

# Scammells at the Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre

by Jim Wells

Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th September 2007 saw the inaugural Scammell Rally, Road Run and Showtrac Gathering at Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre in Devon. The event was a great success, being attended by good numbers of both visitors and Scammells. Seven Showtracs attended, including two on public display for the first time since the 1980s: Alf and John Biddall's ex-Pat Collins vehicle and Anderton and



Rowland's *John Bull*.

The two ex-Pat Collins Showtracs: *The Major* (LDH 253) owned by Russell Cook since 1996 and *The Leader* (but no longer carrying the name, KDH 141) owned by Alf and John Biddall are seen (above) back together again for the first time since 1989 at Barry Island when *The Major* pushed *The Leader* onto the trailer for the journey to Middlesex.

A&R's *John Bull*, was low-loaded to the Centre courtesy of Jim Bracey's haulage company and driver Andy. Seen, right, being unloaded - by Scammell of course - *John Bull* was just short of its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, having been delivered to Barnstaple Fair - due to be held the following week - in 1947. This Showtrac was unusual in having been delivered



fully equipped (although a winch was never fitted) and complete with body. Many were delivered without the bodywork and had it fitted after a few months service.



The Showtracs present were (in the order they appear in the line up, left to right):

- A&R's *John Bull*
- Russell Cook's ex-Pat Collins *The Major*
- Alf and John Biddall's ex-Pat Collins KDH 141
- A&R's *Dragon*
- Mrs Amy Benson's EDL 111. New to Arnold Bros of the Isle of Wight, it spent most of its working life with the Benson Family and is still owned by them.
- A&R's *Gladiator*
- Russell Cook's ex-Henry Armstrong HAU 964.

In addition to the Showtracs, there were several Scammell Highwaymen and chaindrive tractors present. The chaindrives were: the Heal Family's *The Rocket*, the ex-Rogers Amusements 1931 *Supreme*, now owned by Bristol showman Kevin Gamlen, and Derek and Sandra Hallett's 1942 45CD with 1920 Brayshaw living van.



The Highwaymen were: Phil Vanstone's *Illustrious*, Frank Edwards' *Moonraker* and *Enterprise*, and Register Member Steve Shea's ex-A&R *Demetrius*, which once travelled with the Showtrac *Gladiator*.



Also on show was the part built cab for Andy and Paula May's MU20 ballast tractor (ex-Richards of Newport), believed to be one of just three survivors. If anyone has any information or pictures relating to this vehicle I am sure Andy would be pleased to hear from you.

Saturday saw the launch by George DeVey of a new book, *The Working Scammell Showtrac*, by Barry Brown (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). Mr DeVey spoke with great affection for the Showtracs which have

been part of his life for almost as long as he can remember. In 1946, aged 8, George, his father (George Snr), uncle and cousin travelled from Exmouth to collect DCO 212, staying overnight at a hotel near Windsor Castle on the way to Watford and returning to Exmouth the next day. The return journey also included a stop for a drink at the George and Dragon pub about five miles outside Exmouth. Young George was not too keen on this stop - he wanted to get to Exmouth to show off the new vehicle! The Showtrac was a chassis cab with ballast block only at this point, returning a few months later for the fitting of the showman's extras and the bodywork. It was apparently Scammell practice to give drivers collecting vehicles a 10 shilling note and George as a young driver's mate was also given one, which he still has.



As part of the formal proceedings two presentations were made. The Roger Austin Memorial Shield for Best Preserved Showtrac was awarded to Tommy Benson's Showtrac EDL 111, and was presented by the late Roger's son Rob to Member Mike Harris on behalf of the Benson Family.

The Vintage Spirit Cup for Best Preserved Scammell (for a vehicle other than a Showtrac) was awarded to Kevin Gamlen's ex-Roger's

Amusements *Supreme*, pictured overleaf.



Road runs were held on both days, attracting considerable attention from passers-by. When I spoke to George DeVey on Saturday morning he was not planning to take *Gladiator* on the run as she was not insured for road use. This reached his son Simon, and by the time the road run left

*Gladiator* was on a cover note and Mr DeVey Snr was at the wheel!

George DeVey, pictured below with *Gladiator* says *Gladiator* is not just a lorry, almost a member of the family.



Whilst this review has concentrated on the Scammell exhibits, the rest of the Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre was also open, with the rides running at frequent intervals, and much else to see besides. The venue is easily accessible via the M5 and A30 and well worth a visit even without a Scammell event taking place.

Thanks are due to Frank Edwards for organising the event, and to the vehicle owners, custodians and drivers, some of whom had travelled considerable distances to attend. Plans are already in place to repeat the event next year (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2008), and it is hoped even more members might be able to attend.

Further information on the Fairground Heritage Trust and the Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre is available on their website: [www.fairground-heritage.org.uk](http://www.fairground-heritage.org.uk)

Thank you to all who have contributed information for this article, especially to George DeVey for sharing his experiences.