

**Roy Mollet lived at Tidpit Cottage in the 1980's. His photos of Bert Dibben's steam engines can be found in this archive under 'Tidpit Cottage'.**

## **ANNUAL STEAM UP AT BERT DIBBENS**

Before the Great Dorset Steam Fair found a permanent site at Tarrant Hinton in 1988, it used to be held at Stourpaine and it was around this time that I recall 3 or 4 traction engines and steam rollers stopping at Bert Dibben's house in Martin for a mini steam-up over a couple of days, I assume either on their way to Stourpaine or on their way back.

The 'toot-toot' of a steam engine whistle would alert me to the fact the engines had arrived in Martin. This was my cue to wander down from Tidpit to Martin with my very young son to marvel at the hissing, belching monster machines as their proud owners tweaked and adjusted various aspects of these incredible iron monoliths with an oily rag in one hand and a leaky oil can in the other; their faces smudged with black grease, dust and oil.

That unique, heady smell of steam and burning coal would fill the air around Bert's house along with the low key chatter of old Dorset accents comparing notes about the peculiarities of each other's engine. I can still see Bert's kindly face giving me and my boy a welcoming smile as he wandered in and out of his workshop fetching various tools and gadgets to discuss with his fellow enthusiasts. Then, without warning, a loud whistle would pierce the air and we would nearly jump out of our skins, as one of these beauties prepared to leave the yard and go for a 'spin' down the road and back, watched by the other owners and drivers in their tatty overalls with nothing but looks of approval from their lined, tanned and grubby faces – happy days!