

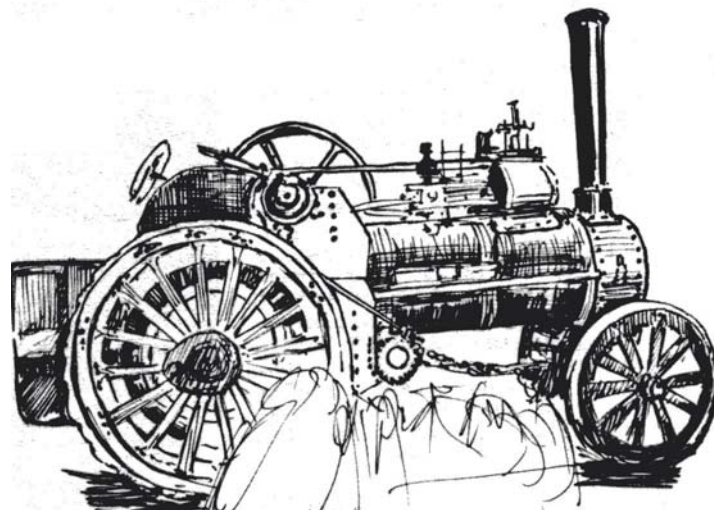
## **Robinson and Auden Steam Engine Working Still**

**Gwyneth Hall and Daphne Fisher**

About four years ago, while attending a County Show at Masham in North Yorkshire, a keen eyed friend spotted a working steam engine. Nothing unusual about that except that on close inspection a plate was visible on the side indicating that it had been made in Wantage. Two years later the engine was seen again on a garage forecourt in the village of Patrick Brompton on the road to North Allerton in North Yorkshire.

In April this year, a group of friends decided to investigate further as an engine like the one seen would have been the power source for a threshing machine similar to our newly restored model. On arrival at the vast forecourt, there was no sign of a steam engine. Perhaps it had been sold or maybe we were at the wrong garage. The proprietor, a Mr Harry Lyons, came out and asked if he could help us. We told him of our quest and he smiled and led us into an enormous workshop full of all the paraphernalia of a working rural garage. Tucked away in a corner surrounded by old car tyres and tractor wheels there was the steam engine, still managing to look very majestic measuring seven feet wide and weighing eight tons. Mr Lyons had bought it in about 1980 from Mr Tom Paisley of Cambridgeshire and the engine had needed no restoration being still in very good order. The first owner had been Hulcke Colliery in Lydney, Gloucestershire. We were shown the registration document dated 1898 and costing 2/6 (about 12½ pence) allowing it to go on the highway as a locomotive. The number plate read “AD 8889”. A previous owner was Austin Izzard of Lower Quinton near Stratford Upon Avon, Warwickshire, who registered the engine in 1916.

At this stage we still had not found the Wantage connection but after clambering round to the left hand side of the boiler we saw the brass plate proclaiming “ROBINSON & AUDEN Ltd., ENGINEERS, WANTAGE, 6 HP, No. 1376”.

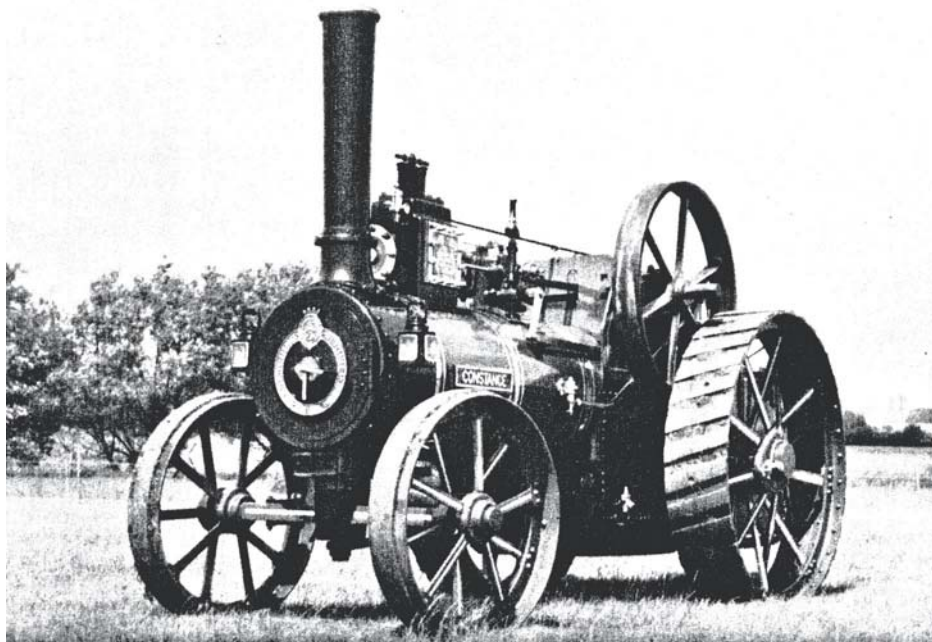


After we had taken photographs from all angles Mr Lyons, who had been so welcoming and so informative to us, amazed us totally by presenting us with a spare brass name plate

for our Vale & Downland Museum collection. We hope that this plate will be displayed in the future barn development with the threshing machine. Nowadays the engine travels on a low loader to country shows and rallies demonstrating sawing and threshing.

Editorial Notes (Bill Fuller)

Mr Lyons also made reference to the fact that he had seen another Wantage engine, made by Gibbons & Robinson Ltd of Wantage. This prompted the editor to dig out some photographs of an engine called "CONSTANCE". With the aid of a magnifying glass it was possible to make out details on the boiler plate. It was built by The Wantage Engineering Co. Ltd., Wantage England, 1900. Unfortunately no record was made as to where the photographs came from. Irene Hancock was able to take up the story with a postcard describing "CONSTANCE" as having been built in 1898 with an Engine Number 1389. It had been owned by Mr J. Hutchens of Ferdown, Dorset (who has since died and the whereabouts of the engine are unknown) who had taken it to the Annual Traction Engine Rally, Beaulieu, Hampshire. Any further information would be welcome.



"Constance"

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