

The **SUNDAY POST**

Fred's engine steams to sale success

A STEAM engine belonging to the late Fred Dibnah sold at auction yesterday for £240,000 — almost twice what experts had predicted.

The Aveling and Porter traction engine was bought on behalf of Cheshire businessman Michael Oliver whose company produces valves for the oil and gas industry.

Auctioneer Bill King, of auctioneers Cheffins in Cambridgeshire, said there had been huge interest in the sale.

"We had several thousand people at the sale today and if I'd

By Gavin Sherriff

had a pound for every one who took a photograph of the engine, I would be a wealthy man.

"Normally we would expect this type of engine to sell for around £120,000, but given its history and connection to Fred Dibnah, we had interest from a number of bidders."

Michael Oliver explained, "Fred Dibnah is a cult figure and national institution — it is vital that his engineering genius and his priceless contribution to our cultural heritage continues to

be celebrated for years to come.

"We are also already planning outings at steam shows, so the thousands of steam enthusiasts and Fred Dibnah fans — and their children — can continue to enjoy this iconic machine."

Fred Dibnah became a celebrity after a TV crew filmed his work as a steeplejack. He went on to present a number of TV series about engineering with a plain-speaking style that won him millions of viewers.

The engine was built in 1912 for the War Department.

Having bought the engine in 1979 Fred



■ Fred Dibnah's beloved steam engine.

spent nearly 25 years restoring it, completing the task just before his death in 2004 after a three-year battle with cancer.

It became familiar to

millions of viewers through his final TV series, *Made in Britain*, in which it appeared. It was also used to pull the coffin at his funeral in November 2004.