

Dear Member,

Already we are halfway through the season, so I will attempt to bring you up to date with events. We have done quite well, so far as visitor numbers are concerned and trust that it will continue until the last Steam Day. There is no news yet regarding the transfer of the Mill premises to the new charity, Bancroft Mill Engine Museum, – we await information from our solicitor. We have had a report on the water treatment which is aimed at reducing corrosion and Jim H is progressing with organising a way of introducing the chemicals to the Cornish Boiler without having to open the manhole and also altering the way rain water is fed to the Lancashire Boiler so that in future it will not overflow.

Recently, we have moved into the realms of the mining industry. I will explain: the blow-down pit of the Lancashire boiler has always been wet, and usually has an inch or two of water in it. We have never done anything about it. But over the years it has not been good for the foundations of the boiler, so a decision was finally made to try to put in a drain which could take the water away efficiently. The idea was to put a pipe from the bottom of the pit through to the Cornish boiler house to connect up with its blow-down drain. Sounds simple, doesn't it? The drain we wish to connect to is about eight feet below yard level, and in a quite



cramped space. First, there was a quite thick brick wall to get through – Accrington engineering brick too - then the boiler house wall (about two feet). The photos above show Phil 1 on the left disappearing into the hole on one side and Phil 2 waiting expectantly in the inspection chamber. Phil 1 and Phil 2 took it in turns to operate a jack hammer and other tools including some very long drills, and after a few Saturday's hard work I am very pleased to report that the hole is completed and the pipe installed. Sincere thanks to all involved for their efforts to get this serious problem sorted out, and we look forward to seeing the improvement in the next rainy season - no doubt next month.

Toward the end of the last Steaming Season we applied for, and were awarded, a grant from the Lancashire Environmental Fund (LEF). This is the same body that gave us a large grant in 2006 to enlarge the garage to make room for the Bradley Engine. This time they were offering small grants of up to £1,000. We applied for £960 split between some new improved low energy lighting for the Bradley Engine House and new external signs for the Museum with the new logo which will come into use properly after the transfer to the new charity. The work was completed earlier this year and the LEF are planning to feature both in their annual

report. We hope that this will bring us some welcome publicity. Photos of some of the signs are below.



Locals visiting Bancroft often see the Roberts' engine nameplate and say

“Phoenix Foundry - whereabouts in Nelson was that?”

Up to now the answer was “where the car park is by the station.” However, as you can see demolition is in progress and in future the new answer will be

“Where McDonalds is”!



Bearing in mind that next year we will be celebrating one hundred years of our mill's existence, I thought I might tell you about the life of the founder. James Nutter was born at Howgill, near Rimington, Lancashire, in 1845. He received no formal education, and at the age of eight years, began work at a local shoddy mill for 1/-d (5p) a week. Shoddy mills ripped up and shredded waste material, either by hand or with a machine called a “devil”, and mixed it with wool, to produce low quality cloth.



When he was ten years old, James moved with his family to Barnoldswick, where they resided at Townhead. There he began his education at Old Tom Jolly's Seminary, at a cost of 1d per week. Presumably he learnt to read and write at that establishment, although he later said that he doubted whether Old Jolly could read himself! James also worked at Billy Bracewell's mill as a “throstle doffer”. Throstles were the name given to the water frames used in spinning yarn, as they sounded like a throstle, or thrush, when in action. Mr Bracewell, also known locally as Old Billycock, because of the hat he always wore, owned Butts Mill and Wellhouse Mill as well as a colliery and the local cornmill.

At eighteen years of age, James was not happy with his prospects, and moved to Edenfield, near Ramsbottom, where he had some relatives. He obtained employment with the firm of Messrs. Porrit and Austin as a wool spinner. Soon he was earning 30/- (£1.50) and

more a week, which was a large sum in those days. He was able to send money to his parents, who were not having an easy time. After a while, however, the firm's partnership was dissolved, and James returned home, although with the promise of more work at Edenfield if the firm was reinstated.

Not long after that the firm did start up again, and James returned to his old job, staying there for a few years. It was during this period that he met his wife, Mary Jane Chadwick. They were both twenty-three years of age (1868). After they were married, they returned to Barnoldswick. They lived at Stopes House, about 100 yards down the road from the Mill - it's still there.

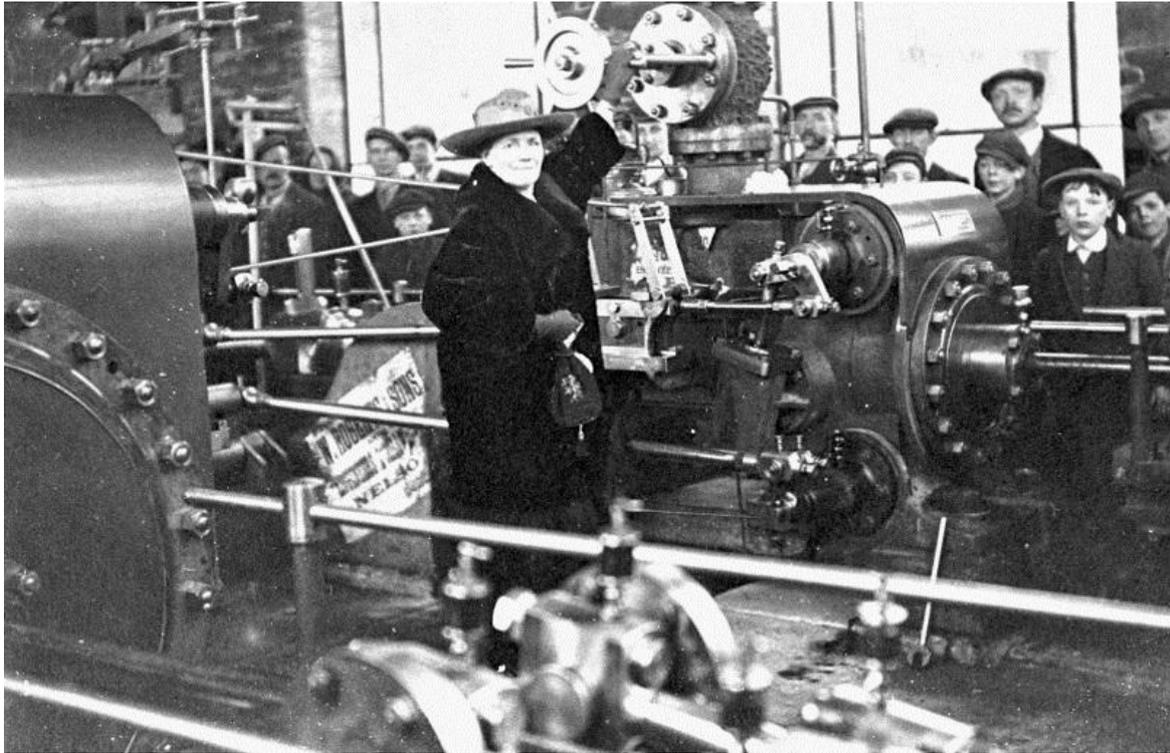
James must have become dissatisfied with the textile industry at this time, because he began, together with his father, to sell books from door to door. They sold mainly bibles and obtained them from Blackie's the publishers of Edinburgh. They were quite successful and before long James had saved sufficient money to start a textile venture of his own. In 1876 he began with 56 looms at Coates Mill, off the Thornton Road, between the Leeds and Liverpool canal and the Stock Beck. It was common in those days to rent looms and premises, and also the power of a steam engine. This was known as "room and power". At that time there were only three other weaving sheds in Barnoldswick; later there would be thirteen. James remained at Coates for about four years, then entering into partnership with his brother-in-law, Slater Edmondson. He then moved to Clough Mill, near the centre of the village, off Walmsgate. This had originally started as an 18<sup>th</sup> century water mill, preparing warp and weft for putting out to hand-loom weavers. In 1846, it became the first cotton factory in the town, with a power-loom shed built onto the old building, driven by a steam beam engine.

Later, the partnership was dissolved, and James moved to Long Ing shed, beside the canal to the east of the town, where he ran 400 looms. He remained there for five years. His next move, around 1890, was to Calf Hall shed, near Wapping in Barlick, with 414 looms, where he remained until the opening of Bankfield shed. This shed was later taken over by Rolls Royce. There he ran 900 looms and would obviously have employed a good number of staff. About 1909 the firm became a private limited company entitled James Nutter & Sons Ltd.

During 1914, plans were in hand to build a completely new mill for the firm, but the Great War intervened, and the work was put on hold for a few years. From such humble beginnings, James Nutter progressed to become an eminent figure in the area. He was elected to the first Local Board, and remained on the Urban District Council until poor health forced him to retire from public service. James also devoted over 50 years to the Independent Methodist Church. During the later years of his life, he travelled extensively, visiting Palestine, Egypt on six occasions and America. He died at Southport on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1914, survived by his wife, seven sons, a daughter and 23 grandchildren.

So, James Nutter never saw his new mill. The building work continued after the War, the firm being run by his sons. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 1920, the mill engine was ceremonially started by his daughter, Eliza Jane Slater, and Bancroft Mill became the thirteenth and last mill to be built in Barnoldswick. At the time it embodied the latest in modern technology and it ran for the next 57 years. The two cylinders of the preserved engine are still named in recognition of James and his wife, Mary Jane.

Overleaf, there is a picture of Eliza starting the engine in 1920.



WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN THE BACKGROUND? If you know, please tell us!

Till next time, goodbye, Jim Gill 01282 865626.

