



SPECIAL 25th ANNIVERSARY EDITION.

On a very sad day twenty-five years ago the gates at the Shelvoke factory in Blackhorse Road were closed for the last time, and for all intents and purposes the company was no more. But this Newsletter is evidence that the memories live on and a remarkably large number of vehicles produced by the company are still in existence. From its inception in 1922 as Shelvoke & Drewry, to reflect that it's co-founders were James Drewry and Harry Shelvoke, the company had in more recent times received a few changes of name, becoming for example Shelvoke Dempster, before finally reverting to its previous name. Managing to survive for 69 years is no mean feat and for its first fifty-eight years the company was served by just three Managing Directors. I thought it appropriate to devote this issue of the Newsletter to reflecting on the significance of Shelvoke & Drewry.

Brian Carpenter. Editor.

The Significance of Shelvoke & Drewry.

A Personal View.

In October 1953 I joined S&D as an apprentice. To some extent I was following in a family tradition since my uncle, George Carpenter had been an apprentice at S&D as early as 1924 and my father, Percy Carpenter, a Chartered Accountant, was the company's Auditor over many years. My first thoughts are therefore that above all Shelvoke and Drewry provided employment for many, many people over its 69 years of existence, not simply in Letchworth Garden City, but more widely through its sales staff and service depots and then through its many suppliers.

good employer and the SD 40 club was founded in June 1968. At first it consisted of twenty-five men who had all completed more than forty years continuous service at S&D. At the time Morris Davenport, the Managing Director, had completed 43 years service, and the Sales Director, Jack Wilkinson 44 years. The 40 Club's total service exceeded 1,000 years.

I think this loyalty was due to a number of factors; firstly the Garden City was a good place to live. Ebenezer Howard's dream of a better place had resulted in short journeys to work, a well balanced community, and a sense of space and well being. Then the company's products were of high quality so employees could take pride in their work and the factory had a good atmosphere with many employees related to one another, brothers, sisters, sons and fathers, husbands and wives. For S&D was never the highest paying company in the area, and so attracted those for whom job satisfaction was valued more highly than remuneration.

And from the outset S&D provided training for young men as apprentices and then offered the opportunity to advance within the organisation. The outstanding example of this was Stan Quin who started as an apprentice and was Managing Director from 1969-1981. Under his leadership the company came to employ over 1,000 people – a major employer in Letchworth Garden City.



This picture shows some of the SD employees with the 1,000th Freighter to be produced.

Harry Shelvoke was not an easy person to be employed by. He had exacting standards, and as a former military man he expected obedience from his employees. He was also ambitious and his partnership with James Drewry sadly ended in 1936. But for many the company was a

SD Freighter.

Whilst working at Lacre Lorries in Letchworth, Harry Shelvoke & James Drewry devised the light lorry that was to become the SD Freighter. Because the Directors of Lacre were un-impressed with the prototype built in Harry Shelvoke's barn the pair left to form their own company.



With its diminutive wheels, tiller steering and clutchless gear change, coupled with a remarkably small turning circle, the lorry was designed as a cost effective means of conveying loads of up to 2 tons.

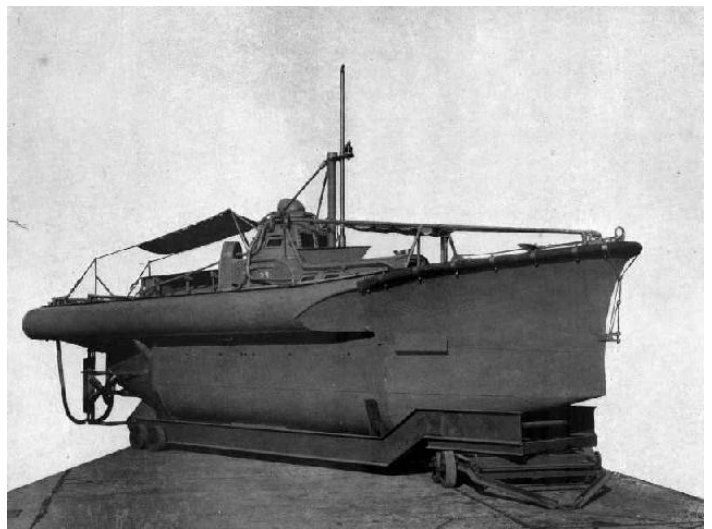


In 1922 the First World War had finished just some four years before, and the country must still have been in shock from the appalling loss of young lives. Much of the transportation in the War had utilised horses, but the superiority of mechanised transport had become evident. The time had arrived for the motor lorry and the ease with which a person could learn to drive an SD Freighter was a major selling point. The small diameter wheels permitted a low loading height and it is not really surprising that a ready market for refuse collection was found.



But the 1920's all too quickly turned into the depression years of the 1930's and Harry Shelvoke had to utilise all his salesman's skills to keep the company afloat and the factory busy. And he succeeded! Municipal authorities became loyal customers and SD's service organisation was second to none. Because the vast majority of the parts for the Freighters were produced in the factory long guarantees could be offered and the operatives enjoyed the easy controls and low loading height.

Then came another World War and production of Freighters all but ceased as the factory was turned over to an admirable war production effort. A company brochure tells of 56,000 tank sprockets and wheels, 8,000 aircraft undercarriages, and for landing craft 2,800 cylinder blocks and 45,000 welded exhaust pipes as well as tank trailers and the amazing Welfreighter submersible shown below.



Just for its war production record SD is worth celebrating. And in the post war years many of these war-time employees continued with the company.

When the war ended in 1945 it was clear that the days of the SD freighter were coming to an end. Sadly this ingenious, brilliant but somewhat eccentric design was unique, and all the competition had followed a different route. Harry Shelvoke and his Directors, reluctantly I believe, decided that the Freighters successor should have a conventional steering wheel, clutch lever, and standard size pneumatic tyres. The 'W' type emerged in winter 1946.



SD's reputation for reliability and rugged construction allowed sales orders to be won for the new design. Petrol engines, axles and gearboxes were all produced in house. The cab was built by joiners on an ash frame and a high degree of paint finish was obtained. To the side loading bodies the Fore & Aft tipping body was soon offered as an option.



Once again S&D were unafraid to launch a somewhat eccentric design. The sight of the body being tipped forward to compact the load was at the very least "unusual". But with the density of refuse decreasing as ideas about packaging increased the amount of paper refuse, the F&A became a very successful product. The addition of the Power Press improved the compaction of the refuse.

By 1959 the 'W' was showing its age and S&D recruited Tom Tillson to design its successor.



The 'T' type with its unpainted aluminium alloy body and hydraulic compaction system proved to be popular with SD's customers and its evolution into the Revopak saw Shelvokes become the market leaders in the U.K. for refuse collection vehicles achieving a creditable 60% share of the market.

The 'P' series tilt cab designed with the assistance of Letchworth company, Ogle Design, brought a modern

looking vehicle to the market in an impressive range of sizes and capacity. With all these designs quality was designed into the product but it needed a skilled and conscientious work force to ensure that standards were maintained so that Shelvoke and Drewry continued to be regarded as a high quality manufacturer.

Other Products.

In the early 1950's S&D were approached by the London Brick Company who were looking to mechanise their brick production. An American Hyster fork lift truck had proved to be successful in revolutionising the handling of bricks, but import restrictions prevented L.B.Co. from further imports. SD's Freightlifter was based on the Hyster design and SD achieved a further reputation for quality and ruggedness in the heavy duty fork lift truck field.



The model 82 Freightlifter, shown above, was joined by the greater capacity model 100 and then the smaller model 72 before being phased out in 1962 to be replaced by a large range of Defiant fork lift trucks, eventually able to handle 27 tonnes with the truck shown below.



In 1974 the fork lift truck business was sold and a new chapter in SD design and manufacture had arrived. The Special Purpose Vehicle Division (SPV) utilising the skills developed in the fork truck range.

Special Purpose Vehicles.

The first design from the SPV Division was in collaboration with Carmichael and the CSD water tender appeared in 1975. A whole range of specialised vehicles were produced including aircraft refuellers, four wheel drive vehicles, a truck designed especially for city deliveries with a low loading height, and even a single deck bus; but my understanding is that none of these achieved significant sales. The most successful designs were for fire appliances and airport crash tenders. The most important order was for 48 WX pump escapes and 10 WY Hydraulic platforms for the London Fire Brigade. A WX is shown below.



Shelvoke's reputation for good design, reliability and ruggedness was maintained within the SPV Division.

Conclusion.

For very nearly seventy years Shelvoke & Drewry made a significant contribution to enhancing people's lives, through providing a satisfying working environment, to improvements in refuse collection and mechanical handling. And I'd like to think that the rate payers received good value for their money when local councils specified SD for their refuse collection vehicles. Also from its earliest days SD sought have a healthy number of export orders which contributed to the national interest. The photo below shows Tom Hall, SD's long serving Export Sales Manager with a 'T' series bound for Accra.



It's sad that the company no longer exists, but there are still plenty who can be called "SD Enthusiasts."

My thanks to Bill Smith, Chris Yeadon, Malcolm Easton, Tony Drewry, Chris Phillips, Veronica Hall and Terry Prince for photos used in this section.



The Icknield Way works shown in the aerial view on the left are but a memory, Shelvoke & Drewry itself is but a memory, but the past fourteen years of running the SD Enthusiasts' Club have taught me that I am by no means alone in fond memories of my working years with the Company.

The enthusiasm for SD vehicles extends to those who were in their childhood 25 years ago because they remember the SD badge was on the vehicles that collected the weekly rubbish.

A significant employer, a creator of innovative designs, a company that took pride in its work remains in the memory and I'm pleased to have been able to pay tribute to it over the pages of these Newsletters and the magazines that preceded it.



This NYC SPV 4x4 16 ton was pictured in the Autumn Newsletter. Malcolm Bates supplied a lot of information about the vehicle. **OTM 891 W** was originally a liquid waste tanker in service with North West Water. It first appeared at the 1978 Motor Show at the NEC and had had the special show cab interior with two-tone seats and was fitted with a Leyland engine..

Later it was purchased by the Vaughan family and converted for fairground use. Malcolm was told that “in fairground days it would pull the laden trailer onto often soggy grass fairgrounds, but with 4x4 low range it was virtually unstoppable. It was even known to pull entire lorry and trailer combinations clear when necessary.”



This is the latest magnificent restoration to come from James McAleer and Peter Johnston from Northern Ireland. As reported in the Autumn 2015 Newsletter Peter purchased this vehicle from the Magee brothers from the Isle of Man. The PN carries a Norba body and has a 10' 0" wheelbase. It is now painted in the livery of Belfast City Council and appeared on the Half Cabs & Bonnets road run on 10th September From Belfast's Titanic Quarter to Ballyrobert. Thomas Moore supplied this photo.

Further Freightlifter Dualdrive Models.

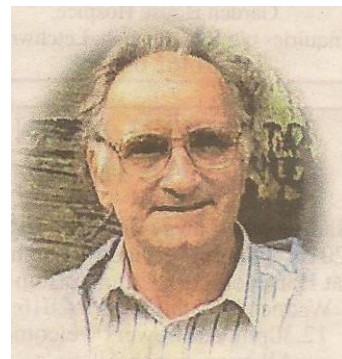
Oxford Diecast have announced that versions of the SD Freightlifter Model 100 Dualdrive will be available in Midland Region maroon livery and the all yellow British Railways livery. Release dates are unknown.



Tim Byrne, an international waste management consultant has produced a lavishly illustrated account of the waste management vehicles used by Biffa Waste Services and the companies that it acquired as it expanded. Only a few Shelvoke & Shelvoke Dempster vehicles appear in this volume which is available from the author.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO FORMER EMPLOYEES.

Mick Waldock.



We were sorry to learn of the death of Maurice Charles Waldock on 4th September at the age of 86. Known at work as Mick, he was a builder with SD works and bricks dept. and worked at SD for a very long time. He used to work with Maurice Kilby.

Mick's wife, Shirley worked in SD's Cost Office , his brother Alan worked on fork lift trucks at No. 5 Factory, whilst his other brother, Eddie, was an electrician at No. 2 Factory. His brother-in-law was Jack Kenchington, the SD blacksmith. His nephew Mick was employed in No. 4 Service Department and another nephew, Andy, was an SD apprentice (1971-76). Andy's wife, Linda, worked at S&D from 1971 until 1991 and in this she followed her parents, Bob and Jean Allen.

Through Linda I have offered our condolences to Mick's family and I am grateful to Linda for the above information. Linda writes:- "Mick was very active in his retirement and always enjoyed being with his family, who will miss him greatly."

The Garden City Collection.



Bill Smith, whose father Ken, was Superintendent of the Joiners' Shop kindly sent in six photos of the newly built office block in Icknield Way. I intend to use these in a future issue.

On your behalf on Tuesday 20th September I handed over many of the SD related items that I have accumulated over the past fourteen years of running the SD Enthusiasts' Club into the safe keeping of the Garden City Collection. This included:- 478 photographs, 45 sales brochures, 18 data sheets, 34 magazines with articles relating to S&D, books, original drawings, sales promotional items, company ties, diecast models etc. There will be a lot of work to enter all these items onto their data base and the Collection would welcome volunteers with knowledge of S&D to assist in that task.

The photo shows left. to right: Aimee Flack, the Collections Officer, Vicky Axell, the Curator of the Collection, and your Editor.

The staff of the Collection were generous with their time given to my son and myself and we were given a tour of their Town centre exhibition space, where the displays are replaced periodically and I recommend both that space and the Collection itself as well worth a visit.

FACEBOOK GROUP.

The SD Enthusiasts' Group on Facebook now has 89 members. Over recent weeks things have become a little quieter and I'll have to be thinking about some more topics to post to create some interest and discussion. Hopefully I'll have a little more time during the darker months ahead.

DVD OF SD REMEMBERED.

Mike Mullarkey, who was the manager of SD's Exeter Depot has generously given me permission to offer to you copies of the video he produced at the 2004 SD Event at Letchworth Hall Hotel. Please contact me for details if you would like a DVD.



Christmas Greetings and a Happy New Year to all my readers.
Brian. Editor.

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 2017 Spring Issue.