood Ave., Frome, Somerset. Tel. Frome 63526. Please make cheques payable to the Wessex Stationary Engine Club.

CLUB CALENDAR 1987

Feb. 23* Annual General Meeting. Come along and express your views, Help elect a new committee - possibly including yourself, read the Club Constitution and have a pint or two at the bar.

March 7 Skittle Match, WSFC versus SSAPC at the Brook House Inn near Castle Cary on the Shepton Mallet road. 7.30 start. Food available.

4. March 14 Annual Jumble Sale. See next month for details as the venue has burnt down recently. Meanwhile collect up your jumble, bric-a-brac, etc.
- March 28 Coach Trip to London, Science Museum, or whatever you want to see. Via Old Down Inn from Bath and pick-up at Trowbridge, Devizes, etc.
- March 30* Brian Lovell, more slides of his travels rallying in Holland.
- April 27* John Kyte, talk illustrated with slides of his recovery and subsequent installation in his back garden of a 300 hp Brush engine.
- May 16/17 Wessex & Institute of Plant Engineers Bristol Docks Rally at the Industrial Museum, Bristol. Make this a **MUST**.
- May 18* (Note: this is a week early this month). Crank-Up in the side road next to the Old Down Inn.
- June 20/21 WSEC Annual Rally, this year at Cheddar, Somerset. Forms with this Newsletter. Enter right away.
- June 29* Illustrated talk by Derek Silk, Steeplejack.
- July 27* 'Guess the Object'. Yet another popular humorous antique quiz.
- Aug. 24* Member's Evening, a chance for everyone to bring along their favourite slides, films, videos (no not those blue ones!.....) for all the Club to enjoy.
- Sept. 28* Member's Models. Bring along your models of all sorts and even give a little talk on them if you wish. Plenty of us collect model engines, tractors, 'Dinky Toys', aircraft... in fact anything.
- Oct. 10 Another coach trip, this time to Dudley, Staffs. The Black Country Museum and Vintage Steam Working.
- Oct. 18 WSEC Car Boot Sales. Details to follow.
- Oct. 26* 'The Railway of Oakhill Brewery' - an illustrated talk by the Rev. Robin Newman on the private branch line which ran from Oakhill to Binegar, crossing the main A37 near the Mendip Inn.
- Oct. 31 Social Evening at Chilcompton Village Hall. 'Halloween - fun and frolics'. More details to follow.
- Nov. 30* 'Ten years with the Wessex' - the story of **your** engine club.
- Dec. 6 Anti-Freeze Crank-Up at the Old Down Inn.

*Denotes a Monday Evening monthly meeting

THIS 'N THAT

In a Bath antique shop during the Christmas period was displayed a 1940's 1½ hp Ruston Hornsby PT best described as 'sloppily' painted and mounted on a rough trolley with what looked like lawn mower wheels. The asking price....? A cool £160.....!! Five times its value at least. The shops in Bath generally charge inflated prices but this is ridiculous.

Devotees of BBC 1's popular 'Allo Allo' series were no doubt doubly interested in the Christmas Holiday period episode which featured vintage tractors and steam engines in a setting which looked familiarly local. With the scene set in 1940's occupied France, what a 'faux pas' for BBC as they were all of British manufacture and registration! Quel dommage.....!

By contrast, Channel Four got 1987 off to a good start with an excellent 45 minute documentary on 'The Great Dorset Steam Fair' shown on New Year's Day. All our favourite steamers were working as was the fair; the atmosphere of Stourpaine was portrayed to perfection. New Junior member, young Neil Puttick played a starring role riding with presenter Anthony Burton in the Steam Yachts. Well done Neil, for keeping the Wessex right in the picture.

Would any member like to volunteer to make two largish notice boards to advertise the Cheddar (and hopefully subsequent) rallysite. Materials will be supplied by the Club. Please let Robin or any committee member know if you are willing to have a go.

FOR SALE

1926 Lister L-type, seized, no magneto or tank, otherwise complete incl. starting handle. £40; Blacksmith's post-vice c/w bench mounting bracket, £18; Blacksmith's hand cranked forge blower, £12. Tom Randall. Tel. Midsomer Norton 418926

Beck & Co. vane type water pump, 1¼" bore £15; Aluminium water pump by ALCO, needs attention, £10; Lister water pump, £27; Douglas side valve engine, ready to rally, type SV54 No. 420H, £55; Dynamo & slate switch-board by Electric Power Engineers, 50-70 volt, 15 amp at 1250 rpm, £60; Scania air compressor complete as found, offers. Alan Sweet, Arch Villa, Bread Street, Pilton, Som. Tel. Pilton 586.

WANTED

External fuel filter for Lister D and copper pipes to fit. Graham Raymond, 35 Wilton Drive, Trowbridge. Tel (02214) 64579.