

Bancroft Mill Engine Museum

Autumn Newsletter 2024



Results for the year

Our steaming year has just finished. You may remember that we were unable to steam as planned on 17th March because of the ongoing repairs to the boiler, nevertheless we did open, without steam, and were very pleased to welcome 99 visitors on the day, a number only equalled or beaten twice later in the year. Overall, on our thirteen Sunday openings we had 994 visitors (including 96 visits by Members – many of you come more than once in a year) and takings of £10,380, so we were within touching distance of last year's record figures.

Another School visit

In mid-October we had another visit from Gisburn Road Primary School in Barlick. This was preceded by Ian and Myra visiting the school for a lesson the day before.

After their visit to the Mill each child was given a voucher offering a reduced price family ticket to the Steaming Day the following weekend, those children who took up this offer obviously gained a much better idea of at least one aspect of the mill and brought in at least eight people who might otherwise not have come.

Another school visit took place in late November after the last Steaming Day of the year.

Boiler – Fire Tube replacement

We have started considering our options for the Boiler. It is difficult to make much progress without some definite answers on whether the fire tube can be replaced at a cost that is reasonable. The most desirable option, as I am sure you will agree, would be to replace the fire tube so that we can carry on running with steam as we do now. If that is unaffordable or technically impossible then will have to consider other options such as finding an alternative source of steam or running the engines on compressed air, or with an electric drive.

We have so far approached the two local firms of boilermakers, Varley's and McEwen's, about a new fire tube. McEwen's have made an initial visit and said that they will need to come back when the boiler has been emptied to inspect the interior. They will then have to do some initial design work before they can quote us. With the best will in the world it will be next year before we have an idea of price from them.

In the meantime, the Boiler Inspector rather surprised us by asking for a hydraulic test to be performed on the boiler in addition to the regular annual inspection in December. This is because he wants to check that the repairs carried out earlier this year have performed well. Thanks to several days extra work by volunteers this week the test was carried out on 28th Nov and I am very pleased to say the Inspector was happy with the result. We should have some more definite news for the next Newsletter.

Charities Aid Foundation

During the course of the year we have received a total of £400 in three separate donations made via the Charities Aid Foundation. We have no way of knowing from whom these came nor if they were all from the same donor. If anyone reading this is one of our mystery donors we thank you very much!

Guttering

For some time, we have been concerned about the state of the guttering on the Engine House but uncertain on how to inspect it; it is far too high for our ladders or scaffolding. Matters came to a head in the summer(!!) when during heavy rain it became apparent that water was overflowing the gutters, getting into the brickwork and puddling on the floor inside. Soon after this Graham noticed, not far from his home, that a large cherry picker was regularly parked. He made contact with the owner, [Jack Croft](#), who specialises in the installation and servicing of oil stoves and multifuel fires. Jack very kindly offered to help out, and within a few weeks he came to the mill and operated the controls whilst Graham rose to great heights and cleaned and inspected the gutters, repointing some coping stones along the way.



We have also been flummoxed for a while by a sapling of some sort growing high-up on the south gable. Graham was able to



deal with this too, it was surprisingly big once you saw it at ground level.

Of course, in all matters of this nature, safety is paramount, and a good number of volunteers were on hand to:

- deal with any eventuality *
- offer unhelpful advice *
- just stand and watch *

** delete whichever is inapplicable.*



Jack was with us for about three hours at his own expense for which we are immensely grateful. We invited Jack and his family to the Steaming Day on 3rd November to say thank you, and his father started the engine.

Family Tree

One of our Life Members in the Isle of Man who is a great-great-granddaughter-in-law of James Nutter sent us a very large family tree of his descendants which she had researched a while ago. We have now transcribed this into a smaller format, so it is easier to handle and there is a copy kept at the Mill. We are keen to add to this and fill in any blanks, so if you are related to James Nutter, or think you may be, please let us know when you visit and we will see what we can find out.

W E and D Nutter Ltd

Speaking of blanks, there were quite a number of Nutter family weaving firms, not just James Nutter and Sons Ltd, but also Thomas Nutter, Nutter Bros, and the one that is confusing me now, W.E. & D Nutter Ltd who were operating 1100 looms in the 'Room & Power' shed at Wellhouse Mill in 1939. The W.E. Nutter is clearly Wilfrid Ewart Nutter, son of James, who was MD of James Nutter & Sons and ran Bancroft pretty much until his death in 1958. I've seen it suggested that the D Nutter was '*his brother David*' but there is no trace of a brother called David (even as a second name) or of a cousin David. Can anyone throw any light on this?

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The Return of Sid

At the Steaming Day on 3rd November we welcomed back Sid Calderbank and Friends from the Lancashire Society to provide entertainment. This was his first time with us since before the Pandemic and he brought with him the Chorley Town Crier. Playing the guitar here is Mark Dowding.



If you were with us that day and enjoyed the entertainment, or if you have any strong views on whether this sort of thing adds to, or detracts from, the enjoyment of a Steaming Day please let me know.

Forgotten Corners - The Office

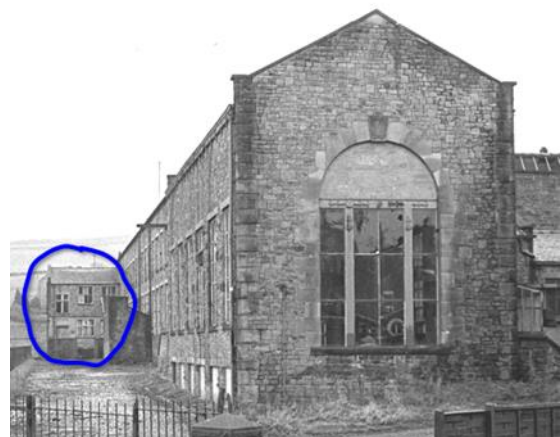
I'm trying out this occasional section to tell you something about parts of the Museum that many visitors may not pay much attention to, and I begin with the 'Office.'

Those of you who have been Members for 25 years or more will, I am sure, remember this paragraph from Jim Gill's Newsletter from February 2000...

Still in the Engine House, you may remember that I mentioned plans for a replica Mill Office. Well, we have started on the construction of it, and hopefully it will be ready when we start steaming this year. We have one or two artefacts to put in it, but if anyone has a tailor's dummy, or at least the top half, we will be able to make the office even more realistic. An old calendar of the 1930's to 1940's would look good too. So, have a look in the attic and see if there is anything we may include to make the effect authentic.

The work was finished later in 2000, and as far as I know, apart from the addition of more artefacts, the 'office' located at the south end of the low pressure side of the engine, has been pretty much unchanged since then. Of course, the real Mill Office was never in this location, it was located in what looked like a cottage built onto the far end of the warehouse, shown ringed in blue here.

It was a small, but vital part of the operation. We don't have any information about the office in the early days, but thanks to Stanley Graham (who took the black and white photos here) we know that in the late 1970s the office staff was fewer than two, Sydney Nutter worked full-time and his brother Ughtred came to help with the wages two or three days a week. They were grandsons of James Nutter, but as Sydney said to Stanley, they were not part of the 'Nutter Millions.'



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The office was on the first floor, and if you worked in an office in the 1970s or earlier you will relate to all the features you can see here - apart from the sloping desks perhaps. There is even an ash tray! The box between the two windows was an intercom system to the Engine House and probably other parts of the Mill except the Weaving Shed where it would have been useless.



I don't think anyone every came forward with a 1930s calendar for the wall or indeed the tailor's dummy, but we have acquired a few artefacts along the way which are on display. My favourite is this pinwheel calculator, good for adding and subtracting. Multiplying and dividing are possible too, but it takes a bit of practice. This type was available from about 1890 so it is quite possible that Bancroft had one in 1920. We do know that by the time the Mill closed at the end of 1978 they had an early electronic calculator, which you can see in the photo below. This calculator would have been very pricey when it first came out in 1967, there is a wealth of information available [here](#).



Sydney is standing on the right here, and Jim Pollard, the Weaving Manager is seated at the desk. Jim worked at the mill from 1935 until it closed. The door leads into the Preparaton and Winding area on the top floor of the Warehouse where the three Tape Sizing machines were.

Look at the fireplace behind Jim, teapot, cups and milk on the mantlepiece and it looks like they kept the bag of sugar right at the top on the left hand side.

Finally: here are the Steaming Dates for 2025, note that we have added an extra one in December. The latest information and any changes can be found on our web site www.bancroftmill.org.uk.

16 March	29 June	12 October
6 April	20 July	2 November
27 April	10 August	23 November
18 May	31 August	14 December
8 June	21 September	

We look forward to seeing you during the year.

Tony Nixon

November 2024