

The Scammell Register at the Great Dorset Steam Fair - 2008

by Mike Thomas

I have always wanted to visit the GDSF but never made it, so I decided that this year was the year for the pilgrimage! Why this year particularly? Well as most of you will know, this is a very special year for a number of reasons.

- The Register is 25 years old and the key 25th anniversary celebration was rightly arranged for the GDSF - our spiritual home!
- The Mechanical Horse Club shares our 25th anniversary.
- The GDSF is celebrating its 40th anniversary.
- We are commemorating 20 years since the Watford factory closed in 1988.

The last reason is sad in one sense, but amazingly positive when you realise that over 70 Scammells were at Dorset - truly ensuring the “Legend Lives on”! The Walters family’s Crusader uses the slogan on the side panels of their immaculate Crusader and S26 both of which were at the show.

I was there with Sue for only 2 days and it is absolutely true what people say - you really need the week to see it all properly.

I started my tour at the Register display lorry which was set up next to the marquee which was ready for the celebratory “do” and was housing the Mechanical Horse Club display. The Register lorry, as always, attracted huge interest and did a roaring trade in new Members, renewals, and sales of merchandising, including the new DVD (see review elsewhere) which was showing on a TV kindly supplied by Brian Carter. I am sure the interest was significantly enhanced by the presence of another Walters family lorry, Mick Walter’s Explorer, “Mean Machine” posed to show the off road capability of the suspension (see also colour section).



To one side was the Wall’s family’s Pioneer, “Quo Vadis”, superbly restored by Member Simon Grainger, newly out this year. It is photographed with Bryan Donkin, one of the section safety marshals, in his Union Jack waistcoat carrying a red flag, which Brian tells me was to escort the lorry to the traction engine with the same name.

I then headed for the commercial area, organised by Dave Hillier, one of our Founder Members. Four hours later we had finished our



tour! I counted around 42 Scammells amongst the huge display. Carol Cooper, who was helping John Collins in the commentary box when the commercials went round the ring, told me that 263 lorries went in on the Thursday! Some of the Scammells which took my eye, mainly ones I hadn't seen before and were of particular interest, included the 1942 Pioneer SV2S recovery, NGY 295 which served in the military from when it was built in 1942 until 1946 before moving to Boscombe Down in '46 where it is still employed for recovery work on the airfield. Its driver, Dave Hardy, says it still works regularly and considers himself lucky to drive it and particularly fortunate to be able to take it to shows. It is fully equipped, including an original set of tracks which are still used when required and are stowed in the box beneath the driver's door, as shown below right. Dave tells me they take around 2 hours to fit.



Also displayed was Dave's superb 1/3 scale model of the lorry, pictured left, which is amazingly realistic. It is fully operational, being powered by a Reliant Regal petrol engine and is driven by flapping the roof



open and balancing on one locker! Both vehicles are pictured in the colour section. Dave has promised to do an article on both for a future Newsletter, so fingers crossed!



I was also taken by YP 6785, listed in the catalogue as a 1926 Scammell S10 chain drive with dropside carrier. It is owned by Zac Hacker from Wiltshire and, I understand, has been driven to the GDSF every year since 1970. The bonnet seemed particularly long and I wonder if the chassis has been extended to take the Gardner 6LW which replaced the original Scammell 7 litre petrol engine which, I am told, is now being

rebuilt. The lorry originally pulled a milk tanker from Somerset to London in 12 hours and was used in Scammell adverts of the day.

It was good to see Tony Jordan there, not with the usual "heavies" but, in sharp contrast, with his Scarab and smart matching Volvo coach which serves as living accommodation as well as a transporter for the Scarab.



My selection from the commercials is complete with what I thought was a very nicely turned out 1968 Handyman, TRE 506G, in BRS livery, with matching BTC 4 in line trailer. According to the catalogue, it was purchased in 1999 as a ballast tractor and converted back to a 5th wheel tractor. Parry tells me it was probably built with a Scammell 6 speed gearbox and epicyclic axle but now has a Fuller 9 speed range change gearbox and back axle from a Ford D1000. It is powered by a Gardner engine which he says seems to be a cross between a 150 and a 180.



The next morning we started in the heavy haulage section - another 8 Scammells. Gyles Carpenter kindly supplied colour photos of three in the “playpen”. I was fascinated to watch Member John Attlee manoeuvre his Contractor with the trailer carrying an armoured recovery vehicle. The value of the rear steering and his skilled steerswoman, Teresa, is clearly shown as he does a “three point turn” [well not quite three!] in a very tight space before heading for the playpen.



I could happily have spent the entire day watching the playpen, but it was off to seek out the various other hiding places for Scammells. Amongst them, I found two of Frank Edwards’ lorries by the Fairground Heritage Trust tent, and FTD 812, in the livery of Halletts Heavy Haulage.

I didn’t make it to the military section where I think there were a number of Scammells.



There were a few others dotted around and finally there were four Scarabs and a Mechanical Horse by their marquee, which was next to our display, housing their display and doubling up as the venue for the anniversary “do”.



Final total? I made it 73!

The Thursday evening saw the official celebration of the Register and Mechanical Horse Club's 25th anniversaries. It was a brilliant evening with just over 90 members of the two clubs and their guests. One of the Register's Founder Members and current Committee Member, Dave Hillier and his wife Pauline



had done sterling work organising the marquee, catering, an anniversary cake and wine for the toast. Pauline was presented with a bouquet by Brian Carter and Jeff Walls from the Mechanical Horse Club.



Jeff and I were asked to cut the cake after Brian proposed a toast to the Register, Mechanical Horse Club and the GDSF. My thanks to Peter Hammond for both these photos. A great time was had by all.

And finally, so far as my visit to the GDSF went, there was the Pirate Party. One of the organisers (the Scammell Boys and partners), Paul Stunt, had kindly invited Sue and I to attend, but pressure on time and the need to leave the showground early on the Friday meant we had to decline. I planned to go back to the car via their camp to say farewell when they hove into sight with raucous cries of Yo Ho Ho etc! I use the word "hove" because Brian's Pioneer, leading, was flying the skull and cross bones while Brian's cutlass was wielded menacingly out of the window. Behind, Graham's Explorer was fully decked out (pardon the pun!) as a pirate ship. Tina Williams assures me that the flags correctly spelt out "Great Dorset Pirates" (see colour section) and who am I to argue!! Both were fully loaded with what I can only describe as a motley crew! As you'll see in the colour section, once in the ring they "fired" a salute for commentator John Collins who seemed to me to be rendered nearly speechless - that must be a first!



Commercial section leader, Dave Hillier, accompanied by his ever faithful parrot was appropriately dressed to observe, or should I say keep an eye on, the spectacle! I hear much rum was drunk by all, and rumour has it there were some sore heads and delicate stomachs the



next day! So this was the "toned down" version of last year's pink party!!! Whatever will they do in 2009??? Scammellers having fun - a fitting end to a great two days for me!