

# Bancroft Mill Engine Museum

## Spring Newsletter 2023



As Spring is now with us, we begin with some Nature Notes....

If you have ever looked up into the trees in our car park, you might have noticed nesting boxes in various sizes. These have all been made and installed by David, our longest serving volunteer who has been involved here since before the Museum first opened. The largest box, on the tree nearest the road, is of the size and design recommended for owls, but David has to cover up the opening every winter otherwise squirrels tend to take it over for hibernation. A few years ago, he climbed up and had a look during the nesting season. These are two of his photos.



We've not been so lucky this year, all we've got is pigeons!

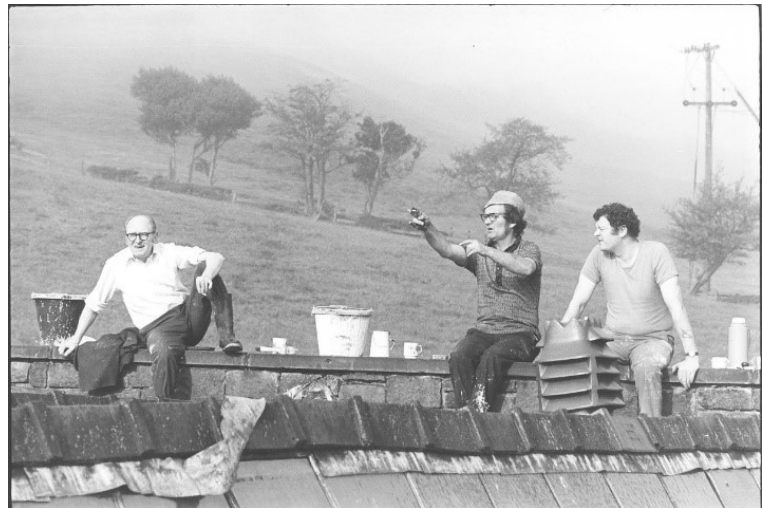
We can't guarantee the results of course, but a range of David's next boxes and a hedgehog house are available to buy in our Gift Shop.

Last year I included this photo when I emailed the Summer edition to members. It shows the annual task at all weaving sheds of whitewashing the northern light windows, just like you do in a greenhouse, to stop it overheating.

Pictured here, from left to right are

- Ernie Roberts, Tackler
- John Plummer, Firebeater
- Roy Wellock, Tackler.

This photo is one of many we have taken by Stanley Graham, the last Engine Tenter at Bancroft between 1975 and 1978.



It reminded Life Member, Jim H of a Summer job he had in 1976.

This is what he told me:

*When I was about 18, together with three mates, we spent two days over Easter on the roof of The Scapa Mill, near Witton Park in Blackburn whitewashing the roof. We were well paid, cash in hand by Don Fox, local window cleaner and entrepreneur. Don gave us all a health and safety talk before we started on the asbestos roof, "always walk where the bolts are, or you'll go through onto the machines below."*

*The whitewash was in large buckets and we had brooms to spread it across the windows. It was slippy stuff and one of the lads, Big Ade, got some on his boots and slid down the roof to*

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*shouts of " he's away!" He teetered in the gutter before thankfully regaining his balance. In the end we all came away unscathed apart from severe sunburn. The wash was bright white on the outside, but when you went into the mill it was green.*

*Those couple of days paid for us all to go off to that years Isle of Man TT races - happy days!!*

Jim may no longer be whitewashing roofs but he has retained his love of motorbikes and visits us on his, most Steaming Days.

It isn't that long since we reported the financial results for the Mill for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2022, but we can now report the figures for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2023, which we will be sending the Charity Commission very soon. This was the first year of normal operations post-COVID. Our total income was £24,523, which after expenditure of £10,752 left us with a surplus of £13,771. The total income from Steaming Days was £7,718 the highest figure ever, even though we had slightly fewer visitors than in the last 'normal' year 2019. Donations brought in £10,178, about 14% of this comes from six supporters to give money regularly each month by Standing Order.

If you came to the Steaming on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, you will have seen a wide selection of classic cars. We were expecting two clubs and then a third one turned up unexpectedly. We had enough space - just! Here is a splendid Vauxhall 12 from 1935. If you belong to, or have contacts with any other car club or other group who might enjoy a group visit to the Mill, please contact Myra.

[publicity@bancroftmill.org.uk](mailto:publicity@bancroftmill.org.uk)



James and Mary-Jane Nutter had eight children and thirty-five grandchildren that we know of, so it is not surprising that they have a large number of descendants. We are always pleased to see any of them at the Mill, even more so when they have made contact for the first time and come from far away. Earlier this month we met for the first time Alison Holtshousen and her sister Sue Allan, who had come all the way from South Africa, with their husbands Ken and Terry. Alison and Sue are daughters of Kenneth Nutter, whose father was Rupert, born in 1886. They grew up in West Marton, only a few miles from Barlick, but the Kenneth emigrated to South Africa with his wife and four children in the 1960s. A fifth child was

born in South Africa. Here are Ken, Alison, Sue and Terry at the end of their visit.

Overleaf begins the next part of Ian's brief history of the Mill

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### Part 2 – Peace at last

Bancroft Mill probably began the war without any real sense of either desperation or urgency. No-one at that stage had any real idea how long the war might last nor what would be its effects. By November 1939 a Cotton Control had been set up to regulate the industry’s war effort. Many mills worked at less than full capacity due to shortage of raw cotton – which all had to be imported – and the loss of their workforce into the armaments industry. Unusually, Bancroft Mill did not get turned into an arms factory – it kept weaving throughout the war. The Essential Work Order prevented certain workers from leaving their jobs to go elsewhere. There began a long-running correspondence between Bancroft Mill and the authorities, one set using the National Service (Armed Forces) Act of 1939 to try to conscript the mill employees into the services and Bancroft trying to persuade them that these same employees were essential to the continuance of the Mill’s war production. All the employees were eventually classed as “essential workers” and coincidentally one of them, Bertha Baldwin, lived in the house in which Elizabeth Brown had died. As far as we can ascertain there were 221 persons employed by BM in 1941 and this figure was maintained until 1949.

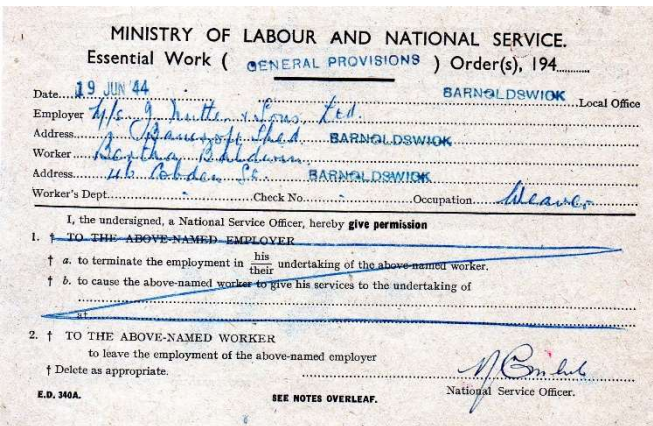
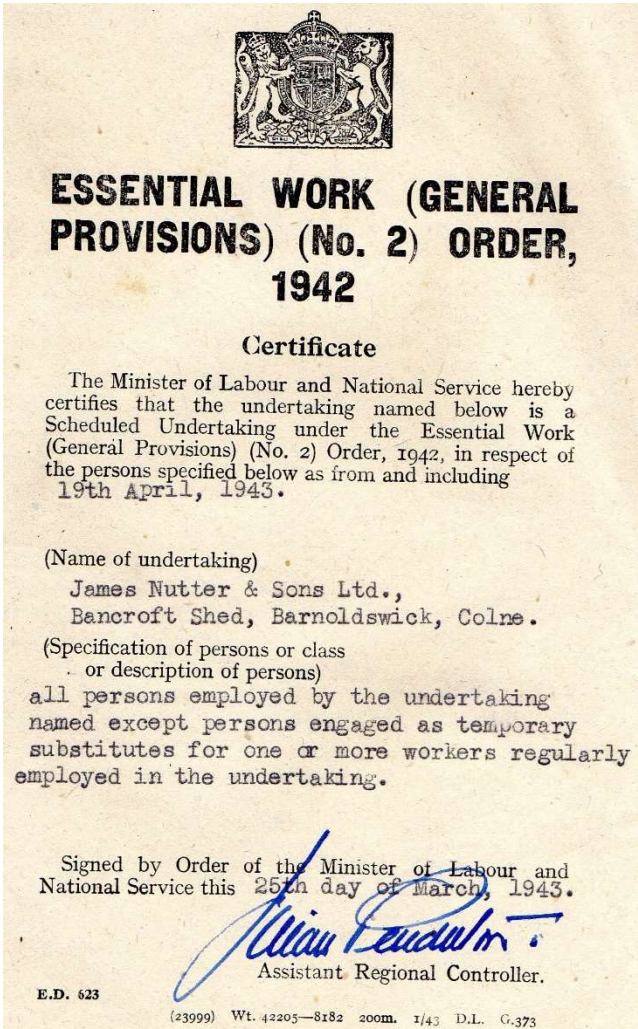
They had a Christmas party too! – see picture.



Government order rather than by voluntary action.

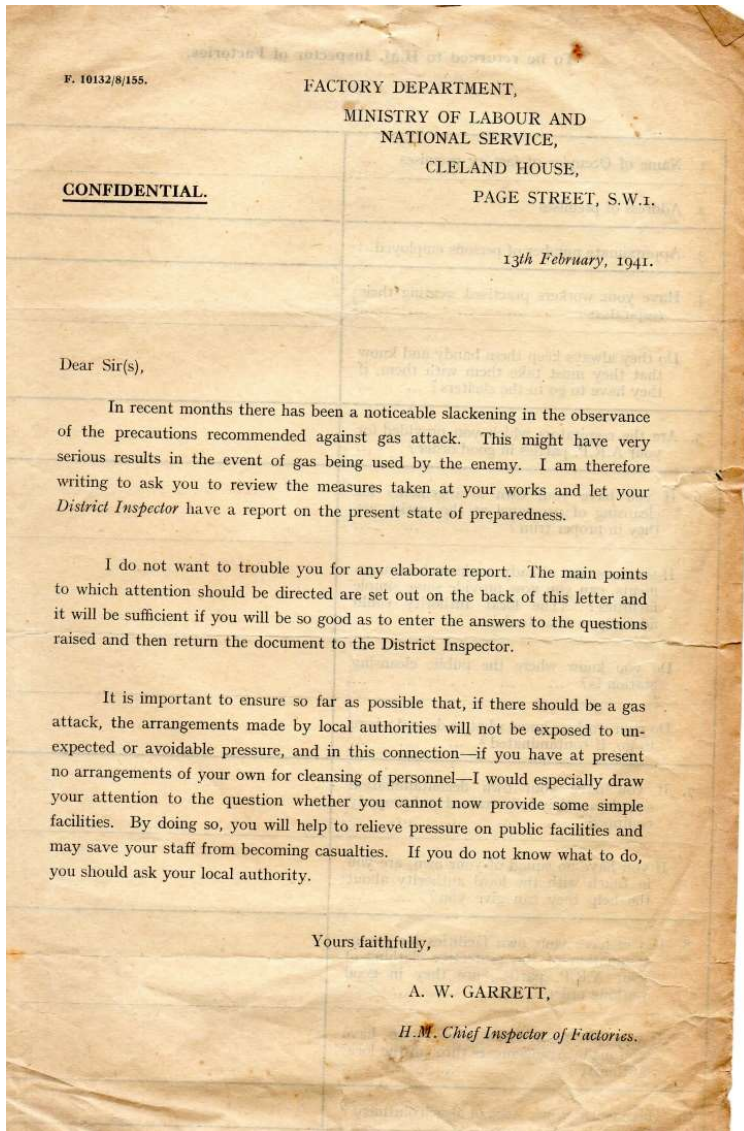
The Cotton Control was all-powerful. By 1942 it fixed cotton prices and every order for yarn or for cloth had to get their approval. By 1943, 50% of the labour force in textiles was employed on

In mid 1939 there had been a million employees in “textiles” – by mid 1944 it was 620,000. In comparison, imports of cotton were 600,000 tons before the war and 440,000 tons in 1944 with exports of cotton piece goods being 1386 and 374 million square yards respectively. But about 1/3 of the cotton industry capacity was closed by



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fulfilling Government orders. The needs of the war came first: the Fine Spinners and Doublers made inflatable decoy tanks and 20 million yards of floating rope for the navy and RAF. The Control Board effectively rationed cotton and it kept the records. Bancroft Mill got itself an official rebuke for not supplying the required monthly figures on time. It also got a hint from central Government that they should pay attention to the need for fire precautions. Though never a major target for the bombers, East Lancashire was hit many times from the air during the Second World War, with high explosives, incendiaries and land mines, though none appear to have landed on Barnoldswick.



At some point - we have conflicting evidence as to the precise date - the Mill acquired the Cornish boiler – second-hand – which we use today. This boiler was intended to assist the Lancashire boiler by taking some of the load off it. The Cornish boiler was taken out of service in 1948 as it and the Lancashire boiler had shared a common flue which was an unsatisfactory arrangement and the Cornish boiler never worked properly. Very fortunately it was left in situ and has been used to provide steam since the Museum opened in 1982.

Finally: a reminder that if you need something to do from time to time, here are the remainder of the year's steaming dates. These can always be found on our completely revised web site [www.bancroftmill.org.uk](http://www.bancroftmill.org.uk) do have a look and let us know what you think.

4 June	6 August	8 October
25 June	27 August	29 October
16 July	17 September	19 November

We look forward to seeing you during the year.

Ian McKay      Tony Nixon      May 2023