

DREDGING AT OCKHAM MILL

Peter Jennings

Ockham Mill, near Guildford, was the site of a decree of upheaval caused by the efforts of Allen and Mike Pronger, ably assisted by 'Tiny Tim' and 'Old Jumbo' and abetted by Vic Mitchell in whose hands lay the procuring and organisation for the job which has been to dredge a large pond/small lake which I suspect used to be the mill pond.

A brief description of the site may be of interest. The pond was some 150/200 yards in length with a maximum width in the region of 50 yards; the overall shape is somewhat amoebic with an island in the middle. It is surrounded by trees of varying sizes, most of them large, although some had succumbed to the recent storms and had been cut up. A small river ran along one side of the pond, separated from each other by an earth bank about 10/15 feet wide; on the other side of the river was the mill garden. At one end of the pond was another garden and at the other, trees and marshy ground. The fourth side was bordered by a field (which did not belong to the mill owner), the mill outbuildings and undergrowth.

It was agreed between all parties that, on the premise that it was to be a "snatch block job", the two engines would stand in the field which would also serve as the area on to which the spoil would be deposited, the block being moved as necessary using the trees as anchor points. However, as the job progressed and the volume of spoil became evident (a point seldom fully appreciated by pond and lake owners) the owner of the field decided that he would prefer not to have it deposited all over the field but only up to certain limits which were then defined by wooden stakes, some 20 to 25 feet from the pond edge. This action obviously severely limited the efficacy of the operation and on several occasions the spoil was pulled up only to slip back as the dredge was pulled back.

Allen and Mike were certainly up against it in tackling this job but seemed to have matters well in hand, combining their skills with a necessary broad sense of humour.

Old Jumbo and Tiny Tim returned to the Isle of Wight at the end of this job in February. At the time of writing Vic Mitchell was running another job with the same gang but using Peter Stanier's AA6 13877 and Richard Pierce's BB 14213 at a small lake at Felbridge near East Grinstead.

When the Secretary and I visited on 22 February setting up was in progress; to cut a very wet and muddy story short, 14213 is standing on the course of the old LB&SCR line from Three Bridges to East Grinstead. The job is continuing but will end shortly.

Secretary's note; there is a possibility of 13817/14213 being used on yet a further job in the: south. No other details at the moment.



The late John Mayes demonstrating a cultivator at the Hinkley rally in 1983 with his BB1 engines "Excalibur" and "Excelsior". I believe that these engines are now in Italy.

Photo John Billard