

# BANCROFT MILL ENGINE MUSEUM

GILLIANS LANE, BARNOLDSWICK NR. COLNE, LANCS.BB18 5QR

27 April 2014

## STEAMING on 27th April

The third steaming of 2014 opened on a dull day but with all systems in operation. Very early visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Wilhelm Strumpfer from Port Elizabeth in the Republic of South Africa who, with their son Reinhard, are staying close to Skipton currently. The family spent most of the afternoon with us and



are seen here with the mill engine flywheel running at full speed. The Bancroft engine was a particular focal point for their son, Reinhard.

Reinhard is producing a blog about his time in the United Kingdom as part of his school's assignments for him. He has sent blog details that make very interesting reading, despite being young, his photography also is well worthy of comment.

<http://adventuresbyreinhard.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/the-bancroft-mill-engine.html>

Following the visit his father has commented:

*"Thank you for the photos, guiding us around yesterday, all the very interesting technical and historical details... The steaming day at Bancroft was the highlight of our visit to Yorkshire/Lancashire! You are all doing such excellent work there. Wonderfully inspiring and educational. The experience is undoubtedly worth more to my son's education than many months of science and technology at school."*

We appreciate the family's comments and are, indeed honoured to receive them.

## **A Centenary Year.**

This year we celebrate the centenary of James Nutter putting the wheels in motion for his new mill on land bought from Bancroft Farm. At this point in the year records show that the engine was on order, but the building design had yet to be completed to accommodate the engine. About 200 looms were yet to be ordered and, on completion of the mill, 800 existing looms were to be transferred to Bancroft from elsewhere in Barnoldswick. These existing looms were working under what was known as “room and power conditions” where the mill or shed owner provided space, light and power for a manufacturer’s looms. Some of James’ looms were known to have been in Bankfield Shed, presently occupied by Rolls Royce plc. and some in Butts Mill, now no more.



The outbreak of war later in 1914 was to frustrate James’ plans to the point where opening of the mill was delayed until March 1920. During this period it is interesting to note that the wage bill for weavers and overlookers running around 200 looms ran at up to £240 per month and the room and power rent was up to £260 per calendar month, varying a little according to the number of days in the month we presume.



It’s a matter of record that neither James nor his wife Mary Jane (nee Chadwick, seen here) survived to see the dream come true, their son Wilfred continued to run the business throughout the war and then brought his father’s plans to fruition at the end of hostilities. We know that Wilfred ran the business for over fifty years, including the period through the 20’s depression, without ever posting a single year’s loss. A testament to the combination of the man and the most modern mill in the town, it performed with efficiency and was a “good” place to work.

An original portrait of Wilfred that he didn’t live to see completed, is on display in the cafeteria; James and Mary Jane Nutter each had half the engine named after them during the official start-up in March 1920 by their daughter Eliza.

## **FIRE SAFETY, 1920’s style.**

David Steel as a member and in his capacity as Chairman of Barnoldswick History Society, has brought a special meeting of Barnoldswick Council to our attention dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 1921 in which it appears that the Council’s seal of approval was given to a fire escape at Bancroft Mill. As this is some eighteen months after the mill’s official opening it could be thought that there had been some controversy over this matter.

## CORNISH BOILER



The feed pump for the boiler, located on the boiler floor, has given cause for concern lately. Two steam-driven pumps were donated by a local factory when it decided to employ electric pumps instead. A recently joined member, Tony Jolly, was responsible for swapping the pumps and having one given engineering attention before delivering them to Bancroft. One of these pumps has been in use for many years and recently, due to wear, we found it necessary to re-engineer and replace some of the valves due to high wear on their guides, see picture.

The spare pump is now under total overhaul “in house” to ensure that we always have a reliable spare pump for the boiler.

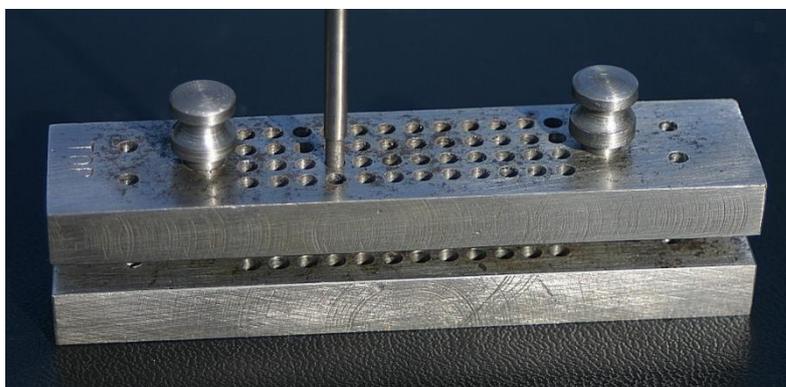
## OTHER NEWS

Our member, engineer and author Geoff Shackleton has brought to my attention that the dates for the Newcomen engine open days at Elsecar were published incorrectly on their website and repeated here. There is still confusion about the final date (thought to be in May) so a telephone call might be appropriate if you wish to see this wonderful old engine. The website is still, apparently, in error.

## WEAVING

Our Pilling loom had considerable attention during last year as its age is showing a little, it was built in 1921 we think. Two members, Anthony Pilling (of the dynasty!), and Ian McKay, worked hard just to get it running again whilst, on occasions, visitors could not see a weaving demonstration. We don't think that all the problems have been completely solved yet but a major step forward has been made during the winter.

The loom is controlled by a “Jaquardette” attachment which reads a belt of small punched cards, the loom in turn producing the “Bancroft Mill Engine” pattern in the tea towel from the data on the cards. These cards were in bad shape and regularly causing hitches.



Using a hand punch (seen above) made by Harry M a couple of years ago, Ian has traced a source of the original card material, punched and threaded a complete new belt of cards to give us a reliable control. Ian punched the cards hole by hole, goodness only knows how many holes there are in the belt but there is a possible of 54 in each card and all holes must be positioned correctly, hole or no hole applies!



Ian McKay weaving for visitors.

## **NEXT STEAMING**

is on 18<sup>th</sup> of May when we shall be visited by a vintage motorcycle group from Cumbria, more later.

[www.bancroftmill.org.uk](http://www.bancroftmill.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/BancroftMill](https://www.facebook.com/BancroftMill)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bancroft\\_Shed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bancroft_Shed)

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