



SHELVOKE & DREWRY ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Volume 2. Issue No. 44.

Winter 2021.

From the Editor.

We have our customary variety of topics covered in the Newsletter which I hope you'll enjoy. Both Keith Rogers and Barrie Woods complete their accounts of their SD memories. I didn't want to write the article that appears on page 3 but I felt it was my obligation to do so. Vehicles on the move feature prominently on page 5 whilst the back page mainly concerns former SD employees.

Brian Carpenter Editor 1st December 2021.

THE HARSH WINTER OF 1962/63



When Peter Johnston, Chairman of McCreath Taylor Ltd. N.I. and a great SD enthusiast saw these photos posted by Bill Headley memories came flooding back of the harsh winter of 1962/63. He kindly sent to me a chapter from a book with the title 'Belfast the Cleansing of a City' written by a former motor mechanic in the Belfast Corporation Cleansing Department – Davy Manderson. Chapter 15 has the title: - 'The Half Crown Flakes' and relates how continuous snow the size of a half crown coin fell on Belfast throughout Wednesday and Thursday 6th and 7th February 1963. Belfast was ill equipped to cope with such an event, the Corporation's fleet of Dennis Gully Emptiers were fitted with snow ploughs and Davy recalls their attempts to clear the streets,. Eventually the British Army was called in to assist and a couple of the Gully Emptiers were wrecked because the soldiers showed no respect for the vehicles, Davy's stories are amusing and I plan to tell you more in a future issue of the Newsletter.

Peter Johnston informed me that as a result in the Summer of 1963 12 Bulk Gritter bodies were ordered from Atkinson of Cltheroe at £6,840.00 each ex-works to be fitted to older SD 'W' type chassis after removing the Chelsea type bodies at the Gardener Street workshops. Eleven were from Belfast's fleet with the twelfth having an IL Reg. No. and coming from Iniskilling. [The successors of Atkinson's trade as ECON gritters from Ripon.]

Snow ploughs by Bunce were fitted who are based in Swindon, Wiltshire. In addition a Frost Stand By Team was established on duty every night from October to March consisting of two drivers and two mechanics.

At the time Peter Johnston was Divisional Manager in the Works Section of Belfast Corporation's Engineers and Surveyors Department.

Memories of Winter 1962/63 also came back to me, your Editor.



On 8th December 1962 at St. Helen's Church near Rotherham, South Yorkshire I married Dorothy Jeffries and we enjoyed nearly fifty years of a very happy marriage. I had left SD in the October of that year. The wedding was quite an SD affair. Joe Wilson, my Best Man, was a former SD apprentice and we had worked together as Planning Engineers. (I'm still in regular contact with Joe). My father, Percy, was the Company's external Auditor over many years and my uncle, George, was an apprentice at SD from 1924. So four of us at that wedding had SD in our bones. When we set up home in Peterborough we experienced weeks of freezing conditions in January & February.

A VARIED CAREER AT S&D Part 2. I REMEMBER FORMER WORK COLLEAGUES.

By Keith Rogers.



Former SD Employees share memories at a 'Get Together' in November 2011.

When I started to work at S&D in 1967 Bob Edlin headed the Jig & Tool design team and Arthur "Curly" Warren was a draughtsman. We shared an office with the Planning Department headed by Fred Astridge with Bruce Hurst looking after fitting and welding and Eddie Archer (who I knew from K&L) and Alan Aldridge looking after machining.

Keith Masters was the toolroom foreman with Paul Hyde as his chargehand. There must have been about twenty toolmakers including the machinists and cutter grinders. There was a re-organisation when the new apprentice school was set up in the machine shop as Keith was appointed to run it and took with him two good toolmakers Dave Porter and Doug Flint. Paul Hyde was promoted to Toolroom foreman and Johnny Kempson became his chargehand. When the company took over Geoff Bridge's St. Neots company we used to have to make frequent visits to St. Neots and in the summer John and I sometimes stopped for a pint in Stotfold.

A memorable event took place in 1969 when a new employee arrived in the office. The newcomer arrived in a red suit with a unique hair style. Jaws dropped! Who was this looking completely different to the rest of the people in the office? Malcolm Bates came to S&D as Publicity Manager straight from Medway College of Art. Bob Edlin had arranged a space for him in the Jig & Tool office which we shared with the planning department. Malcolm was very fortunate that Bob had taken him under his wing as anyone who was not an ex-apprentice, like myself, sometimes found it difficult at S&D. Malcolm fitted in very well, taking in all the ribbing and banter and he gave as good as he got. I seem to remember that he spent most of his Friday afternoons working out his expenses. When the new office block, that's still standing, was built Malcolm ended up with a large studio and an assistant – poor girl.



Malcolm Bates with the "1922" SD Freight.

Edenbridge
June 2009

Keith Masters provided many trainee draughtsmen, the first being Mick Thrush whose father I had worked with at K&L. Mick went on to become the company's buyer. Others were Ronnie Fink, who was a dedicated follower of fashion, looking immaculate in his flared trousers and kipper tie. Others were Bob Chamberlain from Stevenage and Steve File. Steve built a kit car with a VW engine, he made a wonderful job of it, I had a ride in it once, a bit too fast and hard ride for me. Alan Brosnan was working on the Jig Borer in the toolroom and asked if there was a vacancy in the office, there wasn't at the time but when one came up I had no hesitation in offering it to Alan. He eventually left and did well for himself at BAE (British Aerospace) at Stevenage.



The new offices in Icknield Way – all that remains of the main SD Factory.

After S&D I became a self employed draughtsman and worked for about 20 companies, work varied from tooling the Eurofighter windscreen, electro-optical night sights, concrete floors, and for the last two years before I retired, designing cardboard box making machines in St. Albans.

I am now 81 years of age living in Warrington. We moved here after I retired as my daughter and family live here, my son is a lawyer in Munich. I still pursue my hobby of model engineering and am a member of the Warrington club which has a 5" gauge track of almost half a mile long in South Warrington.

I have many happy memories of S&D.

Keith Rogers. December 2020

A Purely Personal View from your Editor.



Aled Rees posted this delightful picture of a 1965 TX Pakamatic newly arrived for service with Warmley Rural District Council and fitted with bin lifting equipment. Warmley is Aled's home village.

I believe it demonstrates the high quality product for which SD was so highly regarded.

I was alerted that the November issue of Vintage Roadscene Magazine carried an article concerning A Century of SD (Pages 28 to 33). So I bought myself a copy and most sincerely wish I hadn't!

I write this, not because it gives me any pleasure, but because I feel an obligation to make these comments. A major objective of the SD Enthusiasts' Club is to preserve the memories and reputation of Shelvoke & Drewry Engineers from Letchworth Garden City (1922 – 1991) and I wish to defend that reputation.

I have come to the conclusion that Mike Forbes, the Editor of Vintage Roadscene, commissioned Malcolm Bates to write a thinly disguised advertisement for the 2022 SD Event to be held at the Classic Commercial Motor Show at Gaydon on 11th /12th June 2022, and to promote further sales of the bookazine 'SD' Shelvoke & Drewry. In my personal opinion the article, as published, does a great dis-service to readers of Vintage Roadscene Magazine, to those of us who are surviving former employees of Shelvoke & Drewry Ltd. and who hold the Company in high regard, and that it fails to give a balanced account of the many important achievements of this relatively small manufacturer of specialised motor vehicles.

I appreciate that there are many people who are grateful to Malcolm Bates for his unique writing style, but equally I know of many former employees who have been quite deeply hurt by some of the comments he has previously had published, and I feel certain that these people will welcome my attempt to counter the impression Malcolm likes to give of the Company that nurtured us a young men and set us on fulfilling careers.

The strap line to the article reads:- "What's to Celebrate?" The "padding" of the article suggests that it is that Malcolm Bates was clever enough to get a job at SD which he loved. Then considerable space is given to the SPV Division and Managing Director, Stan Quin, and Technical Director, Tom Tillson, are criticised for their lack of vision.

Why oh why couldn't we have an honest look at some of the many achievements of the Company, that is so dear to

me, and to many other former employees? For example:- In 1922 SD had 35 employees by 1932 it was 350 (Kaleidoscope Caption [62]), U.K. Market share for refuse Collection Vehicles – The SD Freighter 75%, 'W' type in 1953 33% [118], in 1959 66% [131], 1970's 'N' series 60% [150] Long life of products – 1947 SD Freighters were in use over 20 years old [79], the London Brick Company's first Freightlifter lasted 21 years [154] These are facts we can celebrate.

The Fore & Aft tipper, the Pakamatic and the Revopak were market leaders in their time, the little Freighter carried bus body work on around 50 chassis mainly used at coastal resorts, A work force that grew to over 1,000 who enjoyed the benefits of the First Garden City. A proud history of production during the Second World War, where SD trained young women to become welders replacing traditional male labour, many hundreds of young men trained as apprentices who became a valued part of SD's skilled workforce. In the late 1960's the formation of the SD 40 Club, because so many had now completed forty years at SD. High quality, high reliability vehicles carrying out a humble but vital task. My understanding is that the SPV Division was not a great success but SD did supply the London Fire Brigade with 58 appliances – quite an achievement. That's just a part of what there is to celebrate in 2022!

A final personal quibble. I'm sorry but it is simply untrue that I had any agreement to contact possible owners of SD vehicles to attend at Gaydon. I supplied a comprehensive list to Peter Johnston and Malcom Bates where I felt I had permission to pass on details – that was, and is, my sole involvement. In so far as "Nobody knows how many SD's survive." With assistance from Aled Rees there is a comprehensive list on the SD Enthusiasts' Club website and in addition the website [SD \(manufacturer\) - How Many Left?](#) shows 27 taxed and 16 SORN in the second quarter of 2021.

How sad that this VR article is so flawed! We deserve better than this.

[Both Malcolm Bates and Mike Forbes were made aware that I would be publishing this page.]



S & D Memories No. 5 By Barrie Woods.



This photo of preserved 1972 TN Pakamatic in 1999 at Newark was sent in by Peter Thorner. It was restored by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council and is in the Livery of Keighley Corporation. It is on display at the Keighley Bus Museum & owned by the Museum Trust.

I continued to drive both the Artic and deliver/demonstrate RCV's as the workload directed. Several minor incidents occurred during these journeys.

The Forest of Bowland Rural District Council was probably the most enjoyable demonstration week of my stint with S & D, although it wasn't without its problems. I took the TN 20yd Pakamatic, which I tended to stay on most of my time there. Primarily as more often than not it was the rural councils where I would be asked to go, much nicer than a busy urban town. My digs were with Harold and his wife, he was the driver of the vehicle we were up against, a side-loader. It was a five-day demo. Staying with Harold and his wife was sheer joy, I was made very much at home, she was an excellent cook and fed me very well, they had a wonderfully friendly Border Collie dog. Each night Harold would take me to his local pub in Gisburn where, with some of his colleagues, we'd play darts and sup plenty of ale –far too much if the truth were known –as I would find out to my cost later in the week.

Each day's route around the area was an absolute delight. Broadly speaking we were picking up around 100-120 bins a day and travelling about the same amount in mileage. The tip was simply a pile of refuse left by a field, which was set fire to at the end of each day. After three days and nights of this rather boozy week I was beginning to suffer as I was driving. I believe it was the Thursday morning, one of the first calls was to one of the few large mansions in the area. To gain access meant driving through a pair of tall stone gate posts, which led one into the lengthy driveway, normally not a problem of course. However, the rather intoxicated state I was in, it did prove a problem. I remember aiming the TN specifically to get through the posts which I achieved, then in the euphoria of achieving that completely lost it and sent us all into a ditch alongside the drive! We were tilting well over, but fortunately, we could clamber out through the driver's door. Having achieved that we assessed the situation. The vehicle was more or less empty, which may well

have prevented it turning right over. There was no way I would be able to drive out of this mess. So Harold strode off and found a local farmer with a tractor and chain who came to the rescue. With the chain attached to the TN 3cwt heavy duty bumper, I asked the farmer to go very slowly in case we turned the vehicle further over. He was great and we gradually inched our way back up on the drive. A careful study of the underside of the vehicle seemed to prove there was an awful lot of mud adhering to it but not other damage, which was quite remarkable really. We collected the bins, and as I was in a bit of a state by now, Harold suggested we go to a local cafe and have a cuppa for half an hour or so. That done, we carried on with the day's collection with no further problems.

To save work on a Saturday morning back at Letchworth, we often cleaned down the vehicles before departing from the Council yard. As the Friday collection was only a few hours in the morning I decided to do that, with the only 'tools' available, a broom and buckets of water! I particularly wanted to clean off the underside of the chassis to remove any tell-tale evidence of my misdemeanour!

I returned to my digs to collect my case and say goodbye to Harold and his wife, only to be presented with a lovely fruit cake and tray of 2½ dozen eggs. Fortunately my somewhat reckless exploits during my visit to Bowland didn't filter back to George Dawson. It was quite a week!

Barrie C. Woods 24th August 2020

The Shelvoke & Drewry Enthusiasts' Club Newsletter is published four times a year on 1st March, 1st June, 1st September and 1st December. Items for inclusion may be e-mailed to me at: [pinnerboy\[at\]btinternet.com](mailto:pinnerboy[at]btinternet.com) Next Issue :- 1st March 2022 Spring Issue.

NEWS OF SURVIVING SD VEHICLES.

Since the Summer issue of the Newsletter no less than three SD vehicles have been sold at auction.



This TN Gully Emptier was sold at Helston in Cornwall for £1,900 in August. I don't have any further details.



This photo from 4th November shows the progress being made on the restoration of the 1974 NY Revopak returned from Malta in 2015 by Aled Rees from Bristol where new tines have been manufactured and welded to the compaction system.



78 DNK is a 1958 'W' type, originally a Fore & Aft tipper in service with Ketton R.D.C. In preservation it has passed through a number of hands and appeared in this livery at an auction at Wallsend on 22nd September Chassis No. RW582468 It has covered 27,256 miles and sold for £5,500.00 to an unknown buyer.



At the same sale this 1963 TN Pakamatic from G.O.O'Brien and Sons VTW 601E – chassis No. TN632 sold for £7,500.00 to Aled Rees.



Photo from April 2014 of Steve Jones in his 1982 PN Revopak SCY 786 X.

I have recently talked to Steve Jones who played such a big part in enabling the SD Enthusiasts' Club to come into being when Channel 4 TV broadcast a programme about his vehicle in the 'Salvage Squad' series. The Revopak was going through the M.O.T. process and has been found to need a complete set of new tyres. Recent regulations mean that tyres over ten years old have to be replaced. It isn't an inexpensive task preserving these vehicles and we owe a great debt to the owners for all their efforts.

**OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO
FORMER SD EMPLOYEES.
Anthony Saunders known as Jake.**



We were sorry to learn that Jake Saunders died on 2nd September. Jake worked at S&D for 24 years, first under Jack Arnold in the Service Dept and then under Keith Dunham in Experimental. He was known in the works as something of a joker. His widow Joan also worked as a voice of the Company for 14 years on the Switchboard. They both enjoyed their daily work, and joined us for SD Remembered in 2004 and Joan sent me a lovely letter of thanks. Jake also leaves a daughter – Toni.

Kevin Scott.

In August we welcomed Kevin Scott the son -in-law of **Bert Kerr** into our Facebook Group, and he has generously posted to us no less than fifteen of Bert Kerr's photos.



Bert Kerr with an SD Soapbox.

I believe Bert had a varied career at SD and this included being an apprentice trainer. Several former apprentices paid tribute to him. Ian Morrow wrote: "He was an excellent tutor for us in our first year. He persevered with everyone of us until we could weld to Lloyd's standards. I have never had to do it since but I still refer back to what I learnt in my role now in construction. Top bloke with a real skill in teaching."

Mike Nichols:- "I would never have got through the first year if it hadn't been for Bert."

Martin Holden remembers him well, a duo with 'Mr. Chapman', always had a cheery attitude, - a tough one to maintain with some of the new apprentice skill sets!



Another of Bert Kerr's photos is this of the Apprentice Training School.

A MYSTERY PHOTO.



Aled Rees has discovered this photo about which we know very little. Can anyone help, please?

Barry Fletcher told us that the photo was taken outside the Letchworth Leisure Centre. Aled reports the Reg. No. of the PY as H 882 ETM denoting 1990/91 and Luton with a chassis number 20556. Must be very near the end of the Company.

FREIGHTERS ON FILM IN THE 1920's.

Bill Aldridge kindly informed me of a film in the North West Film Archive of the Refuse Disposal Plant for Separation, Incineration and Salvage of Household Refuse at Water Street Depot Manchester. The short film is No.1549.



**To My Readers
My best wishes for Christmas and the New Year**



YOU DON'T NEED THIS PAGE BUT I CAN'T GET IT TO GO AWAY. SORRY Brian.