

Featured Engine No. 36

The Pipe Dream

A Story For Christmas by Kim Siddorn

Paul stood up & stretched, his hands pushed into the small of his back. He'd been poised over the engine too long and his back was killing him. He sat on the workshop stool and considered his work, nearly finished now with gleaming coach paint and repolished marble, the lighting set looked much as it would have done in 1923.

His tea was cold as he sipped it, but there, it was gone nine and dusk had long since fallen. He wasn't finished with the day just yet – another half an hour before Jenny scuffed down the path in her slippers, her cardy pulled around her spare frame to ward off the dewfall of a damp Christmas Eve.

The Crossley 1075 had come a long way since he'd found it back in the summer. It had been a curious deal. There'd been no-one around, the windows blank staring holes when he arrived and for all appearances, the place had not been lived in for twenty years. His boss had nagged him to come and look at the property for weeks as the auction approached and he walked around and scribbled, taking photos and talking to his hand. It was late in the afternoon on one of those still autumn days when the trees drip silent leaves onto the road and the land looks toward winter.

There were a series of outhouses, but one of them had a thick rubber cable running to it, suspended in the air from the wall of the house. He pulled open the door and peered inside, the tiny shaft of his torch lighting the corners. His heartbeat rising, he saw the edge of what might be a flywheel, partially obscured by a wooden cupboard that woodworm had reduced to dusty rubble before it fell across the engine. Careless of clothes and shoes, he hauled the ancient wood away to reveal a fair sized stationary engine, still sitting on the concrete plinth cast up for it all those years ago. What was it? Twin sideshaft so probably a Crossley and, removing another bit of plank, the Hills magneto and the maker's name on its greening brass plaque assured him he was right. A 1075. Paul hauled on the flywheel rim and he thought it stirred slightly but then locked solid. Shreds of belting hung off the big dynamo below the dull black marble of the switchboard. A rack of glass tanked accumulators sat on a low concrete shelf.

A long, slow breath escaped him. It was complete, the scrappies hadn't found it, no-one had nicked the bearing caps for their brass and even the oilers were still there, cobwebbed and dark with old oil. He put out a finger to rub the dust off the voltmeter.

"Good old girl, she was". The voice came as an utter shock.. Paul spun round and for a moment could not locate the speaker until he stepped forward into a shaft of dusty light from the window. He was perhaps in his late sixties and an almost bald pate shone through the few grey hairs. Not much above five-eight, his sweater fell around him like an old sack and his feet shuffled silently along in ratty old slippers. A grubby pipe stuck out of his mouth, the small bowl whispering with smoke.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to pry – well, I did" he said, shamefaced "I'm an estate agent. We were instructed that the house was being sold by the estate – do you lay claim at all?"

He chuckled, a dry rustling sound. "Not any more, although I did live here once. The engine is mine though – are you interested in it for scrap?"

"Absolutely not. I collect old engines and this is the find of my life!" He stopped, suddenly aware that he'd probably just added two zeros to the price – what the hell did it matter? This was one that would not wriggle out of his grasp.

"So, you will make it go again, like it was when I bought it? I'd want to get rid of it all, mind, engine, dynamo, switchboard, batteries – the lot - what's it worth to you then?"

Natural caution came to Paul. "Did you have a price in mind?"

"I think it's worth what I paid for it – would you cover that, agreeing to pay me what it says on the receipt?" The old face peered up at him, shadows lining it. He was older than Paul had first thought.

He thought fast. It had been here years, fifty, sixty. Prices had changed so much but it would still be worth it. "Yes. Yes, I will."

The old man reached behind him and offered Paul a dusty loose leaf folder. He riffled through the yellowing paper until he found the distinctive embossed "Crossley Bros". £335 16s 4d. "It's worth more than that – a lot more" Paul blurted out.

"It's what I want. Come tomorrow morning with the money and take it all away. Leave the money on the desk there. You WILL take it all, won't you." It wasn't a question. He walked out of the small rear door and vanished from sight.

It had taken a good deal of calling in favours, a lot of phone calls and much pleading, but the next morning, envelope with £400 in it, team handed and with a crane and big pick up, Paul was back to collect his prize. They slogged away all day and having manhandled the big dynamo up two creaking boards onto the pick up they came back in to set about the switchboard. "'ere, Paul, the money's gone" said Bob and the bulky envelope was indeed missing. Somehow, Paul was not surprised.

"Are you coming in – it's nearly ten?" Paul started from his reverie as Jenny spoke just behind him. He patted the Crossley, put the lights out and locked up. They watched the late news and went to bed.

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"Paul. Paul" she hissed.

"Hmm? What? What?" Startled from sleep he turned to her. "Listen." She whispered urgently.

Faintly, the noise of a big single cylinder engine could be heard, running steadily but hunting slightly.

"You left the thing running."

"No, I really didn't, it must be in the street" - but he knew it wasn't. Huddling his coat over his pyjamas, Paul unlocked the back door and stepped into the yard. There was no moon and wispy fingers of fog trailed across the lawn. The exhaust note coming from the buried pot was quiet, more of a "Puh, puh, puh" than a thud. It left an odd smell in the air that he couldn't place.

The back door to the workshop was locked and the padlock undisturbed. He open the door and peered cautiously inside – a burglar would almost be a relief. The fluorescents flashed on and off and settled. Everything was as it should be – if he had started the engine, that is. The Crossley was running at about 350 rpm by the clicking of the belt fastener, the brushes hissing on the comm. The green-shaded lamp above the switchboard lit it well and even from the doorway he could see that one gauge indicated 110 Volts and the Ammeter was loaded to the centre of the scale, On the shelf below, the row of glass accumulators glistened wetly, thin streams of bubbles rising from the plates and there was the familiar hard smell of lead acid

battery in the air – and something else, stronger now. Paul stepped in and walked down to the Crossley. “Taka-taka-taka” said the governor to itself. He wasn’t scared exactly, but perhaps a little apprehensive as he reached across the spinning machinery to turn off the petrol. He waited, his back against the wall. After a little while, the engine speeded up, coughed, the governor whacked it hard open and the weak mixture popped in the exhaust as it died. Paul threw the knife switches and silence fell across the workshop. He sniffed. There was that smell again. Exhaust leaking? – or was it - ? Pipe tobacco, that’s what it was!

As his hackles rose, a shape moved at the edge of his vision and the fluorescents blinked out. He managed to make it to the door without running or crying out, but it was a close run thing. He pushed the workshop door open and stepped out into garden. The still, moonless night was gone and a wall of cold mist had risen from the lawn to fill the space between him and the house. His fingers shook as he carefully locked the door, the smell of pipe tobacco fading now – was that a dry old chuckle?

Jenny was in the kitchen making tea. He put his arms around her and snuffled her hair. “It must have stopped just off compression and as it cooled the piston moved a bit and the plug sparked.” She nodded wisely as good wives do and they sat and sipped their tea amiably as the Church clock struck three. Paul slowly but surely convinced himself that what he’d told his wife was actually true.

Jenny rose and tugged at his sleeve as she walked out into the hall. As he reached round the coats to the awkwardly-placed light switch, his eye fell on the Hills magneto that he had brought in after the afternoon run to put in the airing cupboard - and left on the kitchen dresser. Underneath it now was a bulky brown envelope

Calendar of Events

Key. Event – E. Club night - CN

Jan 25th CN. Guest Speaker: Peter Davey.

Around Bristol By Tram. Illustrated

Feb 22nd 32nd **Annual General Meeting.**

Mar 6th. **Event (E) Vintage Sort Out** Cranmore Station Yard.

Mar TBA E. Club Visit. **Kelston Sparks Collection**

Mar 29th CN. Guest Speaker: Peter Goodchild.

My Life As A Spy. Illustrated

April 5th E. (*Easter Monday*) **Mells Daffodil Rally.**

April 17th E. **Enstone Sort Out**, Oxfordshire

April 18th E. **Crankup** at Nunney Catch:

April 26th CN. Guest Speaker: Kim Siddorn.

Rolls Royce Piston Aero Engines. Illustrated

May 24th CN. **Member’s Night**:- bring ten photo’s or slides on any subject. - prize for best effort.

June 2nd E. (*Wed evening*). **D-Day crankup.** Venue TBA.

Bring something military if you can!

June 19/20th E. **Wessex Midsummer Vintage Gathering,**

June 26/27th. E. **1000 Engine Rally**, Astle Park.

June 28th . CN. **Member’s Night,**

Other Hobbies / Guess The Object

July 26th E/CN. **Crankup**:- at the Court Hotel

July 31st/Aug 1st. E. **Kemble Rally** (*replaces Haynes*)

Aug 23rd CN. Guest Speaker: Henry Body

A Talk On Speed Records

Sept. 18th. E. **Camerton Village Day.**

Sept 27th CN **Quiz Night**

Oct 9th CN. **Skittles & Supper Evening,** Venue TBA

Oct 17th E. **Robert’s Open Day.**

Oct 16th E. **Vintage Sort Out** at Cranmore Railway station yard.

Oct 25th CN. Guest Speaker, Roger Fowler.

The Burnham-On-Sea rescue hover craft

Nov 13th E. **Enstone Sort Out**, Oxfordshire

Nov 29th CN. Guest Speaker:- Martin Phippard.

Parara Marble Extraction, Italy. Illustrated

Dec 5th E. **Crank up** at Nunney Catch

Dec 27th E. **Mince Pie Crankup**:- Court Hotel

Dates and venues may change. Check before driving!

Editor’s note. *Our Secretary, Arthur Smith, is retiring from his post as Secretary. One of the things he has done very successfully is to book the speakers for club nights. A long, long series of interesting people to talk on a huge range of subjects. I’m sure you’d not like his period of tenure to pass without joining with me in an expression of grateful thanks. He will be a hard act to follow!*

We’d also like to make special mention of Tom Randall who has been producing the master image for our Christmas card, taking them to the printers & turning up with a big box of cards just when they are needed. He’s done it for years! Characteristically, he dropped them off at club night in November & vanished before we could say thank you. Thanks Tom.

Mells Daffodil Day

Easter Monday 5th April 2010

A message from Robin Lambert for exhibitors attending the Mells Show. The entry forms and dated passes will go out to past exhibitors with the January newsletter. Please return your forms to me as soon as possible as the space allocated to us will be at a premium. When attending the show please make sure you are in possession of your pass as **the organisers will be operating a no pass no entry policy** and you will be charged the normal entry fee.

The organisers feel that our entry system is being abused with entries turning up with no pass, even cars following vans and trailers saying that they are with the stationary engines.

It is sad for me to mention this as we have never had any hard and fast rules other than safety and have a nice time. So please be aware and conform to the organisers wishes.

PS. A small camping table was left at Mells last year & Robin will bring it with him this year. Are you missing one?

Social news

By Earwig

Happy birthday to a veritable (not to say venerable!) crowd in December. Founder Member Herbie Gane on the 3rd, Maureen Gay on the same day and that Kim is 68 on the 10th followed by Liz Hibbs on the 22nd. Dot Watts is 85 on the 27th, so we can sing to her at the crankup, Bob Lodge also has a birthday this month, but won’t say when ;o)).

Membership cards

Jackie Lambert asks me to remind you that membership subs are due on 31st December, but do feel free to send in advance. Please enclose an SAE if you renew by post. If you don’t, your card will be sent to you with the next newsletter.

Postal Votes for the AGM. Arthur Smith asks me to remind you to mark the envelope “POSTAL VOTE” when sending.

Chairman's report *(printed as received)*

The first meeting at The Court Hotel on November 30th was a huge success. We were entertained by Wessex member Keith Sheppard with a brilliant illustrated talk entitled "**Engine Makers of Wessex**". Keith had compiled on his lap – top computer a superb collection of photographs of stationary engines, steam engines, traction engines, machinery and much more all from the different counties that make up "WESSEX". Engines were shown from such places as Taunton, Devizes, Bath, Trowbridge, Bristol, Yeovil Gloucester, Poole and many many more. Keith had certainly done a lot of research for this presentation and this certainly made for a brilliant evenings entertainment, many thanks to Keith and his friend Simon who was operating the lap top slide show. The owner of The Court Hotel, Sue, certainly made us very welcome, in my opinion we have found a first class replacement for the Old Down Inn. The meeting ended with the usual raffle which was well supported by the members present. I won the basket of fruit, and as I didn't really want it I presented it to Sue, the landlady, she was well pleased so I think we may have scored some "brownie" points there, we have to do all we can to make sure our stay at the "Court" is a long one, so please patronise the bar.

Despite an adverse weather forecast and torrential rain early in the morning the "Anti – freeze" crank – up at Nunney Catch Transport Café on Sunday 6 December was well supported. Oliver and myself arrived at around 8am to find a few engines set up, this gradually increased until 24 engines were on display. The café opened for breakfasts and drinks, Oliver had a full breakfast large enough for an Irish Navvy, (I Don't know where he puts it) and I had an absolutely delicious bacon sandwich. I then set up the raffle in the café as it was too cold to hold it outside. I stayed in the café most of the morning as I was deputising for Jackie taking the membership renewals. (Have you done yours yet?) Jackie and Robin had gone to Brussels for a long weekend, (alright for some isn't it.) I hope she didn't let him stray into the "red light area" of Amsterdam. Christine Rogers and Diana Davis were busy selling raffle tickets out in the cold car park, (they should have a medal) and Wendy Gane was busy folding up the tickets ready for the draw. It caused quite a stir when Joe Davies put a bottle of Bushmills Irish Whisky on the raffle table, Brian Verrall, Steve Baker, Myself and many more members swore their name was on it, not to be, it was won by David Griffiths who had the first number out, and by pure coincident also the last ticket of the draw. At least the whisky went to a good home. After the raffle ended the members loaded up and headed for home. This was a very successful event well supported by exhibitors and visitors, probable helped by a very pleasant morning once the early morning rain had disappeared to be replaced by a bit of sunshine. A special vote of thanks must go to the proprietors and staff at the café for the warm welcome we always get for our events there, and the excellent quality of their food and drinks. I would like to conclude this report by wishing all our members and readers a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy and Prosperous New Year

My First Engine

By Paul Chant

At the last Wessex committee meeting, the editor appealed to his fellow committee members, asking if they could help him with material for Cranking. Kim is happy to be a one man band for us, but rightly needs our input to create a more

varied & communal news letter. His suggestion was that we should all write a short story about our first engine.

There where several comments made, but the one I liked most was from Brian Verrell, "Cranking would be full of Lister D stories!" I happen to have an affinity with the ubiquitous Lister D and believe it to be the best production stationary engine ever made. Well, this got me thinking - Ouch! was my late father's "D"? my first engine,

There was the Francis-Barnett 4 speed trials bike with a Villiers 197 engine, which I owned when I was 13. I had to take the barrel and head off to remove fragments of the second piston ring, leaving just one at the top. Off I went again, with no helmet! (don't try this at home!)

No, I think my first engine must be the one on my dad's Suffolk Super Colt lawnmower. It was my pleasurable job to keep the lawns cut, trying to keep straight-combed shaded lines with this poor old mower which was left rusting outside. It was my first fascination with an engine, which I oiled, cleaned and when the starter rope broke, I dared to put a spanner on it. I fixed it too, so I could start it with a piece of plaited baler twine - & to think that I was only 9 or 10!

Yes, this engine was my first, I won't go into depth, but you can imagine how I messed with everything from throttle adjustment to taking the exhaust off!

Almost every reader has a similar story to tell, so please write to Kim. Having been self-educated myself, I am not too good a speller and my punctuation is an editor's nightmare, but Kim will sort it out for you. Don't let him be a one man band, even though he does a good job!

Mr Punch In France

By Brian Munt

In September my wife and I had a very enjoyable six weeks touring France in our motorhome & staying in mostly free motorhome stopover sites. After soaking up the sun in southern Brittany for a few weeks, we went to visit our old next door neighbours who have been living in France for the last 12 years.

On our way to their house we stopped at a local tourist board shop to get some info. As I was looking through a brochure, I spotted a picture with rows and rows of stationary engines, so off we went to find the museum. It was about 15km off the main road in a little hamlet of about ten houses.

It wasn't easy to find, but I spotted a large Blackstone engine mounted on a concrete slab in a field. We went down a path to a run-down farm - nobody to be seen. I noticed a barn with the door open and looked in. There in all their glory were over 250 restored engines, big ones, small ones & very large ones from all over the world. There was still no one about, so before I found the owner, I took photos & video. Eventually he appeared & was a very charming man who was kind enough to start a few for us.

If you would like to visit the barn the address is Les Petrolophages Collection de Moteurs, 17160 Matha, France. Tel Jean - Louis 0546261631. Matha is the Village & best of luck finding it!

The other museum we found was in the Loure Valley. There were over 4,000 objects and machines, mostly engines, tractors, cars, motor bikes etc. Some items were things I've never seen before & it took us three hours to look around.

The museum's website will tell you where it is & how to find it. www.musee-dufresne.com

By the way, the cost of living is out of this world – a 10 litres of Dulux "Exterior" paint was £176.00