

Finella

A large number of steam enthusiasts and well wishers gathered at the Barrack family steam shed at Kingswells on a dry but cold Saturday 27th of Dec 2008. They were there to witness the first steaming of a Fowler A7 called Finella, since she had undergone a significant refurbishment.

For Bill Barrack it was particularly poignant as he had often commented (jokingly) over the five years the work had taken that he “would never see the engine steam again”

However as the engine emerged from the shed, looking not quite her old self, but slimmer and blacker, as she was missing her canopy and most of the metal covers from around the boiler and motion, the investment and hard work of many people was evident for all to see.

For the technically minded, just some of the jobs that were done were, a new firebox, boiler re-tubed, new chimney and lining, wheels trued and rubbers fitted, new gear guards, new brakes, rear suspension arm repaired, belly tank shot blasted and painted, water tank rebuilt, shot blasted and painted, new water and steam pipe work, new smoke box door and the smoke box relined

Steaming an engine for the first time after as big a rebuild as Finella had enjoyed is always a worrying time, as there are just so many things that can and usually do go wrong. The most obvious are of course steam and water leaks, especially as the boiler comes up to pressure.

Sure enough there were plenty of steam leaks, but gratifyingly, no water leaks. Over the course of the morning the Barrack family, assisted by most of the Barrack steam team worked away patiently and managed to slow or stop most of the worst leaks sufficiently to allow the grand old lady to make quite a few circuits of the yard under her own steam, with Bill one of the first to take the controls.

While there is still a huge amount of work still to be done to the engine before she is in rally condition the first steaming has helped to raise the spirits of all concerned with the refurbishment.

This engine has only had three owners since new, and as the fifth generation of young Barracks drove the engine around the yard and helped with the various jobs, I think it is safe to say it will be staying where it is for the foreseeable future.