

CLASSIC TRACTION ENGINES

Paul Stratford

For close on 75 years, the steam traction engine provided the motive power for numerous activities, from driving farm machinery, road rolling and road haulage to agricultural ploughing and fairground rides.

In the same way that the steam traction engine replaced the horse, the motor lorry and farm tractor replaced the traction engine. Many redundant traction engines were virtually abandoned in yards and hedgerows awaiting their final fate which, in many cases was the scrap dealer's cutting torch.

A few enterprising enthusiasts in the early 1950s recognized the need to preserve at least a small number of engines, which were considered to be workable and not require any major expenditure. Most were purchased for a little over scrap value. As time passed enthusiasm for the preservation of traction engines grew and more engines were rescued from where they lay, to the point where today over two thousand traction engines, are known to be preserved.

In more than 140 superlative images of traction engines in settings which recall their original glory, Paul Stratford captures the essence of these magnificent machines. This large format pictorial album is intended as a tribute to the traction engine manufacturers and to those who have laboured long and hard to preserve and restore some of these remarkable engines.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Stratford was born and has lived his whole life in Warwickshire. From an early age he has always had an interest in steam railways, which began with the Stratford and Midland Junction Railway, which ran close to his home village. Latterly he has travelled extensively both in the UK and Worldwide photographing working steam railways before turning his attentions to not only photographing, but also restoring and driving traction engines. Having an affinity with the owners has enabled the author to position engines in many and varied photogenic locations. After becoming a volunteer in the steam locomotive department at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway he has subsequently qualified as a fireman and now has ambitions to become a driver.

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Above: 'Sister Wendy', 1931 Ransomes, Sims & Jeffries Traction Engine No. 42013 effortlessly surmounts 'Engine Hill' at Porthtowan in Cornwall.



Above right: Marshall 12 ton roller No. 88096 built in 1937 passes the remains of the South Wheal Towan copper mines at Porthtowan.



On a beautiful summer afternoon in rural Warwickshire, Fowler AA7 Ploughing Engine No. 15257 built in 1918 simmers as the four furrow balance plough sets off across the field winched by the second ploughing engine.

Right: A feature of a number of rallies is the Saturday evening 'Road Run'



THE ENGINES

The earliest use of steam power in agriculture was in the form of the portable engine, whereby firebricks, machinery, and other machinery would be driven by a belt attached to either the flywheel or the crankshaft pulley of the portable engine. Unlike the later traction engine, the portable engine was not self-propelled and would invariably be moved by horse to different locations. One of only two surviving examples from the Farmers' Foundry, 1910-built 7HPF Portable Engine No. 18, simmers away in a quiet corner of Old Warden.



A demonstration of how the diminutive 1866-built Brown & May Portable Engine would have traditionally been moved around using horse power. Note how the chimney has been folded down to improve stability.



Clayton and Shuttleworth No. 36731 of 1904 'Old Glory' against the imposing backdrop of Belvoir Castle.

Example of a double-page spread.