



# Triple News

Newsletter of the Kempton Great Engines Society

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## Engine house echoes to The Brazen Roar

Sixty young musicians and singers from Hounslow Music Service joined players from the Philharmonia Orchestra and English jazz trumpeter Gerard Presencer to perform a new work by Siobhan Lamb.

*The Brazen Roar* is a unique and innovative composition, written to accompany an animated film created by pupils from local Bolder Academy and supported by Chocolate Films. The theme is man's relationship with power, choices and change.

The performance was launched by the start of Triple No.6 and its all-clear bell, which formed the first note of the piece. Kempton Great Engines Trust Chairman Michael Hamilton said: "We are immensely proud to host *The Brazen Roar* to celebrate our 90th anniversary. This is a first for us in the field of arts presentation and the musicians and film makers have brought the museum's rich industrial and cultural heritage to life."

He went on to thank everyone involved for making this highly creative event happen, not least the volunteers who gave up their time to help throughout the day.

Guests included the Mayor of Spelthorne and Deputy Mayor of Hounslow, plus Sir Peter Bazalgette, great-great-grandson of Victorian civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette, who built the magnificent Crossness sewage works in East London.

"What a wonderful concert," Sir Peter said. "The engine hissed and there were great parts for all the youthful singers and players!"



*Singers assemble at Ram Floor level while young musicians and players from the Philharmonia Orchestra get ready to perform Siobhan Lamb's latest composition*



*Composer Siobhan Lamb conducts her new work on Kempton's turbine floor*



*Hounslow Music Service young singers*



*Sir Peter Bazalgette (left) with Kempton Trust Chairman Michael Hamilton*

# 90 years of the Triples

Stephen Fielding looks back at the inauguration of Kempton's new works on a blustery October day



*This period photograph shows the Triple House as it was when it was first opened. A display of photographs and artefacts will be on show during the October and November steaming weekends to celebrate this milestone in the history of Kempton Park Waterworks and its magnificent buildings*

**T**he 24th October 1929 was a pivotal day in world history. It was Black Thursday – the first day of the Wall Street Crash. At 2:00pm GMT, the New York stock market opened, sending a shockwave around the world. Whole nations were plunged into depression, helping the rise of Nazism and ultimately leading to the outbreak of war in 1939.

Yet a mere two-and-a-half hours earlier, in a wet and windy corner of Middlesex, a more positive piece of history was being made. The Kempton Park Pumping Station extension and its two triple-expansion steam pumping engines were being inaugurated by Labour MP Arthur Greenwood, the newly appointed Minister of Health. The day that marked the beginning of the most devastating financial crisis the world had ever known was also a day of celebration, marking the completion of a grand undertaking to dramatically increase the supply of water to the ever-growing population and industries of London.

The ceremony marked the completion of a £1.6 million project, which not only included two mighty triple-expansion steam engines but a 48-inch water main 17 miles long from Kempton to Bishop Wood reservoir at Highgate, an underground conduit from the new Queen Mary Reservoir to Kempton and Hampton Works, a state-of-the-art Primary Filter House and an array of trunk mains distributing water from Cricklewood Reservoir to Marble Arch and New River Head. Much of this infrastructure is still in use today and remains a key part of London's water supply network.

To mark the completion of this undertaking, the Rt Hon Arthur Greenwood MP, Minister of Health, was invited by Metropolitan Water Board Chairman Sir William Prescott to inaugurate the works. However, the day did not turn out quite as Sir William and the MWB had envisaged.

The idea of holding a ceremony was first suggested by Sir William in November 1928. He had recently been appointed Chairman and, as the completion of the triples began to loom, he suggested a formal opening should be held in

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*'We cannot stand still.  
The water supply of  
London is not for today,  
nor for tomorrow, nor for  
the next century; it will  
go on forever'*

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June or July of 1929. Owing to the significance of the new Kempton works, Sir William asked Minister of Health Neville Chamberlain to invite Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary to do the honours. The King and Queen had opened the Queen Mary Reservoir and Littleton Pumping Station in 1925, so it seemed fitting that they should return to see the final piece in the jigsaw slotted into place.

Unfortunately, St James' Palace turned down the invitation, citing that the King had other engagements. This was the first in a long line of

disappointments Sir William encountered in his efforts to organise the event.

In May 1929 the first coats of paint were being applied to the triples and the topic of inauguration was revisited. By then, no formal date had been chosen nor had a dignitary been found to perform the ceremony. Sir William, not yet beaten, again wrote to Neville Chamberlain, this time asking whether the Queen would attend on her own.

His letter to Chamberlain highlights his anxiety to find someone of high standing: 'Should it not be found possible to obtain the presence of the Queen, I am to ask if you would be so good as to ascertain whether HRH The Prince of Wales or The Duke and Duchess of York would graciously condescend to perform the ceremony.' Sir Lionel Halsey, the Prince of Wales' private secretary, also turned down the invitation, explaining that the Prince's time was limited because he had adopted many of the King's duties owing to the latter's ill health. The Duke and Duchess of York were also unavailable.

Sir William had now exhausted the senior



*Sir William Prescott hosts a formal lunch for Metropolitan Water Board dignitaries and guests to mark the inauguration of the new works by the Minister of Health and Labour MP Arthur Greenwood*

members of the Royal Family, including two future Kings. To complicate matters further, the general election of May 1929 brought about great political change. Known as the 'flapper election', this was the first time all men and women over the age of 21 were allowed to vote and it resulted in a hung parliament and the formation of a minority Labour government under Ramsey MacDonald. As a result, Neville Chamberlain was replaced by Labour MP Arthur Greenwood as Minister of Health. Greenwood went on to serve in Winston Churchill's war cabinet, which was a coalition of Conservative and Labour.

Sir William was rapidly running out of time to find someone to open Kempton and on 11 September he wrote to Arthur Greenwood asking him to perform the duty on Thursday 17 October, just 37 days later. Greenwood's private secretary replied that the Minister would be delighted but was, unfortunately, out of London that day. He did, however, suggest an alternative and 24 October was agreed – Sir William had little over a month in which to prepare.

Agreeing the date was only the beginning. The event now needed paying for. Just three weeks prior to the ceremony, on 30 September, the Clerk of the Board issued a memorandum stating that only £50 remained in the 'inspections budget' to pay for the inauguration and dinner. The Clerk



**Chief Engineer Henry Stilgoe looks on as Minister of Health Arthur Greenwood opens the doors**

recalled how, at the opening of the Walton works, the Chairman had paid for the champagne and cigars, while the luncheon was paid out of the inspections budget. Owing to the large number of guests invited to Kempton and the subsequent lack of funds, Sir William decided to pay for the event personally. To get round the financial issue, the Works & Stores Committee instructed the General Purposes Committee to increase Sir William's annual allowance by £500 to pay for the event. The total cost was £500.7s.10d – 39p over budget. Of this total, £267.18s.8d was spent at Harrods on providing food and drink.

When the day finally dawned, the weather was miserable. The Met Office recorded a strong south-westerly breeze, cloud, slight rain, wet underfoot and a mere 58F (14C). As the period photographs show, it was perfect weather for touring a normally windswept pumping station.

The day began with the Minister of Health being met outside the Primary Filter House by a reception committee comprising Sir William Prescott, Chairman of the Board and High Sheriff of Middlesex, Vice-Chairman R. W. James, the Chairman of the Works and Stores Committee Lt Col. Sir George Handover, Vice-Chairman of the Works and Stores Committee John Wilkins, Chief Engineer Henry E. Stilgoe, Director of Water Examination Sir Alexander C. Houston, and Clerk of the Board G. F. Stringer.

Here the group reviewed the state-of-the-art Paterson rapid filters. Following the path of the



**Reception committee led by Sir William Prescott battle the elements opposite the Primary Filter House on their way to greet the arrival of the Minister of Health, Labour MP Arthur Greenwood**

water, the group then inspected the slow sand filter beds before walking up the embankment to observe the West Reservoir.

Here the visitors gathered for a presentation by the chief engineer, before proceeding to the old 1905 engine house where they inspected the five Lilleshall triple-expansion steam engines. The party finally arrived at the New Engine House north door, where Chief Engineer Henry Stilgoe presented the Minister with the key for the ceremonial opening. Once inside, the party made a formal inspection of the boilers and the two Worthington Simpson Triples, Nos 6 and 7, before they were started for a demonstration run lasting half-an-hour, with R. W. James and Sir George Hanover at the controls.

The guests were then treated to a grand sit-down meal on the basement floor (which now houses the turbines, installed in 1933). The menu included hot turtle soup, salmon mayonnaise and glazed tongue. To add to the atmosphere and to aid digestion, live music was played.

Once suitably fed and watered, various dignitaries and members of the board made

speeches to top-off the ceremony. The awe with which the magnificent engine house is still viewed was clearly shared at the time and this is demonstrated by the following extract from Arthur Greenwood's speech: "I am no artist, but this building to me is a thing of beauty. Its magnificent simplicity, its sense of power, its attitude of problems overcome and difficulties destroyed, is to me one of the most wonderful things.

"We ought, therefore, all of us, to be profoundly thankful that the Metropolitan Water Board has succeeded in bringing this magnificent effort to a successful conclusion – the application of science to the needs of human life."

Despite being cobbled together in a relatively short time, history was nevertheless made. The day marked the beginning of a 50-year service life for the Triples and the completion of water mains, reservoirs and filtration systems which are still in use today. They are a real testament to the people and the engineers who came before us – let's ensure that their legacy is never forgotten.

• Don't miss the display of photos and artefacts in the museum, on show until November



**The Minister is met by Sir William Prescott, Chairman of the Metropolitan Water Board and High Sheriff of Middlesex, and members of the company outside the imposing entrance to the Primary Filter House**

# Darent rebuild on track

**After months of hard work and frustrating delays, Jerry Scholefield sees light at the end of the tunnel**

**N**othing ever goes quite to plan, as anyone rebuilding an old car, engine or – in this case – a steam locomotive will know. But, after a series of long and sometimes frustrating delays, there is real progress on Darent's new boiler.

Rolling the new boiler barrel was held up for several weeks thanks to a burnt-out motor on the bending rolls. This was repaired by early June and the steel plate rolled, rivetted and fitted to the firebox end, followed by the steam dome and water feed (injection) ports.

It was then a couple of weeks before Bob Moore, our engineering inspector, was able to visit A G Bicknell & Co to survey their work. The boiler was fitted onto a horizontal-axis turntable to allow easy access to all sides and the survey covered all the original as well as the new sections of the boiler.

Thankfully, everything was satisfactory and we were given the go-ahead to fit the new front tube plate and the tubes. We were also able to see the front tube plate, which was nearly finished, and we were very impressed with the precision and quality of all aspects of the work.

Meanwhile, work was also progressing on the 'tinwork' of the loco – all parts of the cab and saddletank have been stripped down and resprayed in their original colours. The dedication and craftsmanship shown by the father-and-son team at Shepperton Bodyworks Ltd is superb. We've stored these parts in lock-up garages for now, while the tank and cab top section remain on purpose-built wooden trollies to make them easier to transport.

The next hurdle was the hydro test (pressure test), which the boiler had to pass before it could be returned to Kew, where Darent currently resides. And again, luck (and craftsmanship) were on our side, because it passed and, at last, the boiler could be brought back, fully rebuilt, hydro-tested and trial steamed.

While the boiler is out, we will now take the opportunity to scrub and paint the entire outer surface with heat-resistant aluminium paint before fitting it to the frames and attaching the smokebox. The next job will then be to fit the ash box and brake system before shipping it back to Kempton to put all the other bits back together.



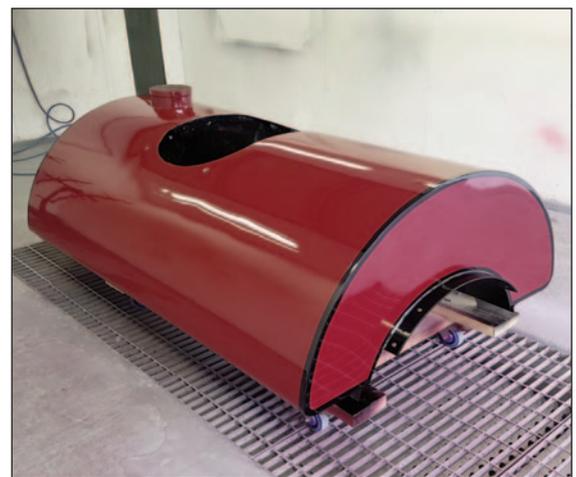
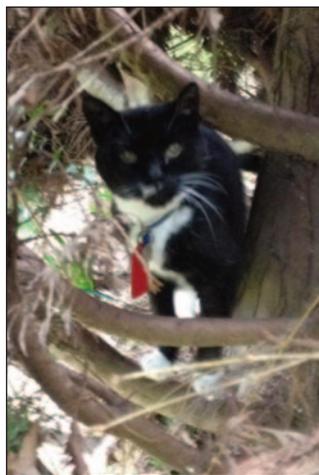
*Darent's boiler sits ready for a scrub and a coat of heat-resistant aluminium paint*



*New crown stays in place in the boiler*

## Farewell Russell

Visitors and volunteers alike are mourning the sad loss of Russell, the famous black cat, who has stalked the waterworks for so many years. The railway team kept a store of Wiskas for him as did the Thames Water staff, but with old age and winter weather taking its toll on this feline free spirit, MWBRs volunteer Alan Rowell decided to take Russell home. He kept him tucked up in the warm with a bowl full of favourite food and the old puss was able to see out his last days in comfort.



*Saddletank resprayed in its original colours*

## *Triple News is the journal of the Kempton Great Engines Society*

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The aims of the Trust are to restore one of the two historic triple-expansion steam engines at Kempton Park Waterworks on behalf of Thames Water Ltd and to operate the restored engine for public viewing on selected weekends every year.

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