



SCARCE News Letter Number 21 (November 2013)

Ellenroad Engine House Sunday October 6th

Pictures courtesy of Mike Littlewood.



The past preserved for future generations
Courtesy of Ellenroad Engine House Website.

Please support this worthy local Museum.

www.ellenroad.org.uk

The World's Largest Working Steam Mill Engines - Victoria & Alexandra

The Ellenroad Trust Ltd was established in 1985 to ensure the preservation of the Ellenroad Engine House and Engines. The Trust arranged the refurbishment of the boiler house and the engines and started to run the site as a steam museum. The Engine House was then scheduled as a National Historic Monument and the Trust is the legal guardian of the site.



The Ellenroad Steam Museum Society Ltd was formed as 'The Friends of Ellenroad' and is tasked by the Trust to carry out the day to day activities on the site. It maintains the building, engines and exhibits and organises the monthly steaming days when the Engine House is open to the public. At the present time it is entirely run by volunteers. The Ellenroad mill engine of 1892 was a triple expansion steam engine built by J&W McNaught of St. George's foundry, Rochdale. When the new ring mill was built, the triple expansion engine was converted to a twin tandem compound engine by removing the high pressure and intermediate pressure cylinders and installing two high pressure cylinders.

The conversion was undertaken by Clayton Goodfellow & Co Ltd, Blackburn. the flywheel was increased in size from 43 grooves for 1.5/8" (41mm) ropes to 44 grooves to accept ropes of 1.7/8" (47.6mm) diameter. 58.5 revolutions per minute, the new engine could produce 2650 IHP (indicated horse power).





Steam first enters the smaller, high pressure cylinders being directed into the cylinders through Corliss valves. The rotative valves are operated by Craigs cut-off gear and controlled by the Whitehead governor. The governor adjusts the valve gear continuously to ensure just the right amount of steam is admitted to produce

the desired power and speed. The flywheel weighs over 80 tonnes: about the same as nine double deck buses.

The exhaust valves are situated in the bottom of the cylinders and the steam goes through these into the second, or low-pressure cylinders to be used a second time. The low-pressure cylinders have greater diameters than the high pressure cylinders to take advantage of the lower steam pressure. They have piston slide valves. Steam leaves the low pressure cylinders to be drawn, by air pumps into the condensers below the floor.

At the back of the low pressure cylinders there are cross-heads that provide pivots for the great connecting rods to the cranks, and which also operate the air pumps that are situated below the engine room floor. These pumps remove the air, water and condensate produced when the river water is sprayed into the condensers to cool the steam and provide a vacuum. Each engine has one condenser and two air pumps. When operating, the air pumps can move up to 6000 gallons of water per minute.

The society volunteers maintain the engine in full working order.

Calendar Club and Events of Interest

November 2013

9th November VSCC Lakeland Trial

15th/16th /17th November Classic Car Show NEC

Official Show Partners:



23rd November VSCC Cotswold Trial

December 2013

SCARCE Christmas Meal

Wednesday 18th December

at the 3 Crowns £15 head 7.30p.m. for 8p.m.

Menu to follow shortly / names and £ 5-00 deposit required by November meeting.

e-mail the Secretary.

Friday 27th December

SCARCE Annual X-mas cracker run.

This year we are aiming to head over into Cheshire.

Names and numbers required to ensure suitable size of venue for lunch.



Watch this space:

In the New Year we are hoping to arrange a tour of the Ginetta Factory on the outskirts of Leeds.
DATE TBA

January 2014

January 20th 2014 : Visit to Huddersfield AutoJumble

Members Contributions

‘Northern Racing’ – in Stalybridge!

Courtesy of TVVSCC newsletter **and one of our members**

‘Northern Racing’ was a headline above a short feature in *The Autocar* in August 1926. There followed an account of speed trials held in Stalybridge ‘last Saturday’, and the VSCC (Vintage Sports - Car Club) Library has come up with a photocopy of this report. Interest was aroused by a passing mention in T R Nicholson’s book, *Sprint* (David & Charles, 1969). This book tells the story of the rise of speed trials here in the UK, both straight-line sprints and timed hill-climbs, but the early town-to-town races and later circuit racing of all kinds are outside its scope.

Sprint events on the sands at seaside venues, where cars were set off singly or in pairs, are included.



Most of these early events took place - more or less legally - on stretches of public road, but an accident at an event in March of 1925 on the public road course at Kop Hill in Buckinghamshire saw the authorities ban any further pure speed events, other than those held on private land.

Nicholson’s book goes into some detail of the more significant or interesting events, and, as an appendix, also lists for reference purposes the dates of all other minor events known to have been held. It was here that the name of an organising club stood out - the Stalybridge & District Motor Club, and two events in 1924 received mention – one on 9th August, and the other on an unspecified date in November. The course used is quoted as ‘Carrbrook Road, Millbrook.’ It was time to trouble the VSCC Library, a free service available for members. They eventually traced some five events, all held between 1924 and 1928, and have been able to produce reports of most of them.

It was also time for some ‘on the ground’ reconnaissance, and so Julie and I ventured into the housing estate off Huddersfield Road (B6175), Carrbrook, in quest of Carrbrook Road. The street plan easily took us there, and a very unlikely road it was. In fact, Carrbrook Road is a narrow and winding back lane behind housing, no more than a couple of hundred yards in length, following the side of a small brook and encroached upon by undergrowth. Even if radical changes had taken place in the last 80 years, it could never have been suitable for high speeds.

When the photocopies arrived, all was explained. The text describes a straight, ‘beautifully-surfaced concrete track’ of which one third of a mile was used, and with a gradient of 1 in 23 – very precise! The photographs show a wide and straight road with one side lined with iron railings, behind (and in front) of which stood a large crowd of spectators. Wooden railings line the other, north-western side. In the distance can be seen a couple of Stalybridge’s large textile mills, and rows of terraced houses. It seems certain that the old speed trial course is in fact now Buckton Vale Road, a straight drag that runs gently uphill through the middle of the Carrbrook housing estate. This housing development probably dates from the 1950s, and at

the far end remain the school and institute buildings put in place long ago by a philanthropic local mill-owner for benefit of his workers. I have been told recently that this concrete road was made specifically to stand up to the regular trips of steam lorries or traction engines that conveyed coal and other materials from the canal up to the mill. This would have been through private land, most likely belonging to the mill's owners, and for this reason the speed events were able to continue to be held after 1925.

The report on the August 9th meeting in 1924 suggests that it might have been the first time that this course had been used. It also seems that the S&DMC ran these events for the Yorkshire Centre of the Auto Cycle Union (ACU), and that the majority of the classes were for motorcycles, with just a few car entries being catered for.

The car classes are numbered 49 to 56, indicating that there had been 48 classes for motorcycles! Drivers and riders could compete in several different classes, and there were separate classes for flying and standing starts. It also seems that the entries were further subdivided into 'Expert' and 'Amateur' competitors. G Porter's 3-litre Bentley covered the course at 56.46 mph, the fastest run, and other cars competing and featuring in the results as first or second prize winners included long-gone makes: GN; Sunbeam, Salmson and Riley. 'Electrical timing' with an accuracy of 'one sixteenth of a second' was used, and the event took place 'under ideal weather.' Two photographs illustrate the report of this event; one shows a very stark side-valve 1½-litre Riley, literally a chassis with seats – passengers were carried, and without even a bonnet, and the other a large Sunbeam tourer which had only its windscreen removed.

In November of 1924, another S&DMC event took place, but on this occasion there were only two car entries, T Ratcliffe's stark naked Riley again, and Leadbetter's Alvis 12/40 two-seater. Illustrated is G Pemberton's very dashing DISS Delage sports tourer, which also made a run, 'semi-officially,' whatever that might mean!

It seems that, if these events were repeated in 1925, then no reports appeared in the press; but on July 31st 1926, some 8 car entries were attracted to this again mainly motorcycle speed event, the same course being used. Famous names now appear, and FTD went to Basil Davenport of Macclesfield in his 'Spider' GN single-seater sprint car, and other fine vintage sports cars that took part included Vauxhall, Sunbeam, Bentley, Frazer Nash and Aston-Martin. There were classes by engine capacity for both racing and standard sports cars, and again for both standing start and flying start runs. Miss May Cunliffe, driving one of the 3-litre Bentleys that took part in the 1922 TT in the Isle of Man made the second best time: the three Bentley TT cars were the only ones of this make ever to be fitted with flat-fronted radiators.

An announcement for another Stalybridge event for 14th May 1927 appeared in the press, details from the Hon Secretary, W Lawton of 1 Primrose Terrace, Knowl Street, Stalybridge, but no report seems to have appeared. There's a reference to a crowd of 5,000 spectators attending a sprint at the Stalybridge course in June of 1927. Another sprint at Carrbrook was held on August 6th, when there were 10 car entries. The report criticised some drivers for making a poor get-away, but G L Jones's Bugatti received commendation. Fastest times recorded were by S E McGowan's GN and R Mellor's Frazer Nash, with just over 21 seconds for the 'flying' third of a mile. I feel sure that other S&DMC speed events took place, and it is clear that Carrbrook was an established fixture in the sprint calendar of the 1920s. There was a circus of keen competitors, most of whom were out every weekend, driving in events of this kind, far and wide, often travelling long distances to take part.

Recent enquiries in Stalybridge's local history archive and the local newspaper have been unsuccessful in adding any information: surely some photographs at least must survive somewhere locally?

Finally, there is a pleasing link. From an autojumble stall a few years ago, I purchased an old and small snapshot of my own car carrying a competition number. Faintly pencilled on the back, somewhat obscured by old glue and adhesions, can be read some details – ‘... Stalybridge, returning down the course.’ In August of 1926, J E Pearson of Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, owned my Aston-Martin, and the photograph shows him in this car, followed by another competitor, smiling, as he and his passenger come back to the start line. From the evidence of the illustrations included in the VSCC Library photocopies, there remains no doubt of the date and the venue. He made the fourth best time that day.

Dare I take the car back to Buckton Vale Road, and try to match his time of 29.5 secs over a measured 600 yards? Well, I did dare, last Saturday: but there was too much traffic for a fast run! Same car (different body and different registration number); same road; 87 years later – see the 1926 and 2013 photos.



N.B.

Please contact the Secretary if you have any photos or contributions to make to the Newsletter.