

BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST.

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2018.

Dear Member,

Time to look forward to the coming season and bring you up to date of events at Bancroft. The first item is a very important date, which I trust you will make a special note of – the Annual General Meeting of the Trust will take place on Saturday 23rd June 2018. It will be at the Mill, and will commence at 1.30 pm. There will be refreshments, as usual, and a chance to look round and talk to the regular volunteers. I have also booked some nice sunny and warm weather, so there is no excuse for not coming!

You know the problem with the bus services - when you wait ages, and then three or four turn up together? Well our wood supply is rather like that. We sometimes get very low on fuel for the boiler and begin desperately searching for something to burn. At other times, however, it seems that everyone wants to send us boards and pallets, and we end up “snowed under” with wood. That is the situation at the moment, with the entrance, yard and so on, stacked with wood. We really cannot afford to refuse offers, but we have had to call a halt to deliveries for the time being, and just hope they start again when we need them.

The annual inspection of the Cornish boiler took place in good time just before Christmas and it was passed for the next season’s operation. The only defect the Inspector noticed was a very small area of slight corrosion on the firetube at one point. Not bad enough to warrant welding yet (a very expensive thing), and he suggested that the area in question be coated



Philip emerging from the boiler



The Fusible Plug

with a very special paint to protect it for a while. We have now got the paint (expensive, of course) and our youngest (adult) volunteer, Philip, has valiantly cleaned up the affected area and applied two coats.



Philip is about the only chap who can get in and out of the man-hole without a struggle. The fusible plug (a safety device on the fire-tube) has also been examined and found to be still serviceable. This plug is designed to protect the boiler if the water level should fall too low. The Firebeater (boilerman) keeps a close eye on the water level gauges and tops up the boiler when needed. If, for whatever reason, the water level drops too low, endangering the boiler, the alloy in the fusible plug would melt, the plug would fall out and water and steam would be released from the fire-tube

alerting the Firebeater and probably extinguishing the fire.

Both the Roberts engine and the Smith & Eastwood engine were very well coated in oil at the close of last season, and they have shown few signs of any surface rust and any patches have been dealt with as they were found. Surprising, as there has been such a lot of very damp and humid weather. We do not anticipate any problems when they are started, so fingers crossed. This picture from a few years ago, shows just how quickly rust can develop in the cold and damp.



Our Committee has been discussing the much-needed repairs and re-building of the front of the garage, which houses the Smith & Eastwood engine. We did eventually receive estimates for the work last year, but had to put the whole process on hold, mainly because of the on-going Water Authority fiasco. Since then however, the Authority has waived some £7,200 they said was owing for Highways Drainage charges, which gesture has given us the chance of trying again to get the garage sorted out. Though they still expect us to pay about £1100 per year in future. We are trying to get them to clarify their suggestions on how this might be reduced.

We have now decided, therefore, to apply for a grant, and possibly a second grant to go with it, so that we can get on with the project before the subsidence to the front of the building gets any worse. If and when it is completed, it will make such a good visual effect to the front of the Museum, as well as giving much natural light to the engine.

One on-going improvement job which Dave and Derek are tackling is extending the walk-way along the economiser. This has been made possible at minimum cost by the arrival of several very strong and large packing cases along with the usual supply of pallets. These have been carefully dismantled to provide very strong wooden beams with a top layer of chipboard which will then be painted. When it is finished, we should be able to display quite a few more artefacts there. Consideration has also to be given to the eventual site of the small steam engine we received in exchange for the Campbell oil engine last year. It obviously needs to

be somewhere inside, but space is at a premium and we have very little space to place it, especially as it will, of course, need to be well guarded.



Once again we are faced with new legal requirements which have to be complied with, this time in the shape of the General Data Protection Regulations. These are being introduced following the outcry over charities passing on details of their supporters to other charities. Needless to say we never have, and never will do that, and even though you are all members of Bancroft Mill Engine Trust we do have to check that we have your permission to continue to contact you. If you are receiving this Newsletter by post you will find on the next page a form on which you can confirm that you are happy for us to continue to contact you. Please complete and sign and date this and return it in the enclosed SAE. If you have received this Newsletter by email you will receive another email in the next few weeks asking you the same question.

Now, as the new season is about to start, may I remind you, if you have not already renewed your membership, that our Membership Secretary would very much like to receive subscriptions, donations, wads of cash you have hidden under the mattress, etc. Subs are a very important part of our annual income, and are much needed. The subs are still the same this year - £12 and £10 for concessions, £6 for Junior Members. Please bring or send them to the Trust as soon as you can. Thank you.

I would like to finish this letter by thanking all of you members who support us, whether for a short or long time, and the volunteers who do such valiant work all year round to keep the place working, not forgetting that small band of delightful ladies who take such care of our visitors.

Please try to come to the Mill, either on a Steam Day or any Saturday; we love to see you. Until the next letter, I will say TTFN.

Jim Gill. 01282 865626. February 2018.