

BANCROFT MILL ENGINE TRUST.

AUTUMN NEWS LETTER 2015.

Dear Member,

Much has gone on since the last letter. Sunday 7th September was a "red letter" day at the Mill when the top half of the Smith Bros. & Eastwood fly-wheel was reunited with the bottom half, which had languished all on its own in the pit for a long time - The friendly man with the very big tractor came and with some very skilful, and rather close encounters with door lintel and roof truss, placed it perfectly in position. The twelve big bolts were then put in, to secure the two halves. It did look different! The following Saturday - after a great deal of gently jacking the whole wheel and easing it back and forth, the stakes were inserted to key the wheel to the main-shaft. All the packing pieces in the pit were removed, and all that remains to be done is to turn the wheel and make sure that it is running true –which may be a bit of a fiddle.



In the meantime, the barring fulcrum is ready to be fitted so that some strong person can turn the wheel and subsequently the whole engine, when it is linked up. Also safety rails have been made to separate the public from the engine. We have five lovely cast-iron railing columns, saved from the Bradley mill, which will be placed in a prominent position. The other columns will be fabricated from steel tube, but will not detract from the engine. Moving the fly-wheel half has freed up the top end of the car park so we can accommodate a few more vehicles.

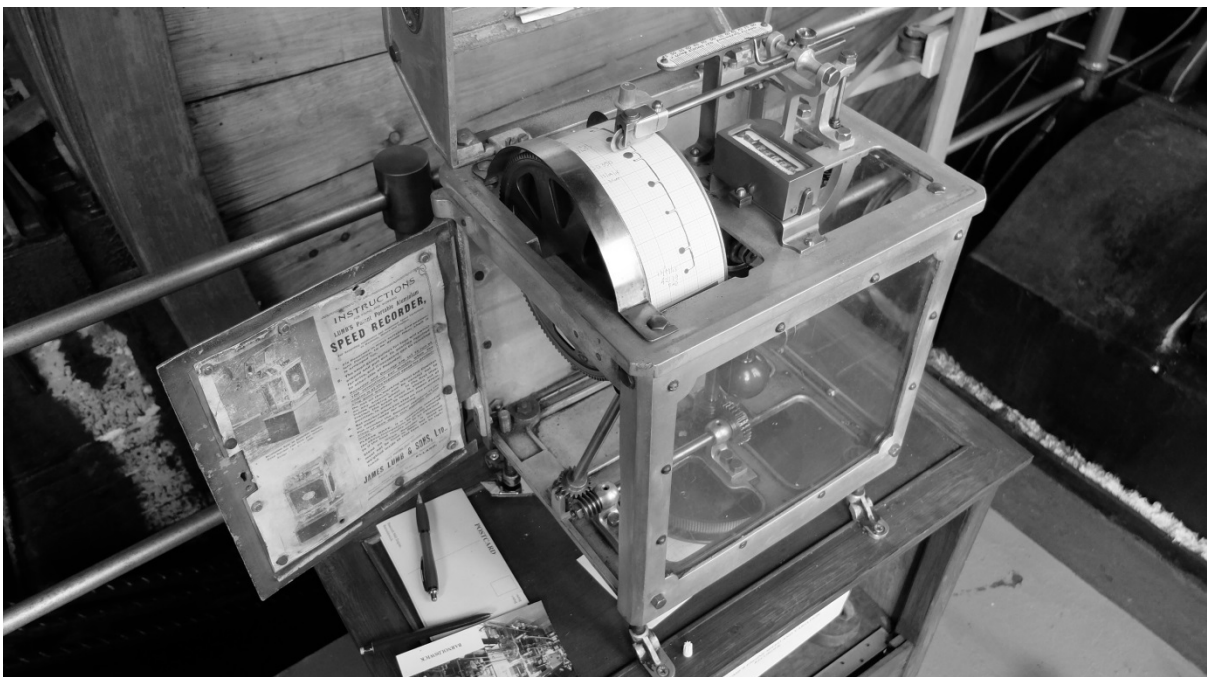
David N is progressing well from his neck injury. He still has to keep the neck brace on for a while yet but that has not prevented him from painting and doing some cementing around the Mill! His main complaint is that the brace makes his neck sweat.



Tony N has rigged up a natty little gadget on the second motion fly-wheel oil aquariums of the Roberts engine. Unless one climbs up to them, it is difficult to see if the oil is running into the bearings. Tony has placed three small battery operated LED lights in the oil reservoirs. They can easily be seen from the back of the engine, and the ones which are immersed in oil appear orange but if any appear white, it means they are out of the oil and the level is dropping. Well done, that man.

Still with the Roberts engine, for a long time we have had a Lumb's drum recorder by the engine but in spite of several attempts to drive it (from the main shaft) a suitable belt could not be found. Then some modern material was obtained, and Andy G did some alterations to the driven pulley. With bated breath we waited to see if it worked - and it did. The drum recorder (which many steam engines had) is a really beautiful little machine. When the engine is running it counts the number of revolutions and traces a line on paper attached to a rotating drum, showing any deviation in speed. The drum rotates about once every working day. In the days of the working mills, it would be a great help in ensuring that the engine is performing well. Incidentally I would not like to guess how much it would cost today to make the recorder. The little governor and all the gears alone would cost a fortune!

We have, of course just had our annual National Heritage open days, when we offer free entry and usually do very well. Because the public can get in free of charge, they tend to be more generous with donations and buying goods from our little shop- Once again, we had a

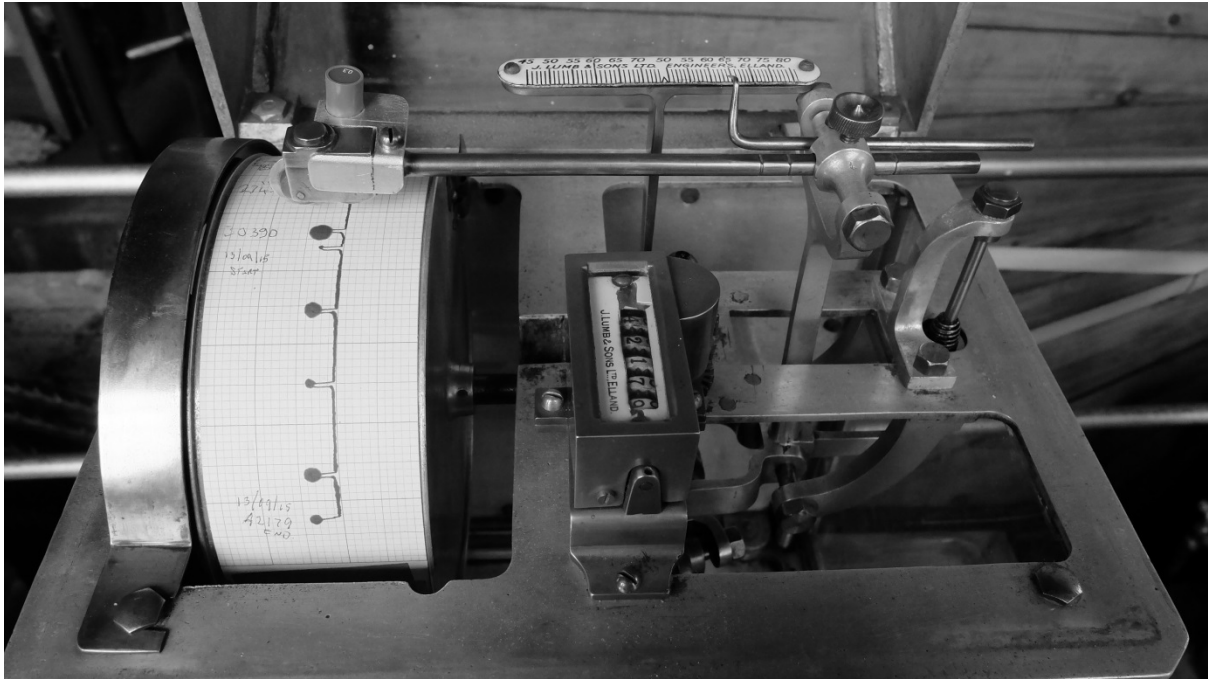


lot of people and although I do not know yet how much money we made I think it will turn out to be quite good.

One thing we always try to do on the Open Days is to raffle a replica of the Roberts maker's plate. Thanks to work done by one of our members we were able to hold the raffle again this year, and we sold a lot of tickets. The draw took place on the Sunday afternoon and of course, the winner had bought the ticket on the Saturday, so was not present. However, we were able to contact them by mobile phone and they collected their prize the following week. They were a Mr Dodd from London (glad I didn't have to post it), and the winning number was 52. There are very few of such plaques around nowadays, so I hope it will be treasured.



Yet another attraction on that weekend was a marvellous 1913 Crossley army tender, complete with Lewis machine gun, kindly displayed by a local collector. He is currently working on a replica First World War aircraft fuselage, which will be mounted on a replica trailer he has built. With the trailer behind the tender, it will be a very long vehicle. As to the braking system - well I would not like to drive it downhill in the wet! Also on show, was a 1920 Triumph model "H" motorcycle of the type which was used for carrying dispatches. I had hoped to have had a World War2 army truck there as well, but the owner was away and waiting for some brake parts so it didn't happen - it would have been nice to display artefacts from both wars.



We still have some more Steam days to come before the season ends, and lots of ongoing work. One thing which is going to be very useful and save us money is the fact that our lathe is up and running at last. We need to get all the insulation material for the new pipe-work from the boiler to the Smith engine before the winter weather sets in - at least all the outside sections. That is in hand.

Our 35e Annual General Meeting has been and gone. Not a lot of people there as usual. However, all the officers and members of the Committee were re-elected. We are indebted to Tony N for volunteering to keep the web-site up to date. There is also talk of having a Bancroft blog; (whatever that means).

We have a very good team of ladies and men working regularly for the trust now, and I am sure you will all wish to join me in saying a big "Thank You" to them all. It is not that many years ago when, if we could raise five or six people on a Saturday or Steam Day, we counted ourselves lucky! I hope it continues.

That is all, until I get round to writing the Winter Newsletter (perish the thought!)- Hope to see you at the Mill soon.

Jim Gill. Hon. Sec. 01282 865626. September 2015.

