

NAMING CEREMONY FOR FRED DIBNAH'S ENGINE

On Saturday 12th March, Fred Dibnah's beloved Aveling & Porter KND convertible No. 7838 was officially named *Fred* at a special ceremony organised by its owner, Michael Oliver, and attended by a number of the late steeplejack's family members and friends.

Back in July of 2010, Aveling & Porter No. 7838 was very much the prize lot at an auction organised by Cheffins. Although Fred Dibnah had specifically gifted the Aveling tractor to his sons, Jack and Roger, after his death in November 2004 it had to be sold in order to fund a claim made by Fred's wife Sheila under the terms of the Inheritance Act.

The engine was bought at the auction by Michael Oliver of Knutsford-based manufacturer Oliver Valves for a figure of £240,000 – double the lower estimate. In a statement released shortly after the sale, Michael described his admiration for Fred and his intention to "preserve the engine for the north-west of England".

ABOVE RIGHT - Roger Dibnah, Michael Oliver and Jack Dibnah in front of Aveling 7838.

BELOW - With Jack Dibnah at the regulator, the engine is steamed up for a short road run.

BELOW RIGHT - The Church Inn at Mobberley was one of Fred's favourite pubs.



Staying true to his word, Michael organised a special naming ceremony for the Aveling & Porter tractor at the Church Inn at Mobberley, Cheshire – a favourite stopping off point for Fred on his way to the Astle Park Rally – and the event soon turned into a celebration of the life of the famous Boltonian.

In the early afternoon, the newly refurbished engine was driven the short distance from Oliver Valves' headquarters in Knutsford to the pub by Jack and Roger Dibnah. In the car park it joined Fred's Aveling & Porter roller, *Betsy*, which is still in the ownership of the Dibnah boys, along with his iconic Land Rover and living van.

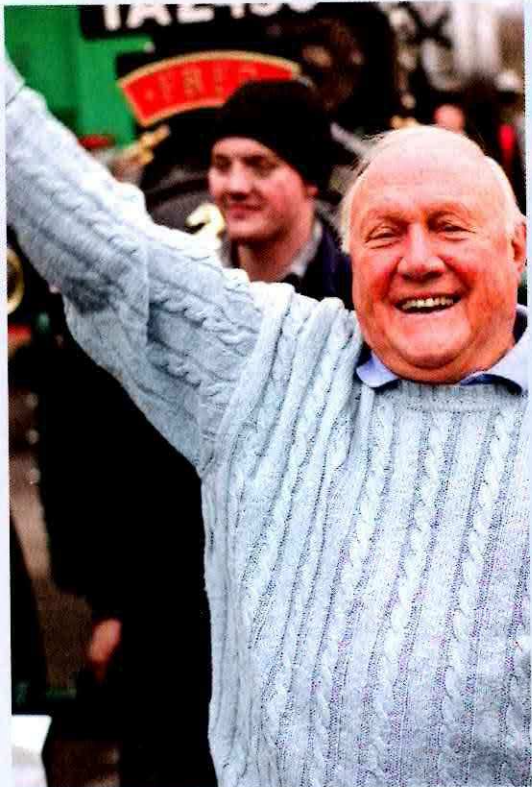
A large crowd of people gathered to see the engines in steam, and inevitably, a healthy number of pints were sunk. In spite of a brief smattering of rain, the weather stayed dry and bright throughout the event.

At 3pm former *It's a Knockout* TV presenter Stuart Hall gave a speech in which he praised Michael Oliver as "a great man" and thanked him for "taking the name of Fred Dibnah forward". This was followed by a prayer from the Reverend of St Wilfrid's Church, Mobberley, in which he offered thanks "for the great pleasure that Fred gave to so many people over the decades and for, with Michael's help, bequeathing us this beautiful engine".

With a very loud cheer from the crowd the *Fred* nameplate was unveiled by Jack Dibnah while Michael was presented with a picture of the engine on its first road run in October 2003, with Fred on the footplate. Interestingly, Michael told *Vintage Spirit* that his original intention to name the engine 'Fred Dibnah MBE' was advised against by the Dibnah boys – he'd much prefer *Fred*, they told him.

Chatting to Jack and Roger, they described their relief that the engine was being retained in the north-west and their plans to tour rally sites with *Betsy* and the living van this year, starting at Riverside and heading onto Chipping, Scorton and the 1,000 Engine Rally at Astle Park. They also intend to take the engine on a low-loader to Hollowell, Shrewsbury and Dorset later in the year.





ABOVE - A jubilant Stuart Hall cheers the newly-named engine.

The Aveling & Porter convertible, which represents 25 years of restoration work by Fred, has since had the finishing touches added and now looks a picture with its boiler cladding etc on. Michael Oliver has recently purchased *British Hero*, the only Garrett showman's road locomotive left in existence, and also owns an extensive collection of vintage vehicles, including a Supermarine Spitfire.

Just before darkness began to descend, the newly-named *Fred* was waved off from the pub car park as it made the journey back to its home at Knutsford, concluding a wonderful celebration of the life of a much-loved steam enthusiast.

See Fred Dibnah's Collection

Another opportunity to see Fred's collection, including his engines, living van and Land Rover, will present itself at the Riverside Steam & Vintage Vehicle Rally. The engines have never appeared together at the same event before, in fact, this will be the first time the Aveling & Porter 'Colonial' tractor has attended a formal rally.

One of the organisers of the Riverside Rally, Alan Atkinson, has been responsible for storing and transporting the engines following Fred's death, when they were mothballed awaiting the resolution of legal issues. He told *Vintage Spirit*, "It's now pay back time for my efforts over the past six years. I am delighted to be displaying the engines at Riverside and I am extremely grateful to the new owners for their co-operation."

In addition to Fred's collection, there will be around 23 full size engines at the event, which takes place on 16th-17th April at the Riverside Holiday Park, Banks, Southport, PR9 8DF. For further information, visit: www.riversidesteamrally.co.uk.



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TOP - The *Fred* nameplate is unveiled by Jack Dibnah.

ABOVE - Fred's iconic Land Rover was also in attendance.



RIGHT - Michael Oliver holds a picture of Fred and the engine aloft.

BELOW - Aveling & Porter tractor No. 7838, *Fred*, stands side-by-side with Aveling roller No. 7632, *Betsy*.

