North Queensland Machinery Preservationists
NQMP Inc PO Box 11, DC AITKENVALE, TOWNSVILLE, QLD, 4814
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NEXT MEETING FRIDAY, 2nd November at Brian Pumps at 60 Coates st MtLouisa

Ruston Hornsby Oil Engine 12HP

One of three engines collected and restored by Pat O’Brien, on display at the Ravenswood collection.
Hi all, three down and one to go. Next weekend nine of us are off to Charters Towers Heritage & Cultural Festival at the Venus Batery.

Each year we are invited to Ravenswood to display our machinery and to start the three engines collected and restored by Pat O’Brien that they have on display with other historical memorabilia at the old Court House at Ravenswood.

The last two years this trip has coincided with their Pioneer Luncheon, where they invite past residents back to Ravenswood for a luncheon, I would like to point out the oldest there this year was 92 years old.

This arrangement suits us down to the ground as we have a captive audience who appreciate and identify with what we do.

Pat O’Brien has given us a story on the three engines.

**The Ravenswood Collection**

By Pat O’Brien

The first engine mentioned is a Ruston & Hornsby, 2XHR, number 219458 of 12 hp that arrived in Melbourne in 1944 and then sold from Brisbane. Recovered from Murray Upper near Kennedy with a Banana Shed built over it in September 1982. Labor was hired to dig a track under the shed to winch the remains out. We broke the exhaust rocker. It came home in our F100 and wore the rear mud flaps out with the excessive weight. More parts were recovered later when I found the concrete base in the river bed and the muffler with exhaust pipe, valve grinding tool were recovered in the sand. Restored with help from John Tait and Bill Phelan who all developed longer arms when cranking. Must make mention of the fractured bronze bigend bearing and broken white metal. An old Victoria Mill fitter offered to remake the bearing and only required the code numbers stamped in
the side of the bearing, amazingly the new bearing returned with 6 shims and perfectly replicated. It fitted without alteration. I wonder if this code method is still used by fitters?

Starting cartridges were purchased from Ray Hoo-ley in Lincoln, UK though later we were able to find unopened tins of cartridges from Ruston pump sheds in the Burdekin. Cartridges were not required for starting pump engines while compressed air was obtainable. We have started this engine using cigarettes from the Field Days audience. The portable transporter came from an Ingersoll Rand Air Compressor that a land developer was about to consign to a trench along with other farming equipment to start the suburb of Santal. The frame was too wide so we had to cut 6 inches from each cast-iron end and weld back together.

Dalrymple Council paid me $2,500 to start the Ravenswood collection and I was more than happy to keep the collection locally.
Richard Hornsby number 46890, 7. ½ hp. The first showing of my green 3 hp Hornsby at a Field Day attracted plenty of attention at the entrance. This led to Gordon Dunlop offering me a larger Hornsby. This engine was lying in a paddock on Upper Ross River Road (now Riverway) and was complete, another miracle. I was up to my ears in restoring and running a business so I offered the restoration to new keen restorer Dave Price who did a nice job. We conferred about the colour and arrived at purple as there were traces of this on the block. Later I was to learn the correct colour was maroon. Then we deduced the years of western sun and lead paint fades to purple, so that’s why!


The Richard Hornsby petrol stationary number 37603 started life 5th May 1911. Was obtained in a swap in Charters Towers in 1983. My first Hornsby and the start of the Ruston-Hornsby Register. Took 3 years to gather or make all the missing parts including casting a gear guard and acquiring an engine pipe and muffler from station dumps. The magneto was also rewound. New piston rings were purchased from England. The only part I could not find or make was the float needle cap with a female thread. I can’t cut female threads! Jim Phillips and I toured Nosnellor Station to see the 7 lighting plants replaced by mains power. Jim (farmer’s bare feet) was stung by a scorpion and he wanted the flying doctor, he recovered. I kicked over some gravel and found my missing float cap, a miracle! This station was known to never have a Hornsby engine, so how did it get there? Starting requires fresh fuel, and rich, so chocking by hand is required. I was to later find the shutter flap on the carby entrance was missing and finding this flap may enhance starting. The fuel tank runs for 12 hours and never needs attention apart from oilers.

The transporter originally belonged to Hornsby 46404 and came from Barrington Station.