

## BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST

### AUTUMN NEWS LETTER 2013

Dear Member,

This is going out somewhat later than I intended owing to faults in two computers, a printer and “duff” ink cartridges. All of which is technology which completely defeats me. I also have to apologise for not including the minutes of the 2012 AGM in the last News Letter. Again, not my fault – that photocopier churned them out as complete gobbledegook. Anything that goes wrong with modern electronic thingamies, I am stuck with. If anything is designed to wind me up, it is things such as that. Anyway, I am sorry for the hitches!

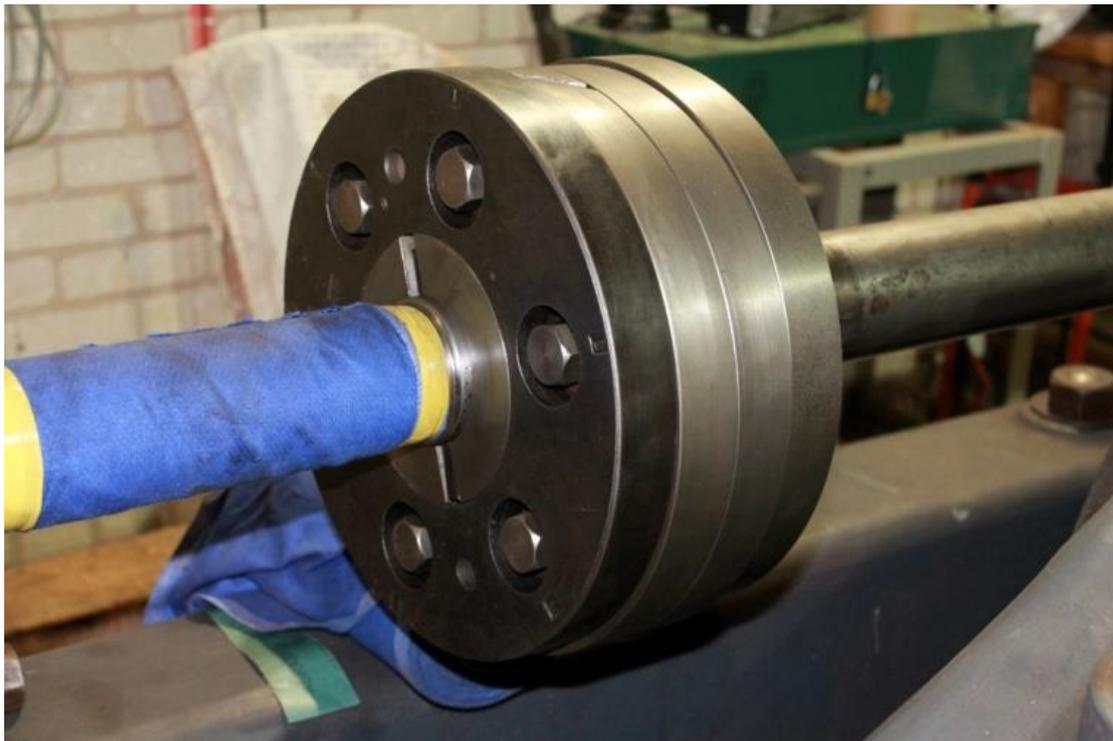
In the last letter I mentioned that we were awaiting the new piston for the Bradley Project engine to be machined. We got it back soon after, and also had the new piston rings machined. We did a trial assembly of the parts on the piston rod, just to see how everything went together, and it all fitted perfectly. The assembly will have to come apart again in order to put the rod through the cylinders, but we cannot do that until we receive the new metallic gland packings. They should be with us very shortly. In the meantime, the next Steam Day (20.10.13) we are putting on a special display of the engine and the bits that still have to be added to it. The area has been cleared and cleaned, and interpretation panels put up, so that visitors may see it all close up and understand all that is going on. I will report the interest next time.

Our workshop facilities are gradually expanding, I am pleased to say. In the past, volunteers have often brought their own tools to do the work of anything we are engaged in at the time. Recently, however, we have had a large number of electrical tools donated by a long standing member. They are all in very good order and some of them are quite new. Another member recently brought a supply of files and lathe tools, and a beautiful pressure gauge (which will be used on the Bradley engine). We are so grateful for such things, and they will certainly be put to good use. We are also very fortunate in having been given some very generous money donations from some members. The generosity of some members is overwhelming! Yet other people freely put their hands in their pockets for sundry small items, without claiming recompense. It is this sort of thing which keeps a place like Bancroft going.

In the past, I have mentioned the rather worrying fact that the majority of our regular work force is getting long in the tooth. Fortunately over the last year or two we have had a couple, Tony and Andrew, who are still in their prime (?), but where are the even younger volunteers who have an interest in our hobby? Usually, if we are fortunate to acquire such a one, he or she usually goes off to higher education, and so we lose them. All is not lost, however. There is a young man who has been coming to Bancroft since he was in nappies (well almost) with his grandfather. He has always been very keen and useful, but we thought he might go the way of the others. Not so – he has gained an apprenticeship with a local engineering firm, and still attends Bancroft every weekend. I hope and pray there are more like him out there.



**Top:** April 2007. Dimensions of the chassis are being taken to draw the building extension and footings  
**Bottom:** April 2007. The various components of the Smith & Eastwood are waiting renovation and repairs



**Top:** October 2013. The engine as it stands today We are waiting for the ne gland packing so that the piston rod can be fitted.into the cylinders and the crosshead assembled.

**Bottom:** The new HP piston and rings have been blank fitted successfully and the rod has been polished to receive the new gland packings..

This year, the supplies of wood for the boiler have been very good. It is a big problem storing it and keeping the place reasonably tidy, and cutting it all up takes a lot of time, but we do our best. The boiler has performed very well this year under the tender care of Arnold and Richard. The annual inspection is not that far off now and we can only hope that the inspector does not find any costly faults to put right.

The Heritage Open Days are now a memory for this year. The weather was quite reasonable and we had fairly good attendances on both days. The visitors, who got in free of course, spent quite freely and our takings were not at all bad. We have also had a great many compliments from the visitors regarding the interesting things we have to show and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere; which is very nice, and makes it seem so worthwhile. We need all the money we can get, as we have ever escalating costs which have to be covered. We have managed to obtain some grant money this year, for work on the Bradley engine, but it is almost impossible to get a 100% grant, which means that the Trust has to find extra money to put to it.

We also have the shadow of the United Utilities Water Authority looming large over us, as the dispute over drainage charges is still not resolved – after a year of negotiations. Getting any response from them sometimes takes months!

Whilst still on the subject of finances, our treasurer, Richard Bettess, stood down from the post after almost 10 years. He has our thanks and appreciation for all his work in keeping us solvent. His place has been taken by long-standing member, Freddie Frot, who is also one of the engine “tenters”. We are all very grateful for his commitment, and wish him well in his new position.

I know that I have mentioned members’ subscriptions before, but, just to remind you, from the beginning of 2014, if we do not receive your subs we will have to assume that you no longer wish to support us, and your membership will lapse. Once we receive the subscription, we will send you a membership card for the year. The card may be sent with the next Newsletter or may be collected at Bancroft when you visit. We will try to avoid sending cards on their own because of the expense. Please help us by sending your subs early in the New Year. Thank you.

We still have one or two Steam Days to take care of this season and only hope that the weather does not get too bad until we close down for the dreaded winter months. That does not mean that you cannot visit us, as we are there every Saturday (except Xmas and New Year week). The tea boiler is always bubbling away on those days and you will be welcome to a cuppa.

Until next time (electronic gadgets permitting), I will say TTFN.

Jim Gill. 01282 865626. Honorary secretary.  
October 2013.