



(BOOK 10)

Fred Dibnah's Made in Britain

Author: David Hall

I was given this book as a Christmas present and I enjoyed it so much that I knew that it would appeal to those members of the WRFA who have an interest in machines that go “puff-puff” and “toot-toot”. Probably England’s greatest steam engine enthusiast in recent years was the late Fred Dibnah who first came to public notice as a steeple jack based in Lancashire and then went on to become noted for his passion for steam powered machines of any kind. Fred was an endearing character and broadcasters quickly recognised the potential in him for acting as the presenter of documentaries about Britain’s industrial history and in particular, the part played by steam power in our history.

The book is somewhat poignant because it is a record of the last TV documentary starring Fred that was produced by David Hall. It is poignant because Fred was dying of cancer throughout the making of the TV series and David mentions the real concerns he had that Fred might not be able to complete the TV programmes. Fred owned and restored a steam traction engine as well as a steam roller. The book tells the story of all the trials and tribulations associated with touring to make the TV series ‘Made in Britain’ using the traction engine as the motive power towing a caravan that served as accommodation for Fred.

The TV series called for filmed visits to sites of special interest from an engineering point of view in both Scotland and England. These made the book of particular interest and value to any reader wanting to know more about British industrial heritage. Fred is with us no more and I feel sure that he would be proud of this book that shows him to have been what he was; a remarkably skilled engineer whose efforts to inform and/or remind us of the tremendous achievements this country made in the field of heavy engineering will be his lasting legacy.

JOHN CRAIG

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