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# Fred's engine is back – but not under its own steam



■ Star's pride and joy arrives in the north west

■ And millionaire buyer is to put it on display

PAUL BRITTON

FRED Dibnah's famous steam engine has arrived back in the north west – and could eventually make a return to its spiritual home of Bolton.

The 1912 model, used by Fred to collect his MBE from Buckingham Palace, was bought for £240,000 by millionaire businessman Michael Oliver, who says he plans to use it for trips to the pub.

Mr Oliver, a motoring enthusiast, took delivery of the Aveling and Porter traction engine after it was transported to his firm in

Knutsford, Cheshire, from Cambridge on a flatbed truck.

It will go on show at his on-site museum with a collection of other vintage vehicles.

Mr Oliver, 72, said he hoped to give Fred's son Jack the opportunity to drive it again at steam shows across the country.

He also hopes the engine will one day return to Fred's home town of Bolton to go on display.

Mr Oliver, whose firm Oliver Valves builds components for oil and gas firms, said: "The engine looks fantastic and, for me, it



#### STEAM FAN

Millionaire businessman Michael Oliver plans to put the traction engine on display

takes me back to how engineering used to be. There are one or two bits and pieces that we need to do to it first and it also currently has no name. I am going to call it The Fred Dibnah.

"I will certainly look to bring it back to Bolton one day. We are also already planning outings at steam shows so the thousands of steam enthusiasts and Fred Dibnah fans can continue to enjoy this iconic machine."

Flat-cap-wearing Fred became well known as a celebrity steeplejack, famous for demolishing chimneys and his love of the golden age of steam. He bought the rusting engine in 1979 and spent 25 years restoring it to full working condition.

The machine was thought to have originally been commissioned by the War Department.

It was found abandoned in a motorway lay-by in 1967 before

Fred discovered it years later. He painstakingly restored the engine in the garden of his home and toured the country on it for his TV shows.

The engine also pulled a trailer carrying Fred's coffin at his funeral.

It attracted twice the guide price at the auction at Cambridge-based auctioneers Cheffins last month.

Fred died from cancer aged 66 in 2004.

#### ▶▶ HOMEWARD BOUND

Fred Dibnah and, above, the steam engine arriving at Oliver Valves in Knutsford on the back of a flatbed truck

