

BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2015.

Dear Member,

You know when you carefully plan something; trying to ensure that all bases have been covered, then just as you start the work, it all goes “pear shaped”. Well, that has happened to us. As soon as the last steaming day was completed, the Cornish boiler was blown down, and the whole water system drained down. The fire-bars and boiler fittings were removed, and the flues cleaned out. The boiler inspector was contacted and a date set for the inspection on 5th January. Great! We would be well ahead of schedule this year. Wrong! The following week, after the blow-down, the



David in search of the blockage

flues and blow-down pit were flooded, and we discovered that the drain, which runs out under the yard, was well and truly blocked. In spite of frantic efforts with drain rods, it has remained blocked. The inspection had to be cancelled for the time being whilst we arranged for a pump, as the inspector did not fancy going into the flues in scuba gear! (Ed: *Since Jim wrote this the problem has been fixed*)



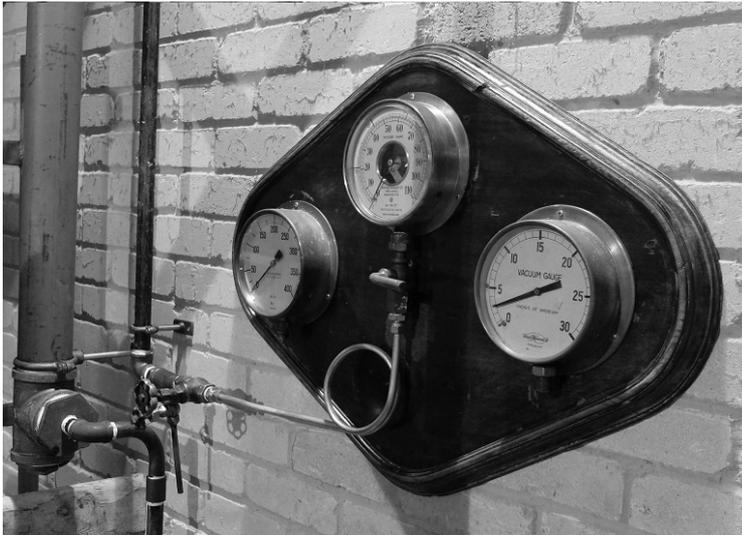
The gland packing ready for re-assembly

Meanwhile, the gland packing from the Roberts engine had been stripped down. As we had suspected, the Babbitt metal sealing rings were in little pieces. A chap from the Hoerbiger Co., who had been so helpful with the Bradley engine glands, called in to examine the Roberts glands. To our great joy, he stated that all the brass parts were in good order, and just needed cleaning and polishing. His firm confirmed that they would make new Babbitt rings as soon as possible. We can only hope that they get on with the job fairly soon. The engine cannot run until they are all reassembled.

The 2014 season was reasonably good, with the usual ups and downs. The last steam day in December was very poor, and begs the question whether it is too late in the season to attract visitors. You may remember from the last Newsletter that I mentioned that we would have a Merlin engine on show in October. If you were not there you missed something very special. The twenty-seven litre aero engine was fired up on the car park for three ten minute runs. Was there ever such a symphony of sheer sound? I think not. The very ground trembled as it was revved up to around 3,000 rpm. When they are heard overhead, they bring a lump to the throat, but close up they are ear shattering. This particular engine, from 1941, weighing a half ton, was one of two which powered a Bristol Beaufighter 11F. It crashed in 1941, with the loss of the pilot and two crew. It was eventually dug up and restored over six years. The owner has indicated that he may bring it again this year. So far, we have not had any complaints from our neighbours! Incidentally, there was a programme recently on Channel 4 about the motor-cycle racer, Guy Martin. He also has a Merlin from a Lancaster bomber, and started it up for the film. But it did not do justice to the real sound when it is there before you.



Starting the Merlin: Hang on to your wig!



Meanwhile, the Bradley project grinds slowly on. We still have not got the second half of the fly-wheel where it should be. We have only two basic options for getting it in place (without partially dismantling the roof), and we cannot decide, as yet which will be the most successful (and safest). In the meantime, John R. has made a thoroughly professional job of installing the steam pipes from the engine to the outside of the building. The workmanship is second to none. He is

now fabricating heavy brackets to carry the pipe into and across the yard, where it will join the boiler house. Once inside the boiler house, it will be connected to a crown valve which will be fed from the main steam line. Insulation will be the next problem, especially as half of the pipe-work will be outside. We had a very nice steam-pressure gauge donated to us from a member, and, so long as it is accurate, will be used for the Bradley engine. John has fastened it on a board on the wall, and it looks well.

I mentioned in the last Newsletter that two of our volunteers had to go into hospital. They are both out and at home, and it is hoped heading towards recovery.

It is now that time of the year to start sending in your subscriptions for 2015. I am enclosing slips for you to send with your remittance. If, you receive one and you are a Life Member, please forgive me and ignore the slip. I sometimes get into a trance when stuffing letters into envelopes. You can, of course, call at the Mill on a Saturday and pay then, and probably get a brew as well. For the members who receive this by e-mail, my address is: Mean Moss Farm, Boulsworth Road, Trawden Colne, Lancashire. BB8 8ST.

Please remember, if subscriptions are not paid, your membership will be deemed to have lapsed under the present Trust rules.



John enjoying a bit of pipework

Now for the 2015 steaming dates. Please will you mark them on your calendars / notebook / diaries.
Thank you.

15th March	16th August
5th April	12th & 13th September (Heritage Open Days)
26th April	4th October
17th May	25th October
7th June	15th November
28th June	6th December
26th July	

We all hope that you will all come and see us and look forward to renewing old acquaintances.
Until then may I wish you a very peaceful New Year.

Jim Gill (Honorary Secretary) 01282 865626.



Saturdays: A hive of activity