

Restoration aspirations Pt 3: Progress

It's oh so very true that time waits for no man, as Simon Bowes has discovered...

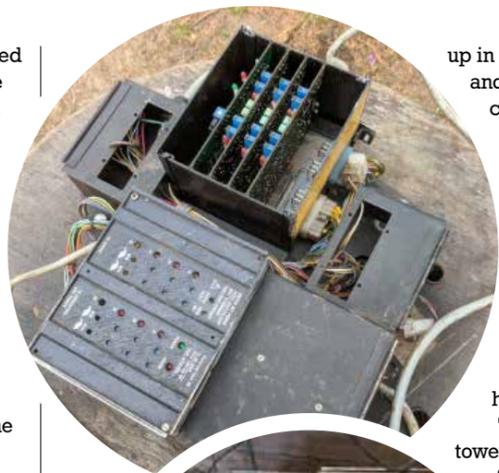
I WENT for a ride through Dalby the other night. I passed a stand of trees up by the old fire tower site. Yes, there was a watchtower constructed from lattice-work steel, much like those large electric pylons that stride across the country now. It had a cabin on the top with communications with which the fire lookout could alert the authorities to any conflagrations that may occur during the hot dry months of summer. Apparently they were busy during the summer of '76, when I was a spotty schoolboy who dreamed of becoming a gunsmith – yes, that was my boyhood dream.

Anyhow, amongst my memories of that tower was one of seeing a body swinging from it one morning from the window of the school bus. Botterill's school bus picked the Davison brothers up from Jingleby Thorn, a little forestry holding just along the road from the tower. I asked the driver if what I had seen was someone hanging from the tower. He said it was just an old coat that someone had left over the rail by the cabin door, but he jumped out at the next farm and used their phone to ring the police. No mobile phones back in the seventies, indeed still a lot of homes without a phone of any kind. Turned out it had been a suicide. To us kids it was something of fleeting interest, we soon went back to avoiding homework and chasing girls; no need for trauma counsellors back then.

My second memory was of seeing that tower toppled across the road one morning some years later. In those days the forest around Dalby would ring to the sound of chainsaws during the working week. County tractors were dragging timber onto roads across all its thousands of acres where crosscutting men would be sawing and stacking the produce one piece at a time. A ride through the woods in the evening would take you past sites where two or three County tractors would be parked up ready for the following day's toil.

Someone had taken a County from a site up by the tower and gone off joyriding on it. When this had become less than exciting they had rammed the logging blade into the bottom of the tower, repeating the process until the structure had become sufficiently weakened and had toppled over into the road. How they had managed to avoid being crushed remains a mystery until this day.

The block of timber I was looking at was opposite the old tower site. It sticks in my mind because we were working



Top: IPS boxes as they came out, and below that the IPS boxes done and ready to bolt to the cab panel.

up in Langdale in the summertime and the FC squads had been clearfelling the block by the tower. It was all shortwood that was being extracted using the FC's Kockums forwarder. It was the first machine of its type I'd seen working and, passing it in the early hours of a bright summer morning, I couldn't help but marvel at how much easier it looked compared to our winching and hand-cutting operation.

That block of timber on the tower road has been thinned a couple of times now and it won't be long before it'll be felled again, this time with a Ponsse Scorpion, or an eight-wheeled John Deere 1270, but I won't be doing it with one of my 1270A Timberjacks, that's for sure.

Now, with that ramble out of the way we'd better get on to the job in hand: progress. No longer lounging in the dealer's yard, my 250 has arrived on the estate and it has been attacked with some gusto and many spanners.

The arrival of the low-loader in the yard saw the usual scenario played out where everybody looks at each other. The wagon driver hasn't a clue how to drive it, Richard knows there's no reverse steering and I hate driving machines on and off low-loaders, especially when this one has been driven on forwards. "You bought it, you drive it off." That's usually how these things are settled. I bought a Kockums 8335 from a disposal auction many years ago and there was a stipulation that sold lots had to be removed quickly. I went out to collect the Kockums with a haulier I hadn't used before and, rather than take a few minutes to rumble the forwarder around to see what worked and what didn't, he insisted we just fire it up and drive it on;



he even reversed the trailer right to the machine so I had about half the machine's length to get used to it. All seemed well; it drove straight and true, up the ramps onto the trailer, but when I got the signal to stop I found it wouldn't. Kockums forwarders had a variety of gear selector options; this particular one had an air selector with push and pull buttons. The problem was a water-cooled air compressor with a leaking gasket that allowed water and oil into the air lines. This emulsion clogged the valves and made drive direction and gear selections prone to stickiness. There I was on the wagon in a forwarder that wouldn't stop and, unlike modern transmissions, the old Clark three-speed gearboxes would move even on tickover. The only thing I could do was to keep juggling between forward and reverse with one hand and pull on the stop with the other, only the stop, like the brakes, didn't work.

It must have been quite a sight; some idiot shuffling a forwarder back and forth on the deck of a wagon. It did eventually drop out of drive and we took it home without having the front wheels jammed against the deck of the trailer as it seemed less of a risk than starting it up again. Once home I took all the air pipes off and blew them out with an air line. There was around a pint of grey sludge in the system. The problem was eventually cured by fitting an

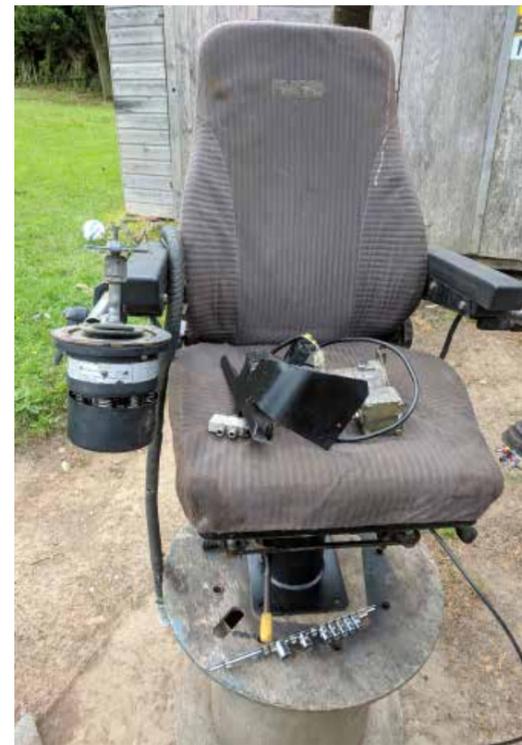
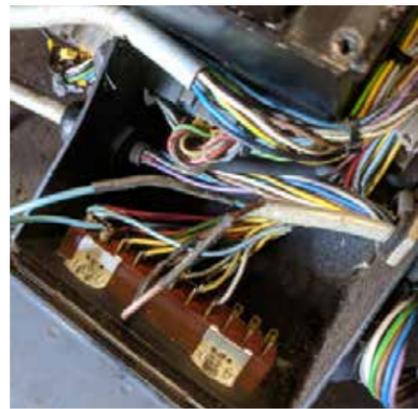
air-cooled compressor.

Back to June 2018, it was fortunate that whoever had driven the machine on, and I'd guess it was Dave at Phil Cooper's, had done a good job and set the machine up in a straight line in the middle of the wagon so all I had to do was select reverse and give it a little throttle and off it rolled.

With the 250 securely parked at the bottom of the sawmill yard, and knocking-off time rapidly approaching, we could spend a little time having a look at what we would need to do first. As described previously, the IPS boxes needed moving, but on closer inspection it might well have been that the brackets that carry them were the only thing holding the seat together. The cab has a number of brackets and extras like the night heater controls and the moving headboard control box that are surplus to requirements, so they can come out. The rubber floor covering has disintegrated and I have a quick and easy replacement that is also cheap. I found some anti-fatigue matting that workshops use where people stand at a bench for long periods. It's available in our local Homebase in rolls big enough to do two forwarder cabs and best of all it only costs £16 a roll.

Under the bonnet, there's no oil cooler (but a suitable

The Ōsa 250 in yellow livery.



unit has been sourced), there's an oil leak from the sump, and there's no cooler for the engine oil. The radiator hoses all look OK except for the top hose which has suffered the almost obligatory mouse damage. Most pressing, though, is the engine stop solenoid. The cheapest solution is generally a cable stop. It needs to be a decent length as it's a long way from the dash to the injector pump when the cab's raised.

Judging by the reasonable condition of the rest of the machine, it is in generally quite good order for a machine that is 35 years old. It would be worth checking the stop solenoid and the wiring before junking it. Sure enough, the fuse in the main board for the 'stopperin' was blown. Fitting a new 3 amp fuse and turning the ignition on created a bright flash as the fuse popped. With the solenoid unplugged from the main wiring, and a jury rig straight to the battery, it worked faultlessly and with some urgency. A quick inspection of the sub-loom that carries the stop solenoid wiring, engine temp gauges and warning light cabling adds the task of a major wiring refurb to the list of jobs.

It is without doubt the seat that needs the most attention, though. It's a very early type with lots of tubing, levers and springs and it weighs as much as a well-fed forwarder driver, especially when you add in the weight of those control boxes. So, save for the pedestal, it can be consigned to the skip. I have an air seat out of an FMG that needs grafting onto the Ösa pedestal and I have some neat armrests that I saved from a 919 Lokomo.

On the outside the Ösa is a faded green over the original sandy yellow that early 250 and 260 Ösas were painted. The yellow was the Ösa corporate colour but a large number of machines were painted in both - they were obviously painted yellow then had the green paint applied to update them when the change to green had been made. Some factory green machines have the yellow underneath but they are green inside and out. This particular 250 has had a colour change at some time in its life, either to make it more saleable or simply to tidy it up, so while it's mainly green on the outside it is totally yellow inside the cab. The green colour is quite easy to match, it's called Brunswick green, but the yellow, or more correctly ochre, isn't so easy to find and my local automotive paint specialist says he'll have to



paint a base colour so it'll cost around a hundred quid for 2 ½ litres. Adding in the price of primer and a couple of litres of non-reflective black for the crane and bunk and we'll be looking at a couple of hundred quid to update the paintwork. I've yet to decide what colour to do the wheels. I'll be looking at pictures of the yellow 250 I had a few years ago to see what colour they should be and I'll be skimming through old brochures to find if the original decals were the black-and-white ones I remember. The big question is whether the green bonnet top and the roof behind the lights should really be green, or was that just a personal alteration by a previous owner?

The IPS boxes demand little in the way of engineering; they just need to be fitted the same way up - the seat mounted version has one box upside down to facilitate the position of the control for the heated seat - and then with some reworked cabling the whole thing can be fixed to the alloy cab panel with four large, self-tapping screws. I have several complete control boxes and dozens of IPS cards (I've hardly ever had one go wrong other than those that have been wet, kicked or had a major overload caused by amateur electricians) and although those in the 250 look decidedly worse for wear, they all do their job well enough.

It didn't take much to pull the old seat apart. The rails had been broken and welded in the past and the original bolts had been swapped, the clamp on the pedestal was bent and the tube that the seat pillar slides into was distinctly blunderbuss-shaped.

One Saturday morning later, with one compressor out of the redundant parts shed along with a fiver's worth of primer and satin black and a bit of rejigging of the mountings, and a serviceable air seat is ready to go back in. I'll need to paint the cab's interior and fit the new cab flooring first, but another half-day should see the interior of the cab sorted. We've already tidied up some bits of redundant wiring and cleaned as much accumulated dust and mouse 'arising' out of the nooks and crannies as possible, so the project is off to a good start.

There are, of course, more major issues to confront. I've found a grab and rotator, which was always going to be a reasonably easy task, given a willingness to spend enough money. I've found a slightly bigger grab that'll go on the 860 and the too-small, eighteen-month-old Cranab currently fitted can go onto the 250. With all the easy details sorted at little cost, in time and cash, it's time to look at bigger issues.

The rear diff cover that sits in the middle of the chassis between the middle pair of bunks is at least fitted - I've had machines where this was missing and the chassis was full of mud, bark and sticks. Given the propshaft and rear

Top left: No cover over the rear diff can cause real trouble.

Top centre: Twisting two wires together and using insulating tape isn't acceptable for a permanent repair.

Top right: Solder and heat shrink; that's better.

Above: So it was assembled in 1984?

brake disc are under this cover it is as well to have one fitted, however badly. The one on this 250 has four large bolts holding it down. I'd guess they will be M12 but the heads aren't 19 mm as you'd expect, they are very rusty and very round. We had a tentative go at moving them with a small pair of Stilsons but, as part of the common theme, they are also very tight. I'm thinking they'll need at least a bit of creative thinking with the welder and some oversize nuts, or the angle grinder and a drill followed by some nifty work with my box of metric taps.

The headboard is very good - at least the part of it that is still fitted. Unfortunately, a good third of it is somewhere on a site it once worked on. I'd consider removing the whole thing and making a new top section but it has been mounted very substantially by someone who not only enjoyed welding but who was also very good at it, so removing it would be some chore.

Once these details - none of them really major - are

Above: Without doubt, the seat needed a lot of attention. The centre picture shows the seat almost ready to go back in.

sorted, it's just a case of doing all the oils and filters and greasing round, changing grease nipples as we go.

That cross-country steering is an issue I'm so far avoiding. I'm just a bit worried that I wasn't dreaming when I heard the relays clicking at some point when I first looked at the machine because for sure they don't now, and that could mean a problem in the steering amplifier. I don't think it will be, however, because it's generally the drive control that fails in my experience.

Hopefully, given the good weather and a new shed going up in the sawmill yard that I can borrow while it's empty, we'll have the paintwork done some time in July.

So, progress. We've had some; now we need a lot more. Just as long as work doesn't make too many demands on my time I'd hope to be moving firewood with it this summer.

There is, however, no guarantee any of this will happen... given the vagaries of work in the current climate.

I'll keep you posted!



LUCAS MILL

Portable Saw Mills

- ▶ 6", 8" & 10" capacity mills available
- ▶ Swing blade cuts up to 10"x 20" beams
- ▶ Dedicated slabbing mill options
- ▶ Quick set-up time on any terrain
- ▶ Weatherboard & planing attachment options



FUELWOOD

FJ6-17
Fuelwood (Warwick) Ltd
www.fuelwood.co.uk
t: 01926 484673