

## HIBBERD PETROL LOCO “BERYL”

This 'Planet' type four wheel petrol shunter was built by F C Hibberd Ltd whose head office was in Victoria Street, London S.W.1. It was outshopped from their Coronation Road, Park Royal Works, London, NW10 on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1937, as loco number 2054. Unfortunately many of the company's records were destroyed in an air raid during the Second World War.

The loco weighed about 12 Tons, in working order, and still retains it's original Dorman 4-cylinder, 6761 cc, 53 bhp (at a continuous 1,000 rpm), type 4JORX petrol-paraffin engine number 31056. It was governed to a maximum 1,450 rpm at which speed the engine produced around 64 bhp but only for a short period. It was given order number 15190 and tested on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1937 before being sent to Hibberd's Park Royal Works.

This was one of the last petrol engines manufactured by Dorman as their production went over entirely to diesel engines in 1939. This is believed to be the only remaining 4JORX engine in the World. It was designed to operate using petrol to start and, when warm, would be switched to run on paraffin which was heated and vaporised before entering the carburettor.

She was purchased by the Bournemouth Gas and Water Company 24<sup>th</sup> March 1938 and arrived in their attractive Green livery complete with an engine warranty from Dorman. It then spent the following 29 years shunting coal wagons in the company's sidings at the Pitwines site of Poole Gas Works. Later, when the Southern Gas Board took over, “Beryl” was painted Orange.

Corralls, a local coal merchant and division of Powell Duffryn, purchased her and transferred “Beryl” to their coal depot on Hamworthy Quay during March 1966. It is understood that she moved those few miles, under her own power late at night, along the main line to Hamworthy Junction and down to Corralls' coal staithes on the Quay. She was driven by a Gas Works driver, accompanied by a BR pilotman, to the Quay.

“Beryl” was bought as a replacement for Corralls ex-LSWR Class B4 steam shunter “Normandy” – now preserved on the Bluebell Railway. “Beryl” acted purely as a stand-by engine, to their main diesel shunter, and was soon painted in Corralls all-over Blue livery.

Not long after arrival, however, both Corralls' shunters at Dibles Wharf, St Mary's, Southampton failed. A short wheelbase loco was needed in a hurry to shunt the tightly curving sidings if their coal trade was to continue. A few urgent 'phone calls were needed to make a 'local arrangement' for the move. “Beryl” was loaded with as many 5 gallon 'jerry-cans' of petrol as could be safely stowed aboard. Heroically the Coralls' (Hamworthy) Manager Ernie Brown, accompanied by a BR pilotman, drove her along the main line light engine on a quiet Saturday night.

Apparently a stop was necessary at New Milton after around 20 miles, due to low fuel, with the signalman being requested to change the road so it could set back into the Down sidings for its petrol tank to be refilled. Fortunately, the rest of the journey of just over 22 miles was completed without incident although it is not known if a further stop was needed to refuel. “Beryl” was to spend around 2 months at Dible's Wharf whilst

both regular locos were repaired.

Due to the urgency to get a replacement loco to Southampton, there was insufficient time to get the chain drive and gearbox of "Beryl" isolated - so that BR could tow it in a regular unfitted freight train from Hamworthy. Hence the requirement to drive it there. Later it returned to Hamworthy, with everything necessary duly isolated, as part of a freight to Hamworthy but the train was limited to a 30 mph maximum as "Beryl's" axle boxes were not designed for higher speeds.

On Saturday morning 26<sup>th</sup> June 1976 she was purchased for preservation by Geoff Pitman and John Vickery, two members of the (then) Swanage Railway Society, and transported to Swanage on the same day. Reports from various sources, about her being "as weak as a kitten", were borne out when it was discovered that one of the eight valves was seized. After investigation it was concluded that "Beryl" had operated on just three cylinders for many years!

The engine was thoroughly overhauled with the added work of 46 separate leaks in the cooling system needing sealing. A troublesome Solex type carburettor was replaced with a Zenith 42FSZ(R) which may have been a co-incidence, or a great choice, as this was the exact match for one that would have been fitted to the original engine. The corroded silencer was replaced, as was the 20 gallon petrol tank and a twin-tone air horn installed on top of the cab roof.

Once all overhaul and refurbishment work was completed "Beryl" dealt easily with all the (admittedly small) trains needing to be moved in those days. There were plans for a bigger (diesel) engine to be fitted to make "Beryl" even more useful to the growing Swanage Railway. This would also have entailed installing a bigger battery and charging equipment, as well as possible air braking of the loco and vacuum braking equipment for possible passenger train operations. All this came to nought, and "Beryl" side-lined, as a bigger shunter - "May" - had arrived.

The livery carried by "Beryl" on the Swanage Railway through to the 1980s was a rendition of the P. D. Fuels (Corralls) Limited corporate blue and grey with red lining. To complement this paintwork, Corralls kindly donated a set of company logo and name transfers.

Bringing the story of "Beryl" more up to date. It was stored in various locations about the Swanage Railway for many years – somewhat unloved. An attempt at restoration in the 1990s was abandoned, unfortunately, after dismantling had occurred.

Almost 40 years since her original arrival, a fresh start on restoration was made on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 with the wheeled chassis being craned out of Woodpecker siding at Norden. It was placed onto a "Salmon" bogie flat wagon, more used to carrying track components, and the whole train (including the crane 'FBC 1') was hauled by 34070 "Manston" back to Swanage. "Beryl" was craned on to the Goods Shed siding for work to commence.

Since then the chassis and cab were refurbished and repainted in Swanage Goods Shed and, on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018, "Beryl" was craned onto a 'Lowmac' wagon for movement to Corfe Castle station cattle dock siding for display. It was hauled by D6515 "Lt Jenny Lewis RN". The engine and transmission were at Norden under investigation for possible restoration to running condition.

By 2023, "Beryl" had been moved from Corfe Castle to Norden Lakeside Siding.

It is believed that "Beryl" is the oldest example of a standard gauge 'Planet' design loco from F C Hibberd and is certainly the only one with it's original Dorman 4JORX petrol/paraffin engine still extant.

Information collated by Peter Sykes 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018

Updated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024