

DIBNAH ENGINE SELLS FOR DOUBLE LOWER ESTIMATE

IT IS a widely accepted fact that the sale of a well-known engine causes quite a stir among preservation enthusiasts but never before have I known an engine to create as much interest, speculation and emotion as the sale of the late Fred Dibnah's KND Aveling convertible No. 7838.

Upon inspection on viewing day it became apparent why Fred had been in no hurry to lag the boiler, as it is claimed he was proud of his riveting. If this was the case then rightly so! The engine is a tribute to Fred's attention to detail. It was last used to pull his coffin through his beloved Bolton at his funeral on 16th November 2004.



£2,000 This Richard Garrett & Sons saw bench soon found a new home.



UNSOLD This scratch built 9 inch Mann compound steam lorry failed to attract a buyer when the hammer fell at £32,000.



£67,500 This unique 1917 Samson 6-12 soon found a buyer at a record price for a Samson sold in the UK. Cheffins also sold a Samson 10-25 for £13,200 in 1994.

The engine was being offered for sale on instructions from the beneficiaries and executors of the estate of Fred Dibnah MBE (Dec'd) and although not in steam, was offered with a current hydraulic test due for renewal on 15th April 2011. The last boiler certificate had expired in August 2005.

Prior to the auction, Cheffins' auctioneer, Bill King, made the comment "This is the smaller of the three sales but the stars of the show will undoubtedly be the Dibnah engine and the unique Wilder."

The latter, a Fowler/Wilder Ploughing Engine, was the first to be offered on sale day. Originally Fowler single cylinder No. 1109 of 1869, she was born of a desire to build a pair of engines by RI & H Wilder of Wallingford in 1926, possibly to rival local builders *Allens* of Oxford who had been building engines based on the Fowler design for some while. Using 1109 as a starting point, she was constructed with a new 200psi boiler, smokebox and chimney. The new cylinder block was of 12 inch bore

and stroke. Unfortunately, Wilders only built the one engine and upon completion she worked in the Oxfordshire area, paired with a Fowler, until 1948. She was purchased for preservation in the 1960s by a consortium of Jack Warton, Arthur Napper, Bill Tame, Eric Filmore, John Hiron and Tony Stockwell, each paying £25!

In 1979 she was purchased by the Hodgeson family who embarked on a long and thorough restoration, which included a new boiler by Colin Waite of Bristol, in time to attend the 1996 Fowler Special at the Great Dorset Steam Fair. I asked James Hodgeson why she was now for sale, and he told me that they've enjoyed *William* for 14 years and, having recently purchased the Fowler BBI 15207 to pair with 15206, it is now time to concentrate on giving the two BBIs the attention they deserved.

With a very slow start, Bill King took a maiden bid of £60k rising slowly to £72k where Bill declared, "Sorry but we can't do that, but we are not too far away".



RIGHT - Vendor James Hodgeson on the footplate of Fowler/Wilder 1109/1 *William*.

The impressive might of the Fowler/Wilder Ploughing Engine 1109/1.



ABOVE - Detail of 7838 from the footplate.



Hardly room to breathe as the late Fred Dibnah's Aveling & Porter No. 7838 passes the £200,000 mark.

HISTORY OF AVELING & PORTER NO. 7838

Probably the best known engine in the country, 7838, described in the build records as "KND 4hp Motor Tractor and Roller combined", was despatched from the Rochester works in December 1912 to the West Sussex County Council, and was originally fitted with a two-tine scarifier. Three other engines also were supplied to the council at the same time and it is believed they were identical, all four having a set of rolls and straked wheels. In 1916 the Aveling was commandeered by the War Department and was later acquired by Devon County Council for use as a road roller, becoming fleet number 20. By 1967, she had been laid up and was purchased by Peter Froud after being discovered in a layby.

Fred purchased the engine from Peter in 1979 and began to tirelessly restore her over a period of around 27 years. Fred chose to refurbish the engine in tractor form, with many new parts being manufactured by him in his home workshop in Bolton. Restoration was completed shortly before Fred's death on 6th November 2004, following his three-year battle against cancer, but not before she had featured in Fred's BBC TV series *Made in Britain*.



Fred Dibnah MBE with his beloved Aveling & Portable Convertible No. 7838. Use of photograph courtesy of Cheffins

Statement From The Dibnah Family

In a press release dated 30th June 2010, the Dibnah family made the following statement:

"There has been much public speculation regarding the recently advertised sale by auction of the late Fred Dibnah's Aveling & Porter steam tractor. Fred left the bulk of his estate to be divided between his five children, Jayne, Lorna, Caroline, Jack and Roger. The tractor, and certain other items, were specifically gifted to his sons, Jack and Roger.

"The settling of the estate's affairs has been an extremely protracted process and unfortunately, for many reasons, its financial expectations have not been realised. The executor, and the five children as the beneficiaries, have therefore had to reluctantly agree to place the tractor for sale, in order to finance the final winding up costs of the estate and fund the settlement of a claim made by Sheila Dibnah under the terms of the Inheritance Act.

"Whilst not being the outcome that either they or their father would have wanted, the five children hope that the sale will prove successful and bring a final closure to what has been a very difficult period in their lives."