Great Dorset Steam Fair Delights 2016

Published: September 7, 2016

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/great-dorset-steam-fair-delights-2016/



Steam power galore, vintage/classic cars and commercials, working horses plus an amazing World War I commemorative display – and much, much more… It all added up to the 2016 Great Dorset Steam Fair.

Kim Henson was there with his cameras…

With an event as vast in scope and size as the Great Dorset steam Fair, it’s a job to know

where to start, when talking about it to people who have never yet attended. So I'll just dive in…

Consistently acclaimed for its diverse variety of vintage and classic vehicles and elderly machinery of all types, the Great Dorset Steam Fair represents an unmissable annual pilgrimage for many enthusiasts – including me. In fact I have missed only one of the 'Great Dorset' (formerly known as 'Stourpaine') events, since first attending in 1971, and becoming hooked. It is rightly claimed that the atmosphere of this event, believed to be the biggest in the world of its type, is unique. In my view, in most respects the 2016 event – and the 48th in a row – was superb.

The sheer scale of the five day long Great Dorset Steam Fair has the power to amaze – including its 600 acre site, the presence of approximately 200,000 people, and, of course, the wealth of amazing and fascinating 'things' to look at.

Each year it brings together a total of 2,000 exhibits of every conceivable description, including one of the biggest and most spectacular line-ups of steam-powered traction engines and road rollers seen anywhere in the world, plus approximately 300 historic commercial vehicles, and a fascinating selection of cars.

In the spirit of 'every picture telling a thousand words', what follows is a (mainly) photographic look around the 2016 event, as captured by my cameras. I hope you enjoy my virtual tour…

THE VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CARS



This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The ‘Great Dorset’ is particularly famous for its displays of pre-1950s vehicles, although in recent years the age limit for participating cars has been raised to the late-1970s. In addition, adding interest to the car section of the show were many classic caravans, dating from the 1920s to the 1970s.

The oldest cars on show were a magnificent 1911 Buick and a 1914 Ford Model T brought along annually from Ireland.

Further rarities among interesting pre World War II models were a 1935 Brough Superior Drophead, and a very low mileage Standard Twelve of similar vintage.

CLASSIC COMMERCIALS





Lorries, vans, pick-ups of every description and indeed heavy haulage; the hundreds of vehicles on display were reminders to many attendees of days gone by and how things have changed in terms of the delivery of goods by road.

STEAM POWER

No words can describe the joy of steam power; I'll just let the photos do the talking…



This slideshow requires JavaScript.

WORLD WAR I COMMEMORATION



This year's Great Dorset included a starkly poignant and deeply moving commemoration of the unspeakably horrific events of 100 years ago, notably in The Battle of the Somme, which started in 1916. Tours of the recreated trenches, given by guides dressed in World War I military uniforms, gave visitors some idea of just what was endured by all who fought in those days. In the surrounding areas were tents of the era, complete with kitchens preparing food of the type that was fed to the soldiers fighting in France and Belgium.

There was also a dimly-lit walk-through section, graphically highlighting the effects that poison gas attacks and the fighting in general had on the men participating.

In addition to the huge human cost of that awful war, the displays paid tribute to the many thousands of animals, notably horses, that suffered and died in the conflict.

Vehicular reminders included many First World War trucks and steam-powered vehicles, some of which were survivors of the mud and chaos that reigned a century ago, and some have been brought to running order and deliberately just conserved in this state, rather than being fully restored.




LOAD NOT TO
EXCEED 3 TONS
W D
GRUNDON


W↑D
A-11925



A hard-worked Nash Quad...



Information on the Nash Quad shown in the previous photograph.

By contrast with the happy noise around the rest of the Show, this World War I Commemoration area was hushed as visitors reflected, with respect, on the global events of 100 years ago.

OTHER ASPECTS



One of the great things I love about this Show is that everywhere you look, there is something different and interesting to see and to do, all with the sights, sounds and aroma of working steam engines constantly in the background! This is true even though I have attended every year in recent times.

To highlight just a few aspects, there are roads being built ‘in the old-fashioned way’, there are working horses, also a marquee showing ‘How it Was Done in Granfer’s Day’ (referring to country crafts and activities), plus a very popular and huge craft tent, there’s live music and singing and beer tents, and autojumble plus general stalls areas, plus shepherds’ huts, fair organs and of course a steam-powered fair! That’s in addition to all the various steam-powered operations, from log cutting to threshing to pulling heavy loads up and down the Dorset hills in the huge ‘play pen’ area. In addition, there are classic motorcycles (with a ring parade every day, as with the vintage and classic cars), plus bicycles, etc, etc.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.



‘Blackwater County’ played entertaining sets in the Michael Oliver marquee…


DAILY DELIVERIES
CHAPELFIELDS STEAM MOTOR Co
· WHITCHURCH ·
Express
PARCEL DELIVERY VAN
Daily Deliveries




CASE
78




ROAST PORK




SHEPHERDS
HUT ROW


Donate £5 now
31625
Project 62


KINGS LYNN
NORFOLK



VERDICT

Brilliant.

I love this Show, as do the rest of my family, and we return every year, come rain or shine. Talking of which, with the exception of occasional heavy showers and one consistently drizzly morning, the weather for this year's event was excellent; dry underfoot and pleasantly warm.

Bad points? This is my personal opinion, but I know that this view is shared by many exhibitors and attendees… I feel that the presence of 'monster trucks' and car crushing displays is incongruous and undesirable in the setting of a 'preservation' event. The fact that these displays take place in the display ring for classic vehicles is also a great shame. I

realise that some visitors like this sort of entertainment, and of course that's fine; however, if it has to be at this Show at all, it's a pity that it couldn't be in a separate area, well away from the preserved classic vehicles.

To end on a very happy note, it was evident to me and to fellow exhibitors that this year, arrangements for entry to and exit from the site (always difficult in the past) were, in general, much improved. In particular, without exception this year the staff we encountered manning the gates were pleasant, accommodating, helpful and smiling! This made such a difference. In fact, I think I will try to return again next year…

NEXT YEAR'S GREAT DORSET STEAM FAIR DATES…

This year the Great Dorset Steam Fair was brought forward, partly to enable more schoolchildren to attend (as the 2016 Show was held entirely within school holiday times), and to avoid potential clashes with other major events. The same approach is to be adopted for 2017, with the Show starting on Thursday 24th August and finishing on Bank Holiday Monday, 28th August.

For further information about the 2017 event, please go to: http://www.gdsf.co.uk/