

THE GREAT DORSET STEAM FAIR

Paul Stratford

Throughout the summer months on most weekends around the country there are numerous traction engine rallies, ranging from small local gatherings, charity events and rural fayres with just a couple of local engines to three-day rallies with up to one hundred traction engines from all parts of the country attending. But there is one event which eclipses them all – the Great Dorset Steam Fair. This is held annually over five days on 600 acres of farmland at Tarrant Hinton in Dorset in the week following the August Bank holiday weekend.

The Fair was the brainchild in 1968 of local farmer Michael Oliver and museum owner Ted Hines. Between them they brought together a small group of steam and vintage machinery enthusiasts for a small gathering on a patch of land adjacent to the museum with the aim of having a collection to raise money for a cancer charity. Since then the event has grown to be the largest and most prestigious of its kind worldwide. Organised primarily by the Oliver family, founder Michael Oliver was awarded the MBE in 2004 but sadly passed away in 2009 leaving son Martin to take over the onerous task of running the Great Dorset Steam Fair.

This unique album which was shot over a period of years from 1989 to the present day, captures in over 140 captivating and nostalgic images the excitement and intensity that makes the Great Dorset Steam Fair a totally unique and much loved event.



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.

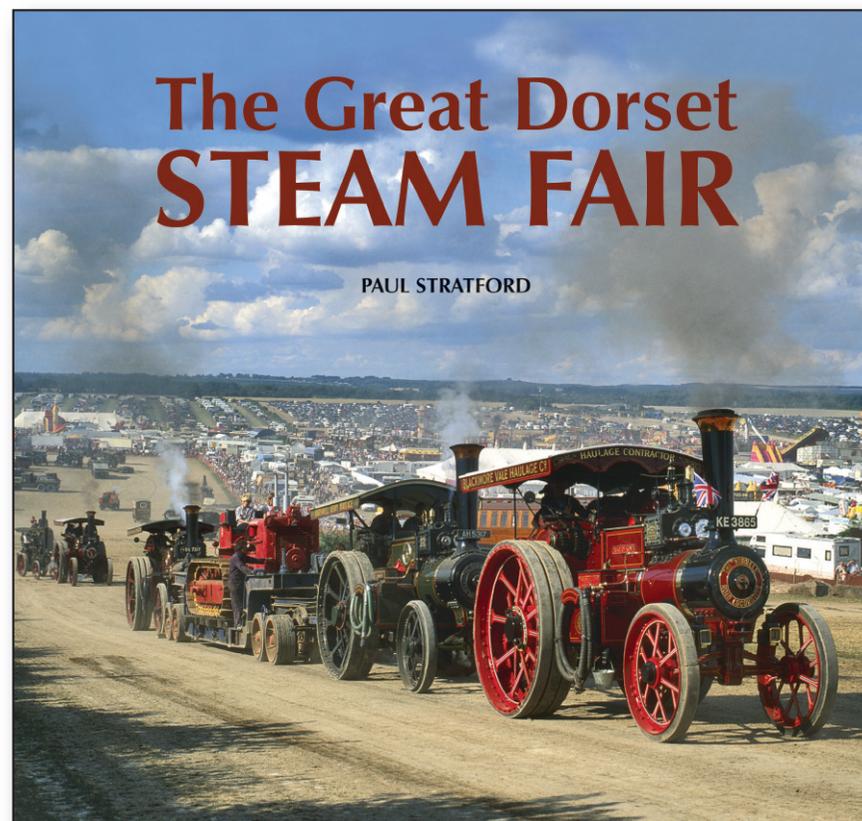
After becoming a volunteer in the steam locomotive department at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway he has subsequently qualified as a fireman and now has ambitions to become a driver. His previous books for Halsgrove, *Classic Traction Engines* and *Traction Engines: Preservation and Power* have both been widely acclaimed.

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THE GREAT DORSET STEAM FAIR



The only Burrell Showman's Engine ever to leave the works painted green is **'Lightning II'** No. 3256.



One of the many McLaren engines to attend the McLaren Special Event in 2010 was No. 1534, a 5NHP compound traction engine seen cresting the hill in the Heavy Haulage Arena.



A spectacle only to be seen at the Great Dorset Steam Fair, four road locomotives, three of which are Fowler Crane Engines.

HEAVY HAULAGE ARENA

Working engines have always been the trademark of the Great Dorset Steam Fair and without doubt the Heavy Haulage Arena has to be the greatest stage on which to perform the 'power of road steam road-locomotives'. This is primarily for demonstrating the power of the road steam locomotive hauling trailers carrying a diversity of loads from stone, timber, plant and machinery and even steam railway locomotives around the arena and for the ultimate test through 'Wooden Crag' and up the hill to one of the highest points of the showground. Up to four road steam locomotives have been known to be coupled together, to not only move loads in excess of 140 tons, but also to climb and descend the hill in a controlled but spectacular fashion. The arena is not only for heavy haulage but also a parade ring for other engines wishing to stretch their legs and demonstrate to the spectators the pride of early-twentieth century engineering. The arena also plays host to commercial vehicle heavy haulage demonstrations where modern counterparts are tested against their steam locomotives.

Milling from County Cork in Ireland. Alkalis 608HP General Purpose Engine No. 1111 'Fens' hauls a loaded timber trailer around the arena.

Example of a double-page spread.



In a workaday finish is Marshall **'The Alderman'** No. 28922, making its first appearance at the Great Dorset Steam Fair in 2011.