

Dorset steam Fair

Many of you that know me will know of my enthusiasm for the Great Dorset Steam Fair. I have been going to steam and vintage rallies for longer than I can remember. The Innishannon formerly Upton Steam Rally is one of the highlights for many years.



After ordination and starting in parish life this has gone from strength to strength. Meeting The late Jim Twohig in my first parish I was introduced to the glorious world of the Model T Ford. Jim gave me my first spin and drive in April 1966. When I moved to the parish of Ballincollig, I met one of the. Great characters of the Model T world, the late Jimmy Walsh RIP of Kilumney, Ovens who was introduced to me by his son Jim Bob. from there life took a turn when in 2001 I bought my 1914 Model T Tourer. Jimmy and the late Donall O'Callaghan often regaled me with stories of going to the Great Dorset Steam Fair, formerly Stourpine Bushes. They had made the pilgrimage many times and it was an annual event for them. Life went on and I met another great, the late Ned Harty RIP who had been going to Dorset for over 30 years.

In late 2003 I had a conversation with a colleague, James McSweeney,

telling him of my plans to go to the Steam Fair and hoping to hire a caravan. "sure I have one of them, I'll go with you" says he, and so it was. Travel arrangements were sorted and the expedition was planned!!!! Talk about going to the South Pole....food water and clothing. We were warned to bring adequate footwear as we would be doing a fair bit of walking.

The Great Dorset Steam Fair started in 1969 in the county of Dorset in the south of England, by the late Michael Oliver. The first Fair was held near the village of Stourpaine. From there it moved to the current, bigger site near the village of Blandford. The Fair grew very fast to become the biggest open air event in Europe. In recent years Michael's son Martin took over the running of the event and it. Hanges and grows



every year. It is mainly a Steam event attracting almost 200 steam traction engines, from rollers, all kinds of engines in luring the magnificent showman engines. It also caters for vintage cars. Tractors, lorries steam threshers, wood sawing, road making, cider making, fairground organs and anything else you can think of in relation to the world of vintage. The current site is over 600 acres in size. 200 of which

is given over to autojumble trade stands and vintage displays. The Show usually takes place after the August Bank Holiday beginning on Wednesday and finishing the following Sunday. I usually travel on the Saturday before the Show, arriving at the site early on the Sunday morning. Over 200 acres of the site are allotted to camping and caravans. On that first year, James and I had a wonderful trip. The weather was beautiful and the Show exceeded all our expectations. So

much so that we travelled again the following year and the year after that!! An idea came to me then about bringing my Model T and I was told to bring it along when it was ready.

In 2008, after a mechanical rebuild, I brought my T over for the first time and have been using it since. We were in Dorset for the 40th Anniversary of the Great Dorset Steam Rally in 2009. As James's appointment has changed, he can no longer come with me I go on my own, but I have made many friends who I meet every year in the field. Many Irish people travel to the Show every year and you never know who you might meet. Nowadays I usually hire a caravan already set up in the field. The advantage of this being that I am in the field at all times. While there is much to do during the day, night life is filled with concerts, dance shows, vintage and modern fairgrounds etc. The shows close about midnight. For anyone who would like to go there is much to see. The attractions include horse ploughing, dogs herding geese (one man and his dog style) the Adams Axman (cutting trees the old way) The Food Halls are magnificent as too are the many crafts on display. I never go hungry in the field I can get anything from freshly made brown bread to Cornish Pasties and homemade sausages. There are also entertainment tents and drink pavilions. Some facts on the Show:



200,000	visitors.
3,100,000	litters of water used last year.
200	tones of coal used by the engines.
16	acres of corn threshed.
500	barrels of beer consumed.
80	tones of wool cut up.
6	Entertainment Pavilions.
180 to 200	tones of rubbish.

For me it has been my annual holiday for the past number of years and I look forward to the trip every year. For anyone who loves vintage and the world of heritage it is a must seen and brilliant experience.

Pat O'Donovan CC.

