

Bancroft Mill Engine Museum Summer Newsletter 2024



The year so far

The good start to the year reported last time has continued, such that after eight steaming days we have had 661 visitors and takings of £6688.

At the 30th June Steaming Day we welcomed the Mayor of Pendle Cllr Mohammed Aslam. We invite the Mayor each year to recognise the link between the Council Bancroft, as without the involvement of Pendle Council the museum would never have been established after the mill closed. The link has been further strengthened as under the constitution of BMEM established in 2018, Pendle Council appoints one of our Trustees. At present this is Cllr Chris Church who lives only just up the road from the Mill and is also a Barnoldswick Town Councillor.



Pendle Business Awards

The Mayor's visit was not our only recent public engagement. Earlier in the year we were invited to submit an entry in the Hospitality and Tourism category of these awards, which Ian duly did. Sadly we did not come first, but it all helps to raise the profile of the Mill

and Ian's hard work earned us a certificate as a finalist. Here he is receiving it, resplendent in the McKay tartan. (I'm waiting for him to get a boiler suit made in that cloth)

2023 Financial Results

By the time you read this we will have submitted the Trustees' Annual report to the Charity Commission for our last financial year, ending 31st Jan 2024. Last year was a very successful year from the visitor point of view, with Steaming Day takings of £10,500 and 1044 visitors, both record figures. If it weren't for the expenditure on the chimney we would have made a surplus of £12,252 but after spending £20,750 on the chimney, the final position was a deficit of £8,498.

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There's always something

In the last Newsletter I reported on the hole that had mysteriously appeared in the drive. We consulted all the old photographs and drainage plans that we could find, thinking that it might have been a collapsed, but disused, drain but we did not reach any firm conclusions. The hole has been refilled and so far all is well.

During the first June Steaming Day we noticed that the rope drive to the oil pump on the Low Pressure side Second Motion Wheel aquarium was slipping meaning that the oil from the bearing was not being pumped back to the tank. The drive is provided by two cords each about a quarter of an inch in diameter and these had, over time, dug into the ring of black foam rubber that had previously been stuck around the shaft. As our chief rope-splicer (and Chairman) was on holiday at the time we had to improvise and increase the diameter of the shaft by fixing half a dozen thin bits of wood with insulating tape – picture on right.



By the time of our next Steaming Day, Graham had stripped off all the black, yellow and white additions you can see above and replaced them with two layers of rubber backed mat stuck directly to the second motion shaft. It is difficult to see how the effective the drive would have been originally with the cords directly onto the metal shaft, but that is how it was done in for each of the four oil return pumps on the engine.

Cellar camera

Graham has been busy in other ways too; he has now installed a CCTV camera in the cellar to give visitors a view of the air pump in operation when the engine is running. The angle and position make this a better view than was ever possible when visitors were allowed into the cellar.

If you are reading the on-line version of this Newsletter you can click on the phot to watch a video clip.



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Chimney Progress

Weather conditions have still not allowed the Steeplejack to return but he is keeping in touch with us and assures us that he will get the job completed when conditions permit. It seems likely that this work will continue into 2025.

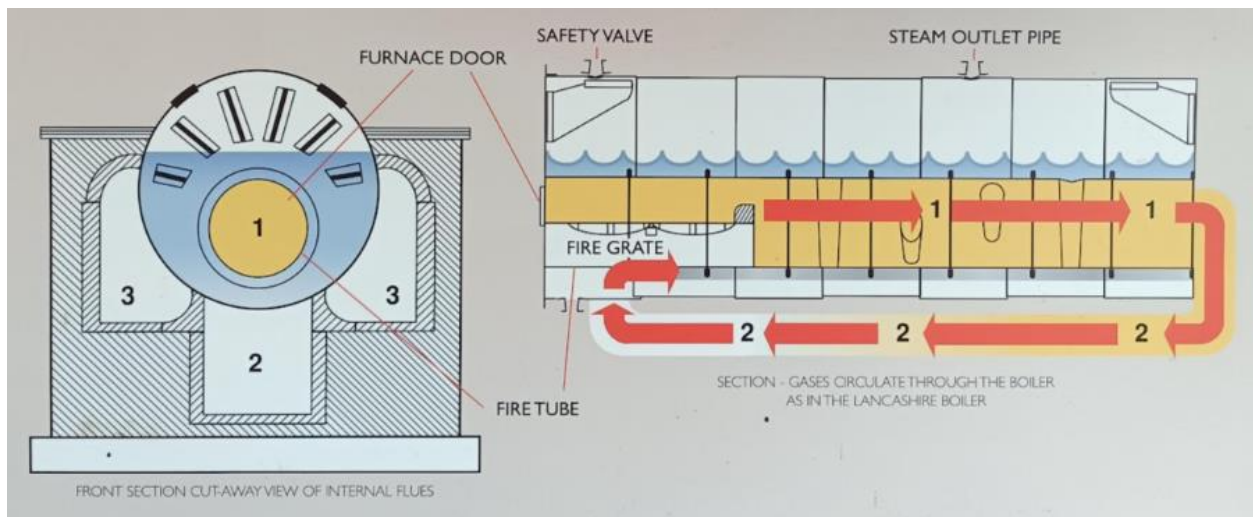
The Boiler and its future

You may recall that earlier this year we had to have a considerable amount of welding done to rebuild the material thickness in parts of the boiler firetube (or furnace as the Inspector calls it). The bill for this including, the additional fee for the Boiler Inspector to oversee and approve the work was £10,680. In his report on the inspection of the Boiler after the work was completed in March the Inspector said:

"It would be prudent, due to the age and extent of necessary repairs this year, that plans, costings etc be put in place for the future replacement of the furnace."

Verbally he has advised that we might get another five years life out of the firetube, but this is not guaranteed and the whole boiler is of course subject to annual inspections. The next one is booked for December this year.

This is a very serious state of affairs, the firetube is the central tube in the boiler which has the fire at the front and carries the flue gasses though the boiler to the back.



In the drawing above it is shaded in yellow and is roughly 3ft in diameter 20ft long and weighs around 2 tons. It is rivetted in place inside the boiler shell by well over 100 rivets. I don't suppose when the boiler was built in 1912 that they gave any thought to how it might be replaced after more than a century of use. If you have been receiving this newsletter since last century(!) you may remember the last major boiler repair in 1997. Then the plates over a large area of the bottom of the boiler shell had to be replaced – which meant that the boiler had to be removed, and that in itself is a considerable undertaking. We are therefore looking at all possible options for the repair of the Boiler to ascertain what might and might not be affordable or whether complete replacement of the boiler is a feasible alternative. The picture on the next page gives a good idea of the size of the boiler and the firetube – and yes - that is a man sitting on the top of it in a red

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boilersuit. This shows the boiler upside down at McEwen's works in Cowling. The long yellow lines mark the areas that had to be cut away and replaced in 1997.



We shall keep you posted on how things progress. We hope that we can come up with an affordable solution that will allow us to continue to steam with this boiler, but at present nothing can be guaranteed. The future running of the engine and the museum is dependent on a suitable solution being found.

If anyone has any suggestions or knows of any other Cornish boilers which have the firetube replaced, we would be very interested to hear them.

You can always find a list of our Steaming Days on the website www.bancroftmill.org.uk but for convenience here is a list of the remaining ones for this year.

22 nd September	3 rd November
13 th October	24 th November

Note that on 3rd November we will welcome back Sid Calderbank - Lancashire Sid - to entertain us along with his friends from the Lancashire Society. I think it is six years since we last saw him.

We look forward to seeing you later this year if you can make it.

Tony Nixon

September 2024