



SHELVOKE & DREWRY ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

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From the Editor.

Sadly in this edition we have to report on the deaths of three long serving employees of S&D. But we also have Mike Mullarkey's memories of an unfortunate mishap in Devon and from Northern Ireland an account of a long serving employee who was familiar with of S&D's products. Of necessity the news items are brief this time, but will be returned to in subsequent issues of the Newsletter.

Brian Carpenter 1st September 2014.

Stan Quin.

With sorrow we learned of the death of Stan Quin on 14th August at the age of 92. Stan succeeded Morris Davenport as Managing Director of Shelvoke & Drewry in 1969 and in 1971 was also appointed as Chairman of the company. He continued in these positions until 1980 when Fred Hooson was appointed Managing Director. Stan continued in a non-executive role until retiring in 1981.

It is highly unlikely that anyone will follow Stan's career in the way industry and commerce are organised today. He started at the company as an office boy in 1936 and spent his entire working life within the company. He served an apprenticeship and during the Second World War was deemed to be engaged in a "reserved occupation." However he took great satisfaction from the work he carried out in designing the complex welding fixtures required when S&D were awarded the contract to manufacture the Welfreighter submersibles.

With the impending retirement of Len Gostling as Works Manager Stan was appointed Production Manager and introduced many newer concepts that improved productivity considerably.

Under Stan's guidance as Managing Director the company entered a highly successful phase in its existence. Previously the company's annual sales had never exceeded £3m and profits had not exceeded £200,000. On relinquishing the post of Managing Director sales had exceeded £25m with profits in excess of £2m.



The photograph shows Stan second from the right with to his right Fernand Rey and Tom Tillson whose joint design of the Revopak did so much to improve S&D's fortunes.

Stan showed a great interest in SD's apprenticeship scheme which under his guidance was considerably improved. He appeared to thoroughly enjoy the ex-apprentices re-union that Bob Bowker organised in 2011 where Stan shared with us some of his memories and reflections on the history of the company.

Sadly to an extent Stan's retirement was overshadowed by a sense of sadness at the failure of the company in 1991 after being bought out by an American concern. Stan felt it was a sad end to his life's work and also the many employees who had given years of service to a company which had been highly regarded for the quality of its products. Stan felt that much that was said about the demise of the company was ill informed.

Stan gave your Editor much encouragement in the formation of the SD Enthusiasts' Club and contributed a number of memories for use in the Club's magazine.

In addition to his duties with S&D Stan was also involved at Board level within the Butterfield-Harvey Group where his extensive knowledge was greatly appreciated.

A number of former employees have told me of Stan's interest in their career development and are grateful for his interest and advice. Under his management I understand that at one stage around 1,000 people were employed by Shelvoke & Drewry.

To Cicely, his wife, and to his family we offer our condolences on the death of one whose influence on the history of S&D is difficult to over estimate.

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:

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Next Issue :- 1st December 2014 Winter Issue.

KEEPING THE BELFAST FLEET ON THE ROAD.



When eighty-seven year old Joe Fittis, pictured above, was invited by Peter Johnston to visit McCreath Taylor's premises at Lisburn, Northern Ireland memories from many years ago came back to life. During the Second World War Joe had been evacuated from Belfast to Bushmills, Co. Antrim, but when he left school in 1941 he returned to Belfast just in time for the blitzes of April and May. Joe found work as a rivetter's catch boy at the giant Harland and Woolf shipyard in the city. Then at the age of sixteen he started serving an apprenticeship with Belfast Corporation Cleansing Section on 6th May 1943. This is where he first came into contact with the SD Freighter.

"This vehicle had no battery, no rear brakes, no steering wheel, no electric wipers, these were hand operated, the lights were paraffin lamps and steering was by a tiller. Gear shift was by a lever on the left hand which operated the epicyclic three speed gearbox, the front brake drums were incorporated into the road wheels. The four cylinder engine was very easy to start and gave very little trouble. An average day's work for the vehicles was four or five loads. This was an amazing vehicle – so primitive, and yet it did the job, and was very easy to drive."

Joe was supervised by George Thompson, who he remembers as "a great teacher" and there was a lot to learn. The five Freighters, three with a short wheelbase and two longer vehicles, were replaced by the 'W' type after the War. Eventually this reached a fleet of twelve with side loading bodies. "These vehicles were sturdy and served us well for many years. But the design gave little thought to maintenance. To replace the clutch, or even the starter motor, the engine and gearbox had to be removed from the chassis. On later models a clutch could be replaced in an hour and a half – not on an SD 'W' type! The engine was very good and a very smooth runner, it had a Solex carburettor and coil ignition so was easy to fix."

Joe remembers that SD's fitter Joe Petty would visit from the Manchester Depot from time to time. "He knew everything there was to know and was a real treat to work with." "In my forty-eight years as a mechanic I went to hundreds of breakdowns." Belfast also had quite a large fleet of Dennis vehicles which Joe would work on. "Quite a good unit but inferior to SD quality wise."

Joe had a great day in Lisburn at McCreath Taylors. He was impressed by the size of the premises and the conference complex. "The friendly atmosphere and all the memories of bygone years stirred up by Peter's collection of SD vehicles did my old heart good. I think I could well be the oldest guy in Ireland to work on SD's. Something to think about."

On 19th August Joe made a further visit to McCreath Taylors, this time accompanied by Joe McConnel who remarkably was born just twenty days apart from Joe Fittis and who also was an apprentice with Belfast's Cleansing Section where he spent his entire working life. These two gentlemen who played such an important part in keeping Belfast's refuse collection fleet on the road were delighted to see Peter Johnston's collection of SD vehicles which brought back many happy memories.



From the left: Joe McConnel, Joe Fittis and Peter Johnston at McCreath Taylor's premises on 19th August 2014. Photos by: Joe Fittis

Bill Aldridge has pointed out that I had incorrectly identified the two vehicles beside the three SD 'W' types in the picture of the Hackney fleet in the last issue as Dennis products.

In fact they are Pagefield vehicles and an article about this Wigan based company will appear in a future issue.

My apologies for this mistake and my thanks to Bill for pointing out the error.

A SAD STORY OF S&D FROM 1990

Hi Brian,

Here are some photos from a scene that greeted me when I was summoned by Teignbridge Council to the tip having been told that the hopper had fallen from a new PNR that had only been in service for a few days. You can see that the pivot bracket pins had sheared off on both sides and it was only the hopper lifting rams, possibly helped by the hydraulic piping, that had prevented the hopper from becoming completely detached.



The following morning, with one of my engineers, and considerable assistance from a council worker with his tractor, we managed to secure the hopper to enable us to get the vehicle back to our Exeter Depot. The journey back was slow as we tried to avoid any bumps etc., and I was relieved to complete the 16 or so miles without further mishap.

We fitted new pivot brackets and after close inspection of the complete vehicle returned it to Teignbridge Council. This was one of two new vehicles that had recently been delivered, so we checked the other one and found it to be ok. Unfortunately the damage was done and the Council, in spite of having bought through many years over twenty-five SD vehicles, said they would never have another one – and they did not!



The pivot bracket minus sheared off pin.

The faulty brackets were sent back to Letchworth for inspection. It seemed to be a case of bad welding. I never found out whether these brackets were manufactured in house or outsourced.

It was suggested that perhaps after unloading the drivers were driving off to the washing down area with the hopper still in the raised position. I did try to investigate this theory complete with camcorder but could not enter the tip unseen. Perhaps that was just as well, because nothing was going to repair the relationship between the council and S&D.

It was rather strange that at this time the Council had not yet put their name on the vehicle cab. I didn't ask why!!

Mike Mullarkey



The detached hopper.

Mike Mullarkey was the Exeter Depot Manager. The vehicle's Reg. No. **G 679 TRO** denotes registration between August 1989 and July 1990. Not SD's finest hour!

Mervyn Spokes wrote in regarding the tracked Latil tractor unit shown in the last issue.

The tracks shown are the Russian Kégresse system. I will write about these in a future issue.



THE EDITOR'S POSTBAG.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO FORMER SD EMPLOYEES.

Fred Astridge.

Fred Astridge died at the age of 91 on 28th July. It is believed that in a long career at S&D Fred was in all probability an apprentice prior to the Second World War. It is known that he worked in the Tool Room and from there in the 1960's he moved into the Planning Department in a managerial role. Subsequently it is understood that he was involved in setting up the Fabrication Training Unit which was based in the West Works.

Later he had a role where he monitored the progress of apprentices following their first year 'off the job' training as they became involved in different production areas and underwent occasional phase tests.

When your Editor met him at events organised by the Enthusiasts' Club he shared memories which reached back to the days when Harry Shelvoke managed the company.

Jack Kenchington.

Jack Kenchington, who died on 8th July at the age of 88 was the big blonde Shelvoke's blacksmith over many years. Those of us who were at the company in the 1950's have memories of him.

In reporting his death the Comet Newspaper of 17th July stated that he served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War and in 1948 married Georgina and moved to Norfolk where he shod George VI's horses for four years before returning to Baldock.

It appears that it was 1952 that he joined S&D. On leaving S&D Jack returned to working as a farrier until retiring at the age of 72, and his grandson, Sean, has followed him in that trade.

Jack and Georgina had two daughters.

To those who have been bereaved we offer our condolences and remember with gratitude those who were work colleagues at S&D.

OTHER LETTERS & NEWS ITEMS.

 By Email.

Another great read Brian, many thanks. The 'W' types do it for me too, lots of memories.

Sadly the gulleys around Watford are filled with earth in some cases, one never sees a gully emptier like of yesteryear when the Council owned a fleet of SD's.

Regards *Les Carpenter*

 By Email.

Thanks Brian

I think the article with Steve Jones is great, especially as it's in respect of a very rare vehicle that has been saved and years after restoration is still going strong, he really is quite happy to drive and use it.

Regards *Colin Glendinning*

[Colin also sent in photos of his collection of models of the 'N' series Revopak which will feature in a future Newsletter]

THE EPSOM & EWELL FREIGHTER.



The former Epsom & Ewell Freighter Reg. No. **BPL 73** owned by the Sothorn Counties Historic Vehicle Preservation Trust has been Moved to the Bressingham Steam Museum in Norfolk on loan. The 1934 vehicle will form part of a display about the 'Dad's Army' TV series as it appeared in a film version of the programme. A team at Bressingham are restoring the vehicle to full working condition.

Although the fictional Walmington-on-Sea was located on the South coast, the actual filming took place in various locations in South Norfolk and Suffolk. It is great that this SD survivor will now be on public display.

THANKS.

My task as Editor is made so much easier by the generous response I receive from my readers. For this issue I have to especially thank Peter Johnston and Mike Mullarkey for the articles on pages 2 & 3. But also thanks are due to Roger Morrisroe, Colin Humble, Bill Smith, Valerie Withy, Mervyn Spokes, Bill Aldridge and the Bressingham Steam Museum for their valuable contributions to this issue.
Thank you, *Brian*.