

Knutsford Guardian

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Full steam ahead with engine Fred

AN iconic restored steam engine was officially renamed in Mobberley on Saturday.

Well-wishers flocked to the Church Inn to see Fred Dibnah's famous engine renamed Fred in honour of the steeplejack.

Knutsford businessman Michael Oliver, **pictured**, who was joined at the event by Fred's sons Jack and Roger, now owns the engine after buying it at an auction last year.

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'It seemed fitting to honour Fred's engineering genius'

World-famous steam engine is named after legendary steeplejack

By JAMES WILSON

A WORLD-famous steam engine was the star attraction at a Mobberley pub on Saturday.

Michael Oliver, the founder and chairman of Knutsford manufacturing firm Oliver Valves, held an official naming ceremony for the late Fred Dibnah's famous Aveling and Porter steam traction engine at the Church Inn in the village.

Fred Dibnah's sons, Jack and Roger, drove the engine from Oliver Valves' headquarters on the Parkgate Industrial Estate to the pub along Mobberley Road and then Town Lane.

The engine was then ceremoniously named 'Fred' after its famous steeplejack owner, with broadcaster Stuart Hall giving a speech before the unveiling.

Michael Oliver said: "Fred Dibnah is a cult figure and a national institution, so it seemed only fitting that we honoured his engineering genius by naming his beloved engine after him. We also thought it fitting for Jack to take the helm on its first excursion."

The late steeplejack and TV personality was renowned for his Aveling and Porter engine, which he spent almost 25 years restoring.

It was last used in November 2004 to pull Fred's coffin during his funeral in Bolton.

Mr Oliver, the founder of Oliver Valves, at Parkgate Industrial Estate, spent £240,000 to protect the historic machine.

"I bought the engine to ensure its preservation so it can be enjoyed by generations to come," he said.

"I hope that steam enthusiasts and Fred Dibnah fans alike enjoyed the celebration of the iconic machine."

Mr Oliver is the owner of an extensive engine collection, including the only full-size Garrett Show-



Stuart Hall introduces the engine in his unique style

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Michael Oliver with Fred's sons Jack, left and Roger

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man's road locomotive ever built, called British Hero.

The engine was built in 1912, and is thought to have been commissioned by the War Department.

It was bought by Fred in 1979,

and when he was invited to Buckingham Palace to receive an award from the Queen in July 2004 he planned to drive it into the palace grounds.

Unfortunately his request was

refused by the Royal Parks Agency as it was feared the engine's weight would damage the surface of The Mall.

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Adults and children take a look at Mr Oliver's engine collection

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