



# SHELVOKE & DREWRY ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

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## From the Editor.

It's hardly surprising that the majority of this Newsletter is devoted to the two events that took place in September to celebrate the Centenary of the founding of Shelvoke & Drewry. But we also have news of surviving SD vehicles, a short biography of Managing Director from 1949 to 1969 Morris Davenport and a photo of SD's 1978 Rugby Team. I hope you'll enjoy this issue.

Brian Carpenter Editor 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

## CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDING OF SHELVOKE & DREWRY LTD.



Some of the guests at SD 100 at The Broadway Hotel, Letchworth, on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

Photo by Malcolm Bates.

Two events took place in September to celebrate the Centenary of the founding of S & D. The first was the County Down Road Run which started at the Titanic Quarter in Belfast on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>. The second took place on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> in Letchworth. An Organising Committee had been meeting throughout the year via Zoom.

All the members of the Organising Committee are former SD apprentices.

L to R:- Bill Stimson, Brian Carpenter, Steve Woodward, Bryan Hawley, Roger Morrisroe.



The Organising Committee. Photo by Bill Smith.

My thanks are due to these four people without whom this assistance the SD 100 Event couldn't have taken place.

We sold a total of 75 tickets for the event but for a variety of reasons nine people were unable to join us. Due to the generosity of benefactors we were able to invite as our guests members on families whose relative had played a significant part in the company.

We had planned a modest contingency fund which wasn't required. The Committee decided to donate this surplus to Stotfold Mill where Jack Kilby's models are now on permanent display. A local reminder of Shelvoke & Drewry's almost seventy years as an employer and trainer in the Letchworth area.

Details of these two events are in the following pages.

**CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDING OF SHELVOKE & DREWRY LTD.  
THE COUNTY DOWN ROAD RUN.**



**Peter Johnston's 'W' type Fore & Aft tipper poses in front of one of the iconic Harland & Woolf construction cranes in the Titanic Quarter, Belfast, named Sampson & Goliath in this photo by Malcolm Bates.**

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September in conjunction with the County Down Road Run organised by the Ulster Vintage Commercial Vehicle Club a celebration of the Centenary of S&D took place. In the morning at the Public Records Office (PRONI) in the Titanic Quarter, Belfast at 11.00 am when four 10-minute talks were given in the Lecture Room. The speakers were introduced by Shirley Cochrane, the daughter of the Coxswain, Hugh Nelson, of the Sir Samuel Kelly RNLI lifeboat that picked up 34 passengers and crew from the ill-fated Princess Victoria disaster on 31st January 1953 just off the North Down Coast. Princess Victoria was an early roll on-roll off ferry and 135 lives were lost in the disaster.

The speakers were:-

Jayne Hutchinson from PRONI who explained what resources are available in PRONI to assist with research into a vehicle's history.

Mike Shaw, a retired helicopter pilot, who spoke about Mew Island and Donaghadee Lighthouse.

Jim Smyth the key organiser of the Ayrshire Road Run each year gave a talk on Scotland's Portpatrick Harbour which was built at the same time as Donaghadee Harbour.

Malcom Bates spoke on the history of Shelvoke & Drewry from 1922 to 1991. He drew on his 13 years working for the Company, ultimately as marketing manager until he switched to journalism following the takeover of SD by the Dempster Systems.

Tommy Moore sent me three photos from the day. The first shown on the left is of three vehicles in the McCreath Taylor livery.

Following the talks around twenty vintage commercial vehicles set off for the twenty mile run to Donaghadee, County Down. In the car park at Donaghadee the Sir Samuel Kelly RNLI lifeboat is on display.

The SD vehicles on the run were:- **2217 IJ** a 1952 'W' type Fore & Aft tipper, **EGZ 9390** a 1980 PN with a Norba body, and **OJL 2936** a flat bed conversion of a 1991 PT with **GJD 121 N** an NN now with a tar tanker body on the flat bed with **MI 2721** a 1929 Freighter being towed on a trailer. Unfortunately it was a wet day but Tommy assures me that everyone enjoyed the road run. Thanks are due to Peter Johnston and others for organising this celebration of the centenary of the founding of Shelvoke & Drewry.



**CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDING OF SHELVOKE & DREWRY LTD.  
SD 100 THE BROADWAY HOTEL SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022.**

**CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE FOUNDING OF SHELVOKE & DREWRY Ltd. AND THE ALMOST SEVENTY YEARS IN WHICH THE COMPANY PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LETCHWORTH AREA. PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS.**



Anyone passing the Broadway Hotel on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September would have realised that Shelvoke & Drewry were in town as Terry Prince's WX Pump ladder and Malcolm Bates' Ex-Folkestone "1922" SD Freighter were parked in the Hotel's car park.

For your Editor the Event had been a long time in the planning with two major revisions due to circumstances beyond our control. But at last the day was here and the Organising Committee's planning was put to test. As well as being a reunion for former SD employees we had had to try to ensure that the Event would be of interest both to former employees and those who hadn't worked for the company.

Since at the end of June we had been informed that the proposed exhibition at the Museum at One Garden City would not be going ahead we had arranged that as much of that exhibition as possible would be on display at SD 100.



The AV display situated in the Bar area had three programmes which played continuously. These were:- A 1970 publicity film commissioned by S&D when the NY Revopak was in production, The Salvage Squad TV programme first broadcast on Channel 4 in January 2003 showing the restoration of ex-Isles of Scilly Revopak Reg. No. SCY 786 X, and a video made by Mike Mullarkey at the 2004 Event at Letchworth Hall Hotel. This AV display created a lot of interest with former SD employees adding their comments and recognising former work colleagues on the 2004 video.



**View of the main Function Room.**

I think we succeeded in that objective. SD100 included an AV display, four magnificent models of SD vehicles made from matchsticks, a display of the Ten Top Achievements of SD, four three panel display boards featuring various aspects of the company, table displays provided by a variety of contributors, a buffet supper and time to talk, recall memories and meet new people.



The four matchstick models were made by the late Jack Kilby

An SD Demonstrator Driver and had been beautifully restored by his nephew, Ray Kilby, The models have many working parts and Ray is shown demonstrating these to us. The models are now on permanent display at Stotfold Mill.



Around eight tables were used to display items loaned for the event. Those lending items included:- Roger Morrisroe, Bill Baker, Steve Woodward, Malcolm Bates, Brian Carpenter, The Garden City Collection, the North Hertfordshire Museum, Hitchin, and Malcolm Easton



Down the centre of the room six one metre square panels related the Ten Top SD Achievements and a Time Line. These had been printed for us by Phillips Digital Print of Letchworth.



At either end of the room 3 panel Display Boards carried documents relating to the Company. Board 1 concentrated on the personalities who had held significant positions in the company, Board 2 concerned the Service Department, the Joiners' Shop and three photos from the Garden City Collection. A third Board had a variety of items about SD history including an account of the World War II Welfreighter submersible. The final board carried copies of documents about Brian's Uncle George Carpenter who was an SD apprentice and later Service Manager.



Many appreciated the chance to catch up with former work colleagues. Here Roger Morrisroe is in conversation with June Tucker, who was Stan Quin's Secretary.



I gave a welcoming speech and then Malcolm Easton, the grandson of the co-founder of S & D , James Drewry, outlined his grandfather's achievements. Then to my complete surprise Malcolm presented me with an engraved glass vase by Dartington Crystal. The engraving reads:-

*To Brian Carpenter in thanks for all your time over many years promoting Shelvoke & Drewry to its many enthusiasts.*

*Presented by Malcolm Easton, grandson of the co-founder*

*James Sidney Drewry, on the Centenary of the formation of the Company , at Letchworth 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2022.*



Many messages of appreciation were received which included:-

It was a fabulous event with great displays and so many memories for me and my father. **Ian Morrow**

Thanks for organising such a great Centenary exhibition for everybody. Well done. We certainly enjoyed it and found the exhibits very interesting – especially the amazing matchstick vehicles. In our daughter Rosemary's own words "Yesterday was lovely - it was so nice to be able to share this with you and, as you say, learn even more about my wonderful great grandfather".

Best wishes, **Malcolm Easton**

We had an absolutely fabulous time we shall definitely be at the next one.

It was a real pleasure to finally meet you and thanks a million for all your hard work in making this event happen Dad and I really appreciate you.

Kind wishes **Dennis & Russell Townley.**

## Ritson Morris Davenport. O.B.E. (1909 – 2001)

A happy additional benefit from organising SD 100 to celebrate the centenary founding of Shelvoke & Drewry has been the receipt of some additional historical information. For this account I am indebted to John Davenport, a nephew of Morris Davenport.

Morris Davenport was SD's Managing Director for twenty years from 1949 until 1969. On the death of Harry Shelvoke in 1962 he was also Chairman of the Company.

Morris Davenport moved to Letchworth Garden City at an early age, because his parents thought that the clean air would be beneficial to Morris' younger brother, George, who suffered from asthma. Morris's father, Ernest, was a plumber by trade and in Letchworth expanded into house building.



**Morris Davenport during his schooldays.**

On leaving school Morris was employed by the newly formed Shelvoke & Drewry as an office boy and moved into the commercial side of the business. He studied in the evenings to obtain qualifications as a company secretary, and was duly appointed to that post. In 1936 Morris married Florence Thomas and moved into a house in Norton Road. In 1949 post war reorganisation of the Board of Directors Morris was appointed as Managing Director with Harry Shelvoke becoming Chairman. Morris and Florence moved into a house built by his father in Norton Way North, bringing up a son and a daughter.

On the death of Harry Shelvoke Morris became Chairman and Managing Director. Under his management the company became recognised as a producer of high quality refuse collection vehicles and heavy duty fork lift trucks. Morris took a keen interest in the sales side of the business and undertook a number of overseas trips to further export sales.

In 1964 he was awarded an O.B.E. in recognition of his contribution to industry and he finally retired in 1969. For a number of years he lived in the Broadway and in retirement he moved to Frinton-on-Sea where he died at the age of 92.

In a newspaper cuttings regarding the "Freightlifter" launch Morris is quoted as saying:- "I want to state publicly that everyone on the firm, from my colleagues on the board of directors, through every section of the works to the youngest worker, have given their best. We are proudly confident that this new Freightlifter is going to be a great success."

His grandson has written:- "Grandfather was heart broken when S&D finally closed down, he loved it and was very proud to have been part of something so great."

I am indebted to John Davenport, nephew of Morris for much of the above information. B.P.C.



Dean Webster posted this photo on Facebook. He thinks it is SD's Rugby Team from about 1978. Mark Stapley remembers going to watch the match at Stevenage Rugby Club near Lister Hospital and says that 1978 sounds about right. Does anyone else remember this team?

## EXISTING SD VEHICLES.



On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September Terry Prince took his WX Pump Escape to an Open Day at Shoreditch Fire Station. In the photo above fire brigade uniforms are shown as they have evolved.



### OUR FACEBOOK GROUP.

Membership of our Facebook Group now stands at 724. We continue to receive a steady stream of postings. The Group has become far more popular than I ever expected.

### TWELVE YEARS OF THE NEWSLETTER.

This edition of the Newsletter marks the completion of twelve years of publication. The magazine that it superseded ran for eight years, so in all I've now been the Editor for twenty years.

I have been so fortunate in that material for publication continues to arrive and I hope to continue for a while yet.

*Brian Editor.*

### THANKS.

Thanks are due for the photos used in this issue to:- Tommy Moore, Terry Prince, Malcolm Bates, Bill Smith and our son, David Carpenter.

For content I am grateful to John Davenport for his contribution.



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



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

**Next Issue :- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 Spring Issue.**



At the end of August Adam Griffiths posted this picture of a WX Fire Appliance in a scrap dealer's yard. It appears to be VWR 818 X which was used by the Santa Pod Raceway. It was originally in service in West Yorkshire and the bodywork is by Anglococ.