

# BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

Dear Member,

Am I being over optimistic in calling this letter a Spring epistle? I hope not, although the weather is not encouraging at the moment. Another Steaming Season is about to start - in fact, will probably have started by the time you receive this. It is somewhat of a landmark year for your scribe, as this year I will have been at the Mill for twenty-five years. A quarter of a century! Where has it all gone? I should add that we have a regular and hard-working

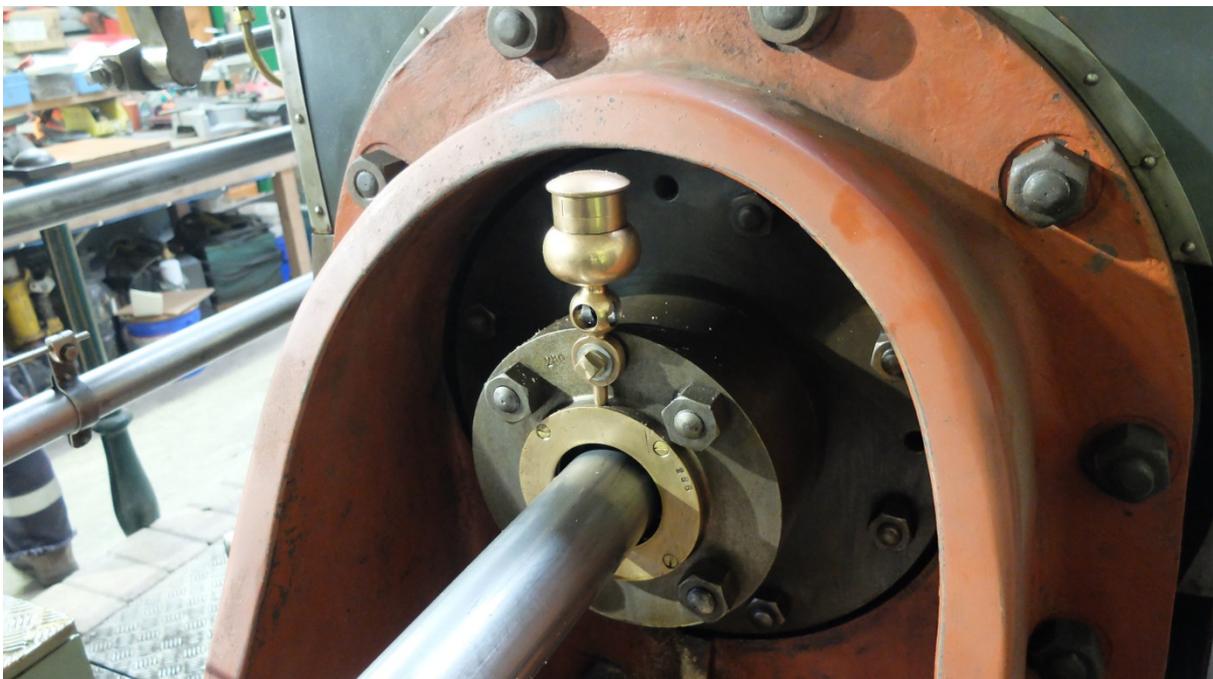


volunteer who has been coming for 34 years! Yet another lady member who has attended almost every Steam Day since the Trust started. In addition to the steaming of the engine, there will, we hope, be other things of interest going on. We hope to have the Merlin engine back sometime; a car club or two; probably some little "pop pop" stationary engines at some point, and no doubt some "in house" entertainment of a musical nature. We try to provide something of interest for all. Watch the web-site.

Earlier this year, we had to have certain sonic testing on the welded seams of the Cornish boiler, to ascertain that all was in order. This occurs every ten years. We were fortunate that we were able to get the chap who did the testing last time. He charged us a very reasonable amount! I'm glad to say, although I do not suppose he will do it again in another ten years, but a few of us won't be around then anyway! That testing was successful, and shortly after,

the boiler had its normal annual inspection, and everything was found to be in order. It is always a stressful time for our volunteers, until we get the 'all clear". We did a trial steam test more recently to make sure everything was steam-tight, because every single valve and fitting on the boiler had to be removed and stripped down - although we did not get enough pressure to try to warm the engine - that will come a little later.

Going back to the last (Winter) newsletter, you may have wondered at the amount of smoke that was issuing from the chimney in one of the photographs. Fear not, it was a picture taken whilst the Mill was still running - and they were probably stoking up. We as you know, bum wood, and our fire beaters ensure that there is no visible emission from the chimney. Smoke is, of course unburnt particles of fuel.



All but the outside part of the new steam-line to the Smith Bros, engine has been lagged and we now await some decent dry weather to lag the outside part. The big-end bearing is in place and work is now beginning on the valve timing. This is not very straightforward, as every part of all the linkage was completely stripped at first and some parts of the governor linkage has been bent at some time. We dare not put any steam to the engine until we are absolutely sure all is right, so it will not be rushed.

Still with the Bradley Project, the front of the building is in need of quite urgent attention, and will be very costly. I am hoping to get some estimates for the work in the near future, and then apply for grant. Even if we are successful in obtaining grant money, we will have to put a considerable amount to it, as 100% grants are virtually unobtainable.

I know I mentioned it in the last Letter, but I must say again how much the Trust owes to the band of stalwart volunteers who turn up nearly every week and get on with their labour of love; very often in conditions no employed workman would tolerate. Well done to all of

them. Even those members who are getting long in the tooth and somewhat frail, still enjoy coming and having a chat and a cup of tea or coffee. I am afraid that I number myself amongst them now, but still go and make a nuisance of myself!

Yet another of our regular workers is hors combat at the moment, and waiting to go into hospital for an operation on his leg, which he hopes will be in the middle of March - strike permitting! We wish Roy well, and look forward to his speedy recovery, and hearing his unmistakable laugh once again.

Our Treasurer has been busy getting the books in order at the close of our financial year, and it is now time for you to send in your subscriptions, which are badly needed. I am enclosing remittance slips with this Letter (for those who receive it by Her Majesty's post), and for those of you who get it by e-mail, my address is: Mean Moss Farm, Boulsworth Road, Trawden, Colne, Lancs. BB8 8ST.



Please remember, under the Trust rules, if I do not receive your subs, your membership will lapse and you will not get any more Newsletters either. So please help us and show your support by sending it soon. I would like to add that we are very grateful for those members who continue to send us donations by Standing Order, and other "one off" donations. Rather than spending stamp money for sending out Membership cards, I will include them in the next Letter - or you can collect them in person at the Mill. Many thanks in anticipation.

Our fuel position is quite good at the moment, although a lot of it is very wet. We do hate having to turn down offers of wood, either because we have not the space to store it, or it is not suitable for our boiler, but have to hope that as the season progresses, we will get sufficient. We will also have to keep the front of the Bradley building clear for the work that we hope will take place this year.

As I mentioned in the last Letter, Queen Street Mill at Burnley, and Helmshaw at Haslingden, are due to close at the end of March. Both of these museums are packed with textile machinery which you will be hard put to find elsewhere. As I said before, Queen Street Mill is the only complete steam operated cotton weaving mill in the world. We at Bancroft hope to pay it a visit before the doors are shut, and see the engine (a Roberts like ours) running for the last time in the foreseeable future. That will mean that Bancroft Mill engine will be the only working one on its original site in Lancashire.

There is always a lot of preparation to do as the new season approaches, but we are not filling the water system (pumps, condensing and cooling) just yet, as we can still have some very cold spells. Meanwhile, David N and Derek G have been busy with paint pots and brushes, and generally up and down ladders. Andy G has been cleaning off all the preservative oil which had coated the Roberts engine bright-work over the winter. It looked quite good before he started but once he began scouring and buffing, it looks amazing. There is, of course, loads of wood to cut ready for the coming steaming days, and that takes quite a lot of time. Things tend to get piled up over the winter, and need to be generally tidied up.

Jonathan B has been collecting more steam models - to such an extent that it is getting difficult to know how we may display them. When Roy F returns to the fold after his operation, he will no doubt have great delight in running some of them in steam.

I gave you the Steaming Dates for this year in the last Newsletter, but if in any doubt, or if they have been mislaid, have a look on our web-site: [www.bancroftmill.org.uk](http://www.bancroftmill.org.uk) where you will find lots of other items of interest.

That is all for now, folks. As always, we love to see members, old and new, so do try to visit. We are always at the Mill on a Saturday as well as Steam Days.

Goodbye for now,

Jim Gill.Hon. Secretary

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