



SHELVOKE & DREWRY ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

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Winter 2023.

FINAL ISSUE.



Visitors to the SD Centenary Celebration at the Broadway Hotel in September 2022.

From the Editor Brian Carpenter.

It was with a very heavy heart that I wrote "Final Issue" above. 2023 has proved to be a very difficult year for me brought on, I believe by a Covid booster jab in October 2022. It feels almost unbelievable that so far the doctors I've been seeing have been unable to discover why week by week I've grown weaker and weaker. One suggestion is that it's simply that I've had too many birthdays! So I felt I had to decide to release myself from the commitment to produce a Newsletter every quarter as I've done for over twenty years now.

BUT IN NO WAY DOES THIS MEAN AN END TO THE SD ENTHUSIASTS' CLUB. JUST SOME ADJUSTMENTS.

Running the Club and publishing the Newsletter has been a delight that has greatly enhanced my life. The many contacts I've made have become similar to friends although there are a lot of members I've never met. I'm grateful for all those who have shared memories etc. and who share my own enthusiasm for Shelvoke & Drewry who gave me such a good grounding in the workings of the engineering industry.

Tentatively for the future I intend to publish whenever I'm good and ready:-

Newsletters Extra consisting of an article on one particular topic.

A **News Bulletin** whenever sufficient news has arrived.

Maintaining the **main website**.

Maintaining the **Facebook Group**. Here I think it would be good to be able to distinguish between those who were at one time SD employees, those who worked in the Waste Industry, and those whose main interest is the SPV Fire Appliances. I'd welcome any views on this.

It has been fascinating to discover that the Company is still highly regarded, especially by those it employed. With the passing of each era much will have changed, but there seems to be a common thread of good employee relations (not necessarily with the management) a sense of humour, a sense of pride at being involved in the production of high quality special purpose vehicles and fork lift trucks.

The Club has held a number of successful events:-

On **September 12th 2004** the first event organised by the SD Enthusiasts' Club was held at Letchworth Hall Hotel's Arlington Suite, under the title 'SD Remembered'. This accommodates 200 people and all the tickets were sold with unfortunately a waiting list. A buffet supper was provided, memorabilia was displayed and seven preserved vehicles were on display.

In **2005** the Club were invited to attend the Bedfordshire Steam & Country Fayre at Old Warden (near Biggleswade) on 17th & 18th September. A display tent was provided and eight preserved vehicles were displayed and driven into the parade ring each day. The event was had the title:- 'SD Celebrated'.

The **2006** event was more low key and was held at the Grange Community Centre, Letchworth Garden City, on 24th June. Just sixty people attended this event which consisted of a buffet meal and display of memorabilia. Steve Jones brought his 1982 PN Revopak over from the Isle of Wight for the event.

In **2009** the Club provided a stand at The Letchworth Garden City Industry Festival on 1st and 2nd August. Relatives of James Drewry also provided a display. The "1922" Freighter was on display.

In **2009 & 2010** preserved vehicles were displayed at the Southern Counties Historic Vehicles Preservation Trust's rallies at Edenbridge, Kent, in June.

In **November 2011** in conjunction with the Enthusiasts' Club, former SD apprentice, Bob Bowker, organised a reunion lunch for former apprentices at the Letchworth Garden City Golf Club. Former Managing Director, and an ex-SD apprentice, Stan Quin, addressed the gathering of over thirty former apprentices.

In **2022** we celebrated the Centenary of the founding of the company with a gathering in Letchworth, and assisted others in a display of vehicles at Gaydon, Warwickshire.



Harry Shelvoke

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF

SHELVOKE & DREWRY LTD.

The Editor.



James Drewry

S & D Ltd.

It appears to be impossible at this time to determine the exact roles that Harry Shelvoke and James Drewry took in conceiving, designing and making a prototype light lorry whilst they both worked at Lacre Lorries in Letchworth Garden City. Clearly the believed that they could work together to form a successful engineering company, and Shelvoke & Drewry Ltd was launched in 1922 to manufacture the SD Freighter.



A very basic early SD Freighter.

James Drewry had a lively and inventive mind and in 2022 Malcolm Easton published an excellent account of his grandfather's life and achievements with the title: From bicycles to Dustcarts. Little biographical evidence about Harry Shelvoke appears to be available although on a website Mark Grace comments that Harry used the coat of arms of the "THORNES of Shelvock & Meverley" although he had no entitlement to use it.

The Freighter was designed as a light two ton lorry and many prestigious customers were persuaded to purchase the vehicle controlled by two levers known as:- "tillers". They had an automatic gearbox and were built with meticulous accuracy. It appears it was almost by chance that many local authorities realised the potential of the Freighter for refuse collection duties where it often replaced horse drawn carts. By 1929 S&D were celebrating having produced 1,000 Freighters. The World Wide Recession of the 1930's made sales difficult to find but the company survived this difficult time. However all was not well in the Boardroom and James Drewry felt he had no option but to leave the company in 1935.

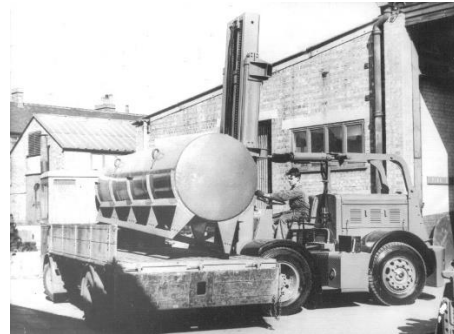
In the Second World War (1939 – 45) numerous military contracts were obtained, including parts for tanks, landing craft and aircraft undercarriages. In addition a complete 30 ft long miniature submersible was under construction in 1944.

There is evidence that once the war was over Harry Shelvoke believed that there was still a market for the SD Freighter, although C.K. Edwards was charged with a designing s replacement. This arrived in 1946 as the 'W' type and was basically of standard commercial vehicle design. In 1948 a Fore & Aft tipping body became available where by tipping the body forwards a degree of compaction was obtained. This was welcomed whole heartedly by waste operators and S&D entered a very successful period in its history.



An early 'W' type Fore & Aft tipper tips forwards.

1952 saw a complete new venture for the company when it was commissioned by the London Brick Company to design and build heavy duty fork lift trucks. These were termed Freightlifters, built in three sizes, and made a welcome addition to SD's output.



A Model 82 Freightlifter.

In 1958 C.K. Edwards retired as Chief Engineer to be replaced by John Huggins, who had joined SD to work on the Freightlifter. Sadly John's prototype design of an enlarged version of the Fore & Aft tipper failed spectacularly when being demonstrated and John left the company.

S&D discovered that Tom Tillson, Chief Engineer at their customary main rival, Dennis Bros, was willing to move and join the company. Tom immediately set about designing a new range of vehicles designated the 'T' type. The range included the Pakamatic with an aluminium alloy body and a hydraulically operated packing mechanism based on the French Rey design, which was launched in 1960.



An early TY Pakamatic.

The Freightlifter range had been superseded by the Defiant range of fork lift trucks in 1962, and in 1974 it was decided to close the fork lift division. In its place a Special Purpose Vehicle Division was created, which had varying fortunes, the SD Fire Appliances were well regarded and a large order from the London Fire Brigade was an endorsement of their quality. But many of the projects produced workmanlike useful vehicles, but if they were successful the much larger commercial vehicle manufacturers could produce similar vehicles at much lower cost.



Ex-London Fire Brigade WX Pump Escape.

In 1978 the 'P' series came into production with an all steel tilting cab made in house. Normally supplied with a Revopak body the 'P' became a market leader in the home market achieving a 60% share of the market.



A PY Revopak Demonstrator.

In 1980, Managing Director, Stan Quin, was moved on to other duties within the Butterfield Harvey Group of Companies to be succeeded by Fred Hooson. It would appear that Fred Hooson was cut from a very different cloth to other SD managers, many of whom were former SD apprentices, and the company began to lose its way.

A loan was taken out with the Dempster Division of the American Krug International, and when the company could not repay the debt it was taken over by the American Company who closed it down in the autumn of 1991. A sad end for a once market leading enterprise.

I make no claims to be historian but hope this account gives an idea of the highs and lows for SD So far as I have been able to discover only limited evidence remains of the company's finances, which would be a trues test of its fortunes over nearly 70 years of trading.

SHELVOKE & DREWRY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

As a Shelvoke & Drewry employee my time at the company was a relatively short one – a mere nine years. It was not unusual for employees to be welcomed into the SD 40 Club after 40 years as an employee. I started in 1953, completed five years apprenticeship and then added two years to gain a Higher National Diploma. Then I joined the staff firstly as a Jig & Tool draughtsman and then a production planning engineer, before leaving in 1962. Obviously when sharing reminiscences and memories former SD employees from different eras will have different insights. But a common theme is:- "It was a very good place of work", we were well treated and respected, "There was always plenty of good humour."

Some people who are keeping the memories and reputation of the company are those who are preserving SD vehicles for the future, and I feel I have no option but to remind you of a few of these stalwarts, who have given time and money so that a surprising at least seventy-seven vehicles still exist. I refer to them here in no particular order of their importance. Any SD Enthusiasts should be grateful to them for all that they have done and are doing.

Steve Jones.

By sheer coincidence at the end of the year in which I'd launched the Website, Channel 4 TV broadcast in their Salvage Squad series a programme about the ex-Isles of Scilly 1982 PN Revopak Reg. No. SCY 786 X owned by Steve Jones from Sandown, Isle of Wight. Steve became fascinated by dustcarts at an early age and was unable to resist staring from the school window every week when the bins were emptied. Publicity by the TV company immediately gave me a list of contacts sufficient to launch the Enthusiasts' Club in 2003. Steve also owns a PNL Revopak which is undergoing restoration.



Steve at the wheel of his PN Revopak.

Malcolm Bates.

Unusually for S&D Malcolm came to the company as a young man in 1969 not having served an apprenticeship in Letchworth but rather studying design at an art college.

Malcolm was designated the title of Publicity Manager, attached to the Sales Department, despite only managing himself, with responsibility to design and produce all sales brochures, arrange photographs, and produce cutaway drawings for the Drawing Office. He also was given responsibility for replying to letters.

sent in requesting information about SD's previous products. This allowed him access to SD's photo book master archive.



Malcolm on the left at Letchworth September 2022.

He remained with the company until being made redundant in 1983 and became a freelance journalist and photographer. Whenever he found an opportunity Malcolm has written about Shelvoke & Drewry. Often critical of the management but with a far more modern approach than I can produce. I have scans of no less than twenty- one of his articles from Vintage Roadscene magazine.

In 2016 came the first of two bookazines (A cross between a magazine and a book) On the Dust - A Pictorial History of Municipal Vehicle Development, and in 2020 the excellent SD – Shelvoke & Drewry (Vintage Roadscene Archive Volume 11). A comprehensive account of many aspects of the company, richly illustrated and giving insights into the management not easily available other than to Malcolm.

Then finally he is the owner of the ex-Folkestone Freighter KP 7670 restored to 1922 condition by the apprentices in 1968. Truly an SD Enthusiast!

Peter Johnston.

Peter was in charge of refuse collection for the City of Belfast in Northern Ireland. On retirement he acquired McCreath Taylor N.I. Ltd – a company that had represented S&D in Ireland. Then, along with his son, David, he caught the collecting bug, and now has a fleet of some seven vehicles most of which have been beautifully restored with two remaining as future projects.



1959 Fore & Aft tipper.

Aled and Matthew Rees.

Brothers Aled and Matthew from Bristol have acquired a large number of refuse collection vehicles from various manufacturers with the intention of eventually creating a Refuse Collection Vehicle Museum. Included is the only 'N' series Revopak thought to exist in the U.K., an unusual 1963 T converted into a breakdown truck by the London Borough of Newham, three 'P' series Revopaks, a PY Maxipak, a Defiant fork truck and several other vehicles – some in a very sorry state. Once again preserving the SD story.



The Rees Brothers' 1974 NY Revopak.

Terry & Chris Prince.

Husband and wife Terry and Chris Prince are the owners of four ex-London Fire Brigade SPV pumps from 1979 & 1980. One is a pump escape with the remainder converted by the LFB to pump ladders. The majority of these have been beautifully restored by many hours of hard work by Terry, a fire appliance enthusiast since his school days.



Chris & Terry Prince with Pump Escape Reg. No. YHV 1187 T June 2022 Gaydon.

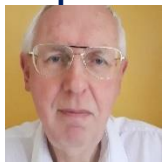
Malcolm Easton

Finally Malcolm Easton, the grandson of James Drewry published a comprehensive biography of his grandfather in 2022. All the above and many others continue to keep the name Shelvoke & Drewry before the public in the twenty-first century. A relatively small company, I would suggest, but one whose name is remembered for quality of build, ingenuity of design, and a long working life. Known to so many in the waste industry, but stretching far beyond that to an impressive War record, heavy duty fork lift trucks and many specialised vehicles.

Brian Carpenter. November 2023

NEWS BULLETIN.

Of Special Interest to Former SD Employees.



David Potter

We were saddened to learn that David Potter died in August. David worked for S&D for two periods in the early 60s and again in the late 80s until he was made redundant in July 1990. At that time they were very busy in the stores due to having large contracts for Iran involving sending kits of parts for the Iranians to assemble them onto Leyland chassis. The first kits David believed were Pakamatics and Gully/Cesspool Emptiers. The last kits that went out there he thought were Interpaks. During his second stint working for S&D the company was taken over by Dempster and renamed Shelvoke Dempster. The No. 3 factory was closed down and sold, and the stores moved over the road when spares and production stores were combined. David worked there as a charge hand store-man. He finished off his time progress chasing.

David's father, John Potter, also worked for SD in the Tool Room from 1966 to 1981.

David accumulated a large collection of SD memorabilia, and was a keen supporter of the Enthusiasts' Club. In recent years he used his well equipped workshop to manufacture wooden models of SD vehicles, one of which is shown below.



Shaun Flies the Flag for Shelvokes.



Shaun Taylor has produced an excellent model of a PNL Plus Revopak which he has displayed on his OO gauge (1:76 scale) model railway layout on several occasions this year including in his home town of Howden, East Yorkshire. The model is based on a modified Oxford Diecast Dennis RS Fire appliance, by

removing the body, shortening the cab and making detailed alterations to the cab front. The body is made from the Oxford Diecast livestock trailer which has rounded corners with ribs down the side and the hopper is made from plasticard. The model is shown complete with a miniature operator. Shaun works as a refuse collection vehicle driver in his home area. It has had its last showing for 2023 as the Show season comes to an end.

Home and Dry!

We have been informed by Malcolm Bates that the ex-Folkestone SD Freighter Reg. No. KP 7670 which was restored to 1922 condition by the SD apprentices and completed in 1968, has been moved to the covered premises of a local farmer. After being returned from Northern Ireland in 2022 the vehicle has been stored under its cover in the open air, so this is very good news.

A Freightlifter at Work



It isn't often that we get colour photos of SD vehicles in action. But Darren Brennan posted this in our Facebook Group of a Model 82 at work for Guinness, and I thought the photo was well worth sharing with you.

Also at Work in Sheffield.



GWJ 867 J is a 1970 TBN Fore & N Aft tipper which covered 71,855 miles in the service of Sheffield City Council. Retired in 1982 it was restored by its owners. It has been stored outdoors for several years, but Council are now considering its future. It had a watertight rear door for when it was used for night soil collection.
Photo courtesy City of Sheffield Council.

ANOTHER COMPLETED RESTORATION.



Tommy Moore sent in this photo of the ex-Barking 1972 TZ Gully Emptier Reg. No. **KLK 464 K** which has been beautifully restored in Northern Ireland. The vehicle was purchased in 2017.

Two More Defiant Fork Trucks Survive.

Malcolm Bares tells me that he has located two more Defiant fork trucks that have survived. Perhaps I'll have photos for you next time in the News Bulletin.

FACEBOOK GROUP MEMBERSHIP.

Membership of the Group now stands at 976 members. I am trying to find ways to make the Group more of a community of people with a shared interest.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU.



**TO ALL
READERS.**

**I WISH YOU A
VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS
AND
BEST WISHES
FOR THE NEW
YEAR.**

Brian Editor.

I give my customary thanks to all of you who have provided the information given in this Newsletter. But I wish to record my gratitude to our son, David (Pictured above left) who has encouraged me in developing the SD Enthusiasts' Club over the past twenty years, and provided, free of charge, an Internet presence for the Website. Truly my right hand man. Also to his late younger brother (by just one year), Michael, who discovered a modestly priced source of printing when I used to supply copies of the magazine by post.

FAREWELL!

So it's goodbye to the Newsletter, but already eight Newsletter Extras are in various stages of development. And items to hand waiting for the next News Bulletins.

I'll be on here in the New Year, just in a different form. **Brian.**

