

BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2011

Dear Member,

Yet another season has passed and the engine stopped for the winter months. It has not been a bad summer so far as visitors go, some poor days and some very good – the usual mix. The last steam day was, in fact, the best of the year. Our young friends from



the local Church Junior School came as usual and were in good voice, and the visitors appreciative of their talents. Santa Claus turned up in a pony and trap as well! A little early perhaps, but no doubt sorting out his route for later. Going back to September, we opened up on the Saturday and Sunday for the Heritage Open Days, and were quite



busy. We raffled another “Roberts” engine name plate over that weekend. At the close of the raffle, I asked a small boy to pick the winning number out of the bag, and he drew out his ticket! Not a “fix”, I assure you, and the lad’s father told me that his son

was mad about steam engines – so a good result.

There have been a number of entertainments laid on for the benefit of the visitors, in between engine runs, and perhaps the most memorable was a troop of blacked-up Morris dancers. A number of visiting children joined in and had a great deal of fun. The dancers have promised to come again next year.



After a few years of trying to find someone to take over running the Lancashire loom, which produces our tea-towels, a young lady volunteer became fascinated with the process, and Peter R. has trained her in the mysteries of weaving. She is now quite proficient and enjoys giving demonstrations. The fact that she has good eyes and nimble fingers, unlike many of us, is a great help. Our worry with the weaving is that it is now very difficult to locate a source of pure cotton thread for the weft. All the modern threads seem to be a mix of cotton and synthetic fibres. We do have stock of cotton thread, but it is the wrong weight, and we do not know if it will produce the kind of cloth we want.

In the meantime, we have spies out searching and enquiring, so perhaps we will be lucky!

Yet another of our volunteer stalwarts has come under the surgeon's knife! After undergoing medical tests some time ago, Roy F. had to go to Blackpool for heart surgery. We are pleased to say that he is doing well, and drove over to see us for the last Steaming. We had all missed his laugh, and it was very nice to hear it again. We look forward to him being given the "all-clear" soon. In the meantime, Bob I. has also been in dock for a few weeks with an infection. He is

at home again and itching to get back to the Mill to join his grandson, Philip, who comes frequently.

After having the top part of our chimney refurbished last year, we gave the steeplejack clearance to continue and finish the rest of the stack. He has had it scaffolded for some weeks now, but has not done a lot, apart from some picking out of joints in the brick-work. Weather will dictate how long he can continue working, but it will be sometime next year before it is complete. That is alright by us, as the money for it will take some finding!

As I have said before, the chimney has to be a priority, and the longer it is left, the more work there will be to do. Once it is fully re-pointed, and the iron bands cleaned and painted, and the whole covered with linseed oil, we should not have any further expense for the next ten or so years.

We have some progress to report on the Bradley Engine Project. After fitting on the governor assembly, which made a terrific difference to the look of the engine, we moved the low pressure cylinder into place and fastened it to the bed. It is big, and very heavy, so great care was needed. We used greased steel rails and levers, and a block and chains to manoeuvre it. That was just a practice run, to see that everything would fit, because the piston-rod assembly cannot be readily fitted with the cylinder in place.

That brings me to the question of the high pressure piston, which, you may remember was cracked. We decided that the only safe way forward was to have a new one cast. Then, a bit of luck, we received two donations which would cover the cost of a pattern and casting, so the decision was



made to get on with it. The casting will have to be machined now and attention given to a cracked piston ring, but things are going on, and the momentum is being maintained.

Whilst on the subject of the Bradley Engine, we were lent a copy of the original minutes of directors meetings, when the mill at Bradley, called Cross Lane Mill, was first started in 1860. The minutes are somewhat vague, but together with some research from other sources, a history of the mill and its engines has been put together. We hope to produce it in booklet form in due course.



You will remember our Chairman's appeal for Members to consider making standing orders to the Trust each month. Well, we have received confirmation of a few orders in the offing. That will help us so very much, and a big thank you for your help. What with escalating costs – of everything – together with the VAT increase, things are becoming much harder for charities, such as us.

Below are the steaming dates for 2012. Hopefully, we will be celebrating a number of events: the centenary of our Cornish boiler, the four hundredth anniversary of the Pendle witches trials, and the centenary of the Titanic sinking (local bandmaster). Then there is the Queen's jubilee and the Olympic Games.

*18-3-12. 8-4-12. 29-4-12. 20-5-12. 10-6-12. 1-7-12. 22-7-12.
12-8-12. 8&9-9-12. 30-9-12. 21-10-12. 11-11-12. 2-12-12.*

Goodbye until the next Newsletter.

Jim Gill. Hon. Sec. (01282 865626). December 2011.