

Wm Allchin & Co Ltd

The Globe Works, Northampton

Allchins may have been a small company in the league of wagon builders but over the years they gained a good reputation both for reliability and quality of their products. During the late 1950s I had occasion to meet and got to know an old employee of Allchins by the name of Harry Matthews. Harry had joined the company in 1908 where he rose to the position of test driver, prior to then going out on the road visiting customers.

I visited him a number of times when he was in the residential section of the Danetree Hospital at Daventry. During the time I knew him he was kind enough to give me a number of catalogues, photographs and an auction catalogue of the sale of the company (see Fig. 12), all of which have helped in the preparation of this article.

The earliest catalogue he gave me was produced by William Allchin, Engineer and was his abstract catalogue No. 41 of September 1893 in which he proudly proclaims that the firm was established in 1847 (it was not to become a limited company until after 1900).

After listing four sizes of traction engines

and numerous portables it continues to list all kinds of tools, galvanised feeding troughs and corrugated iron sheets. The earliest recorded traction engine was No. 228, a 7hp single-cylinder engine built in 1872.

It was to be another 34 years before the company would produce their first steam wagon, a 3-ton underframe, No. 101, which was built on Monday January 12, 1906.

Having built seven of these underframes, they decided to change horses 'mid-stream' and went over to producing a range of overtypes.

There were probably two reasons for this decision; firstly they would have been well aware of the great success that Edwin Foden up at Sandbach was enjoying with those overtype Fodens, and secondly the overtype was more akin to the traction engine, for which they had gained so much experience.

The first overtype was a 5-ton wagon, which was given the works number 108, but it would seem that they had problems with it during the build as it was stood on one side, eventually emerging from works as No. 142 on Saturday January 25, 1913, and sold to Kingson & Dadswell of South Nutfield, nr Redhill, Surrey.

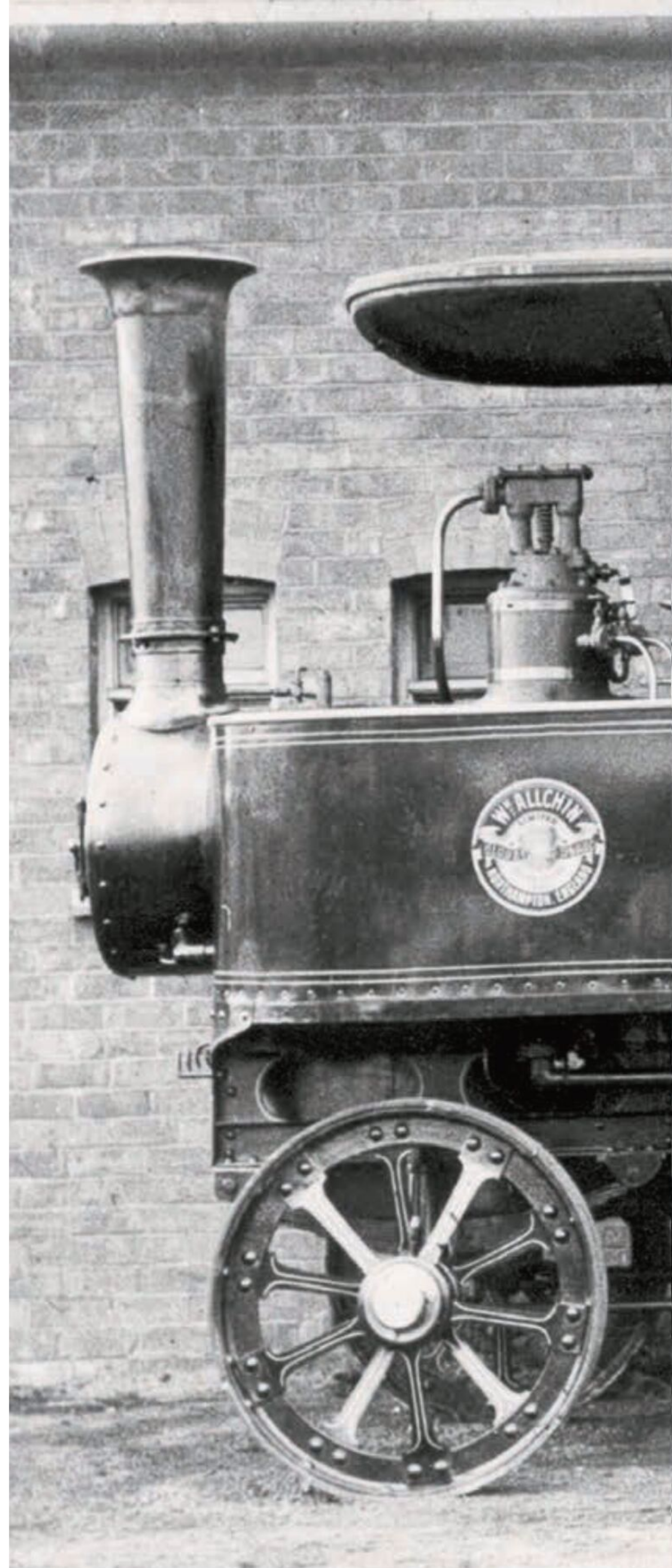


Fig. 1. The first Allchin wagon, No. 101, ready to leave the Globe Works at Northampton in 1906 for exhibition at the Park Royal Show.

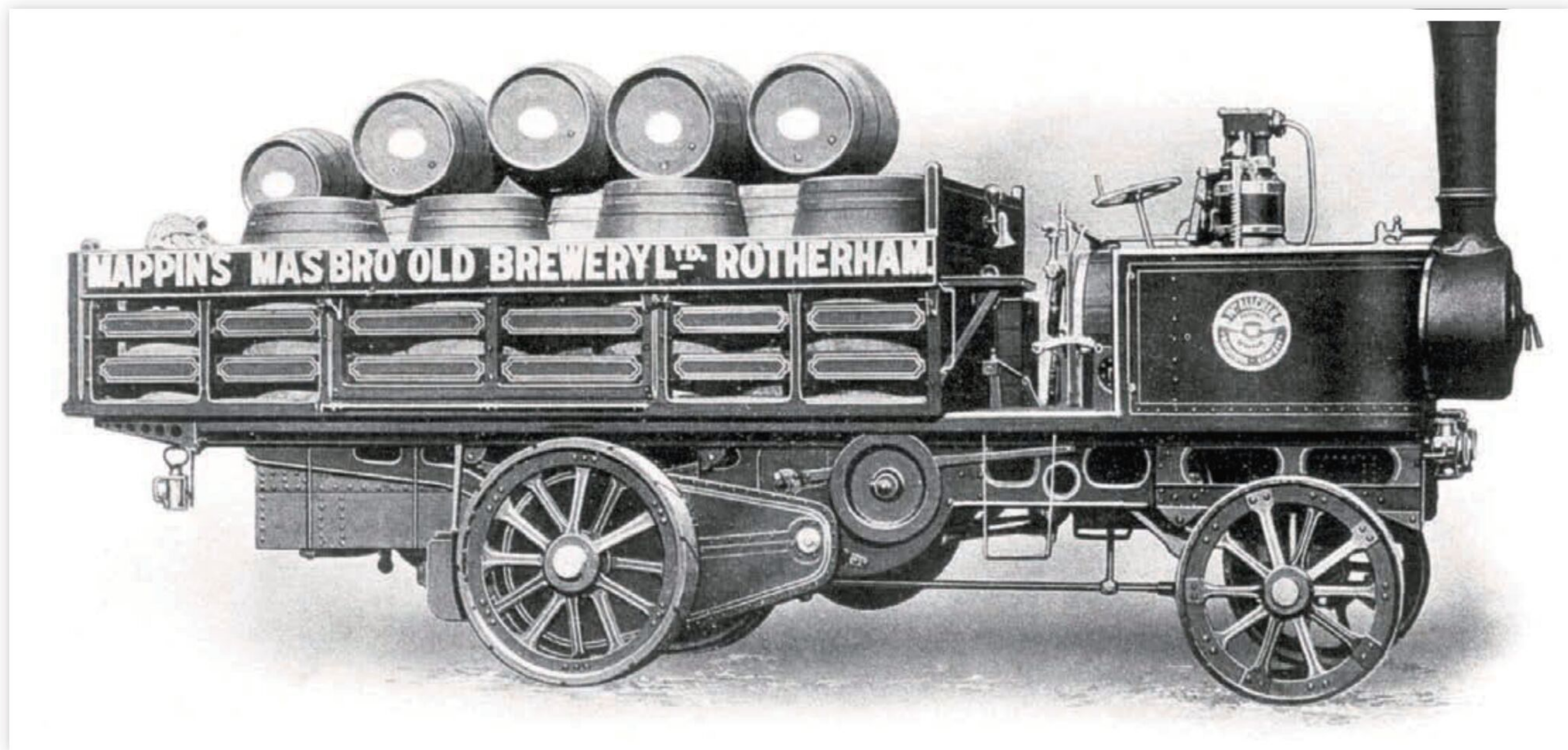
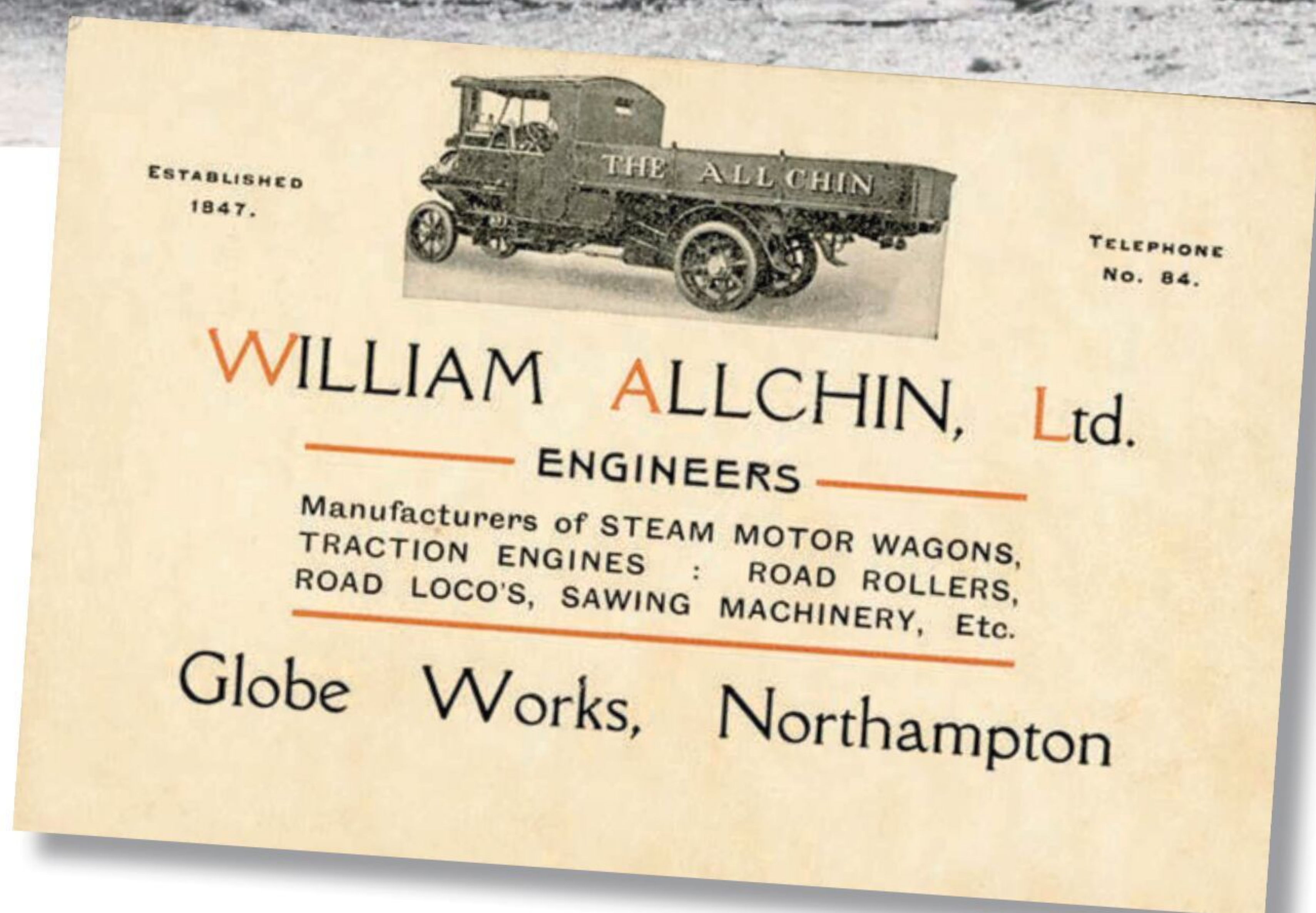


Fig. 2. The second overtype wagon was No. 102. Scant regard was paid to the comfort of the crew but must have been successful as Mappins took three of the seven built of this type - Nos. 102, 105 (second hand) and 107.



The first to be sold was actually 5-ton wagon No. 109, which was built on Saturday January 28, 1911, selling to G Wallace & Co of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The last wagon to be sold was a 6-ton three-way tipper No. 1436, going locally to Alfred J Mackaness of Little Billing, Northants, where it was registered RP 9370.

I would contend however that the last wagon built was the 6-ton three-way tipper

that was Lot No. 240A in the company's auction catalogue. This was probably completed just in time for the sale but no works number was quoted. This seems a reasonable assumption as the last two wagons built, Nos. 1435 and 1436, were both 6-ton three-way tippers in which case this wagon would possibly have become No. 1437.

Whatever its works number could or could not have been, it was built so I have

included it in the total number of wagons built, which come to 269 when we include the seven undertypes.

A breakdown showing the quantities of each of the variants built is shown below:

UNDERTYPES BUILT

Weight (tons)	Type	Number built
3	wagon	2
4	wagon	1
5	wagon	4
TOTAL BUILT		7

OVERTYPES BUILT

Weight (tons)	Type	Number built
3	wagon	45
3	tipper	3
4	wagon	5
5	wagon	132
5	tipper	45
5/6	wagon	1
5/6	tipper	4
6	wagon	14
6	tipper	11
6	articulated	2
TOTAL BUILT		262

STEAM WAGONS

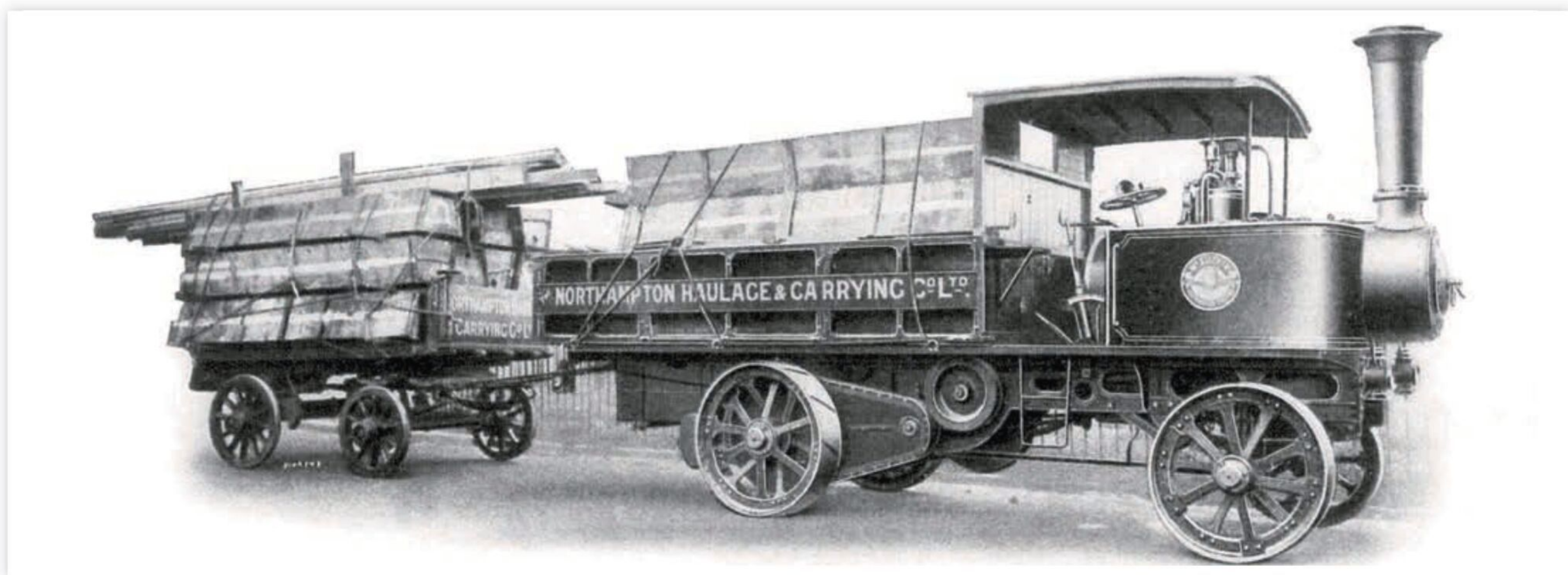


Fig. 3. Five-ton undertype wagon and trailer No. 104 sold in the company's home town, where it could be seen going about its work, giving Allchins good publicity.

Fig. 1 shows the first Allchin wagon, works No. 101, a 3-ton undertype, which was built on Friday January 12, 1906, and exhibited at the Park Royal Show that year. It sold to A.J Farrow of Matishall, Norfolk. The first seven undertype wagons all sported a horizontal multi-tube boiler which supplied steam at 200lb sq in for the 2-cylinder compound engine.

It had machine-cut gears, with improved Reynolds roller driving chains from the intermediate shaft to the driving wheels. The gearing and both the driving chains were enclosed in dust-proof steel cases. They had gear ratios that gave two speeds of four and six miles per hour, which could be maintained over average roads with a load of five tons and with a trailer carrying two tons. The water tank had a capacity of 225 gallons, which, according to the terrain, would give a range of 15-20 miles.

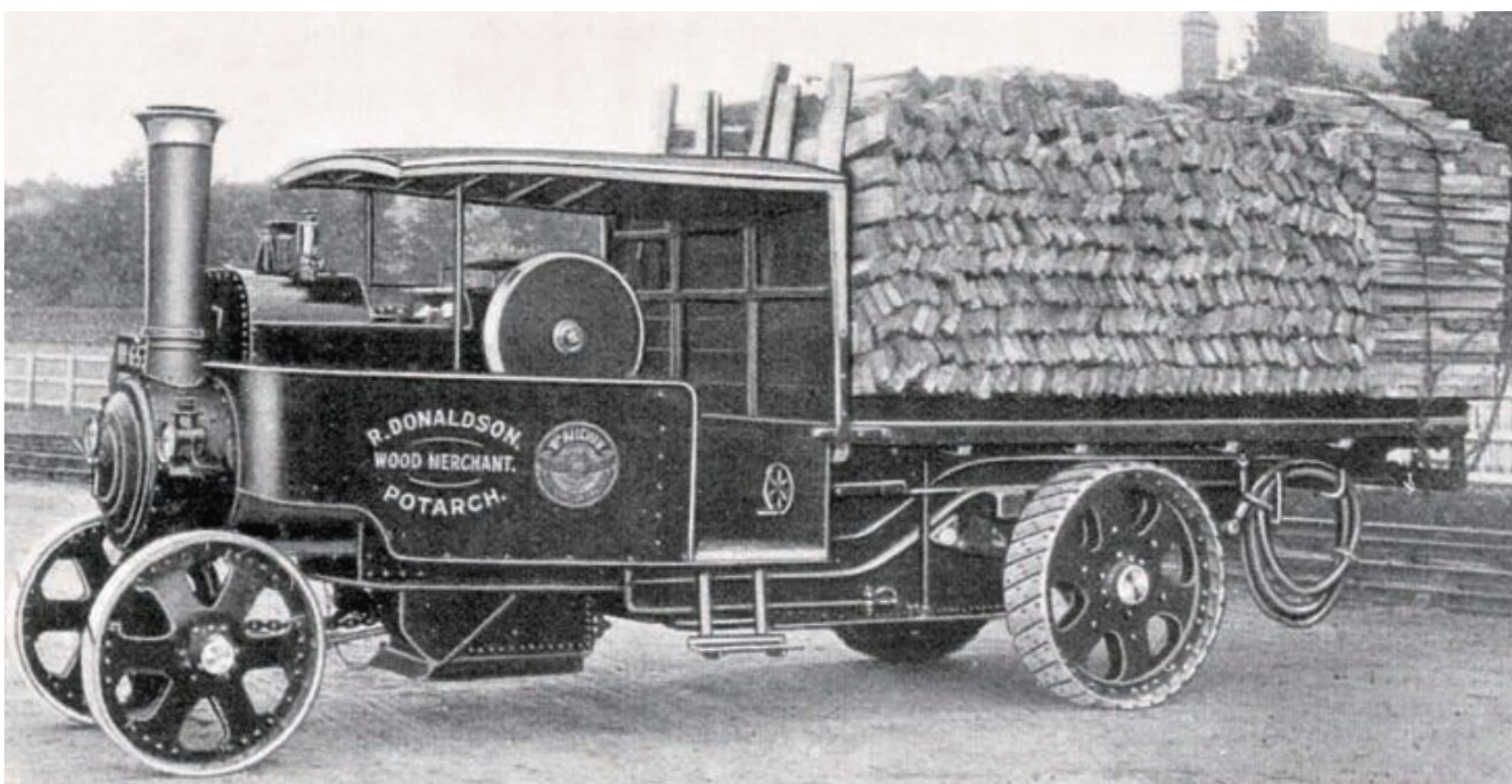


Fig. 4. Overtime 5-ton wagon No. 118 was the tenth to be built but only the second to be sold in England after the first one (No. 109). The next eight went to Australia.

The coal bunker had a capacity of 10cwt.

Fig. 2 shows the company's second wagon, No. 102 of Thursday February 7, 1907. Fitted with a 5-ton brewers' body it was exhibited at the Brewers' Fair where it was sold to Mappins' Masbro' Old Brewery

Ltd of Rotherham, Yorkshire.

The boilers on these wagons, so the catalogue proclaims, are fed by two feed pumps; one driven direct by the engine and one independently for emergencies.

A tubular water heater is supplied, heated

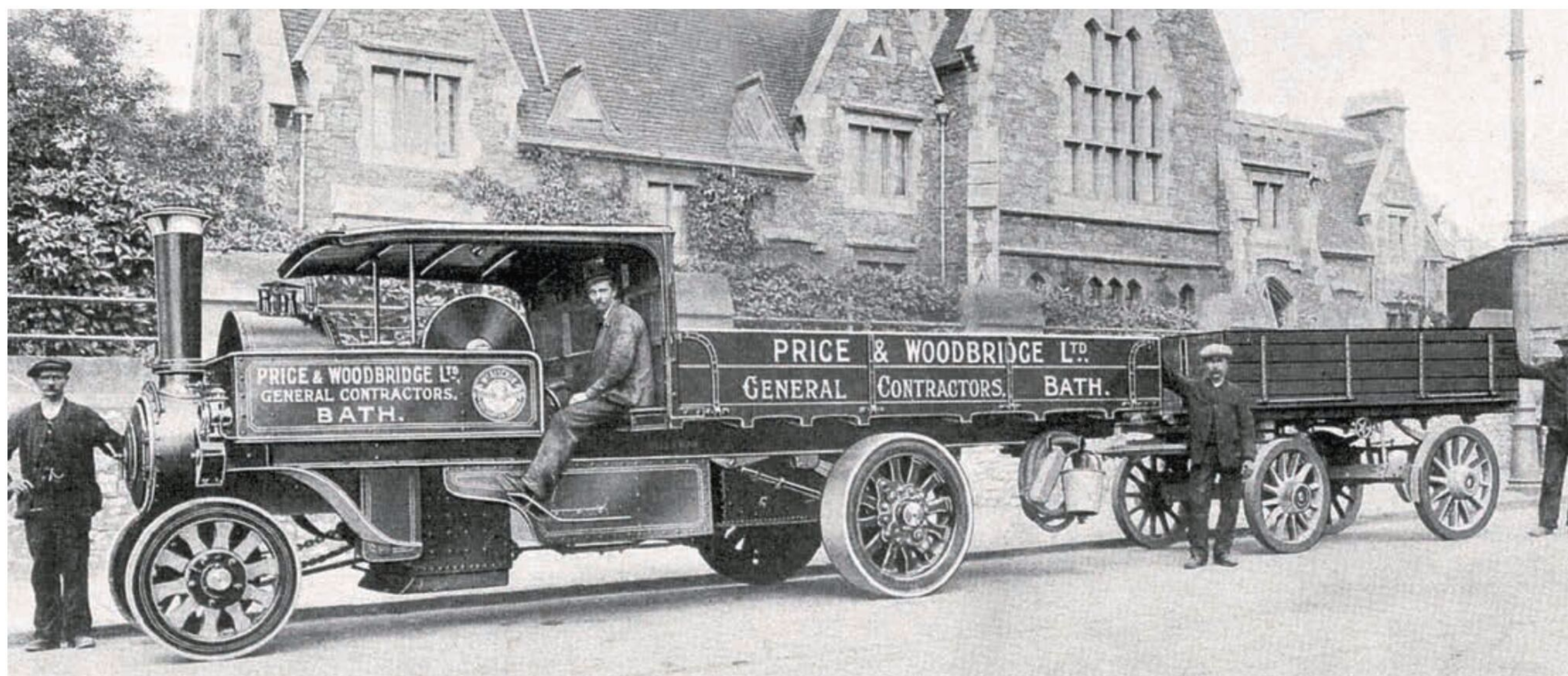


Fig. 5. The proud crew of Price & Woodbridge's first of two wagons, posing for their company photograph.

by exhaust steam as a further economiser located in the smokebox.

Fig. 3 shows 5-ton overtypewagon No. 104, which was built on Saturday March 30, 1907, and sold locally to the Northampton Haulage & Carrying Co Ltd.

Note that in all of these early photographs showing steam wagons pulling trailers, all of the trailers appear to be old horse-drawn affairs with just a modified drawbar. The idea of purpose-built trailers doesn't seem to have been adopted yet – probably the expense of a new wagon was thought to have been enough by the company accountant.

Fig. 4 depicts the tenth wagon of the new overtypewagon design, No. 118, which was built on Tuesday July 11, 1911, and sold to R Donaldson & Son of Potarch, Aberdeen, having received the Northants registration of NH 653. Later, on a date not recorded, it sold to George Thomas of Edinburgh, where it was scrapped in 1928.

Five-ton three-speed overtypewagon No. 138 (Fig. 5) was built on Friday June 28, 1912, receiving the registration NH 733 and was sold through dealers Townsend & Price to their customer Price & Woodbridge of Lower Weston, Bath. On a date not recorded it passed to Ernest Ireland Ltd, also of Bath, where it finished its working days. This was the first of two wagons that the company bought (the other being No. 160 in June 1913) and is seen posing for her official photograph.

Fig. 6 shows 3-ton overtypewagon No. 212 of Friday January 22, 1915, receiving the registration NM 1487 and sold to F Cave of Northampton. The wagon was just big enough with the tailboard removed to accommodate a standard railway wagon size container, which would be transhipped by rail if the intended move was beyond the economic use of the wagon. By 1925 it had been sold to Arthur E Pittam of Long Buckby, Northants, where she worked until December 1932 before being scrapped.

Fig. 7 is another overtypewagon 3-ton wagon used in the removal business and also in Northampton. This is No. 228, which was built on Friday June 25, 1915, and registered NH 1690, selling to Henry Hamp & Sons. It was later sold to Eastern Motor Wagon Co Ltd where by September 1925 it had been scrapped.

Our next photograph shows overtypewagon 3-ton wagon No. 287 of Friday November 5, 1915, receiving the registration NH 1780 (Fig. 8) and being sold to John Cragg of Romsey, Hampshire. For use as a general haulage wagon it was fitted with a drop tail and side board body, which as yet is unlettered. It is fitted with wooden wheels and solid rubber tyres.



Fig. 6. Cave's removal service used wagon No. 212. Those wooden wheels and solid rubber tyres would have helped to prevent damage to the customer's delicate glassware, one would hope.

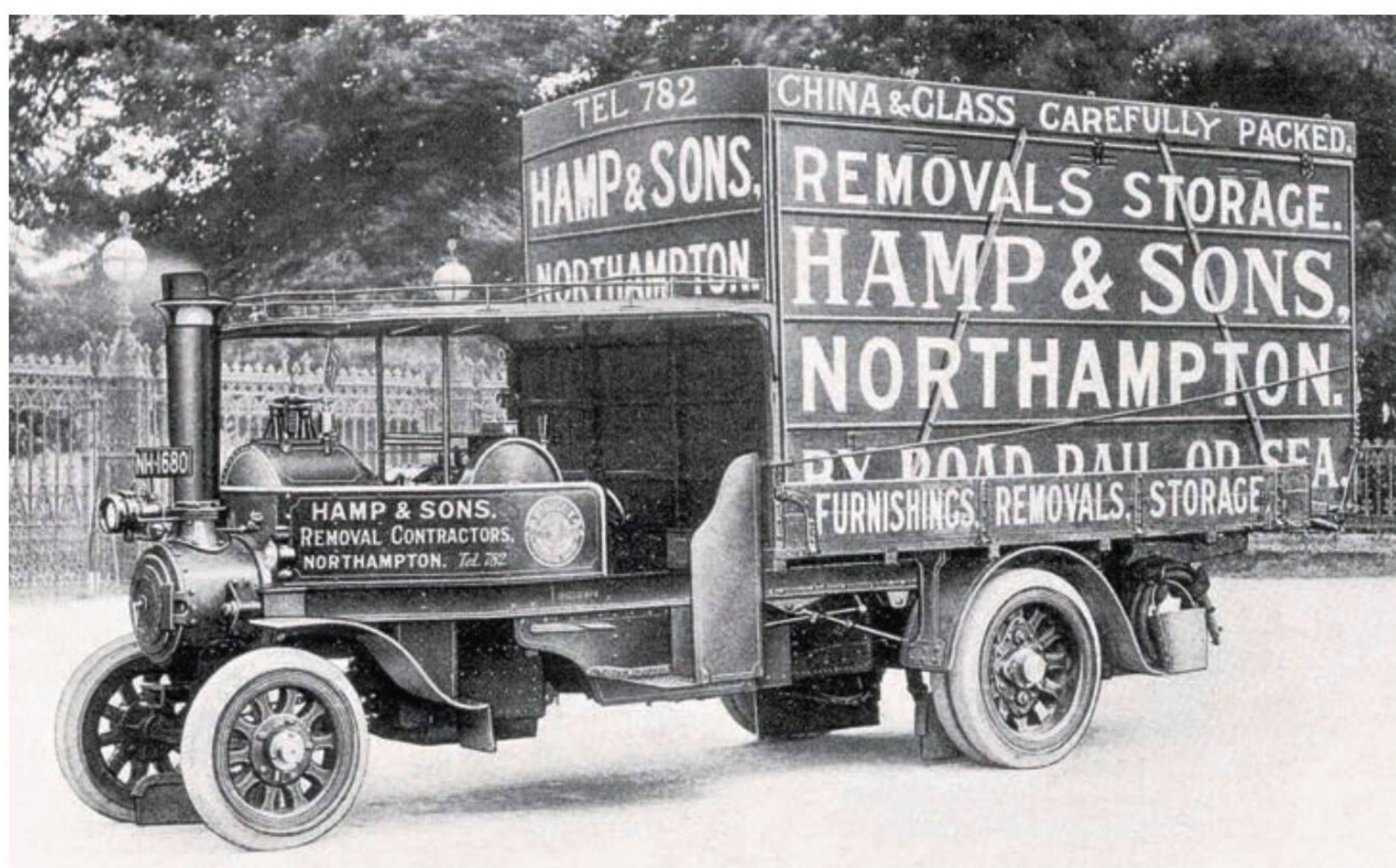
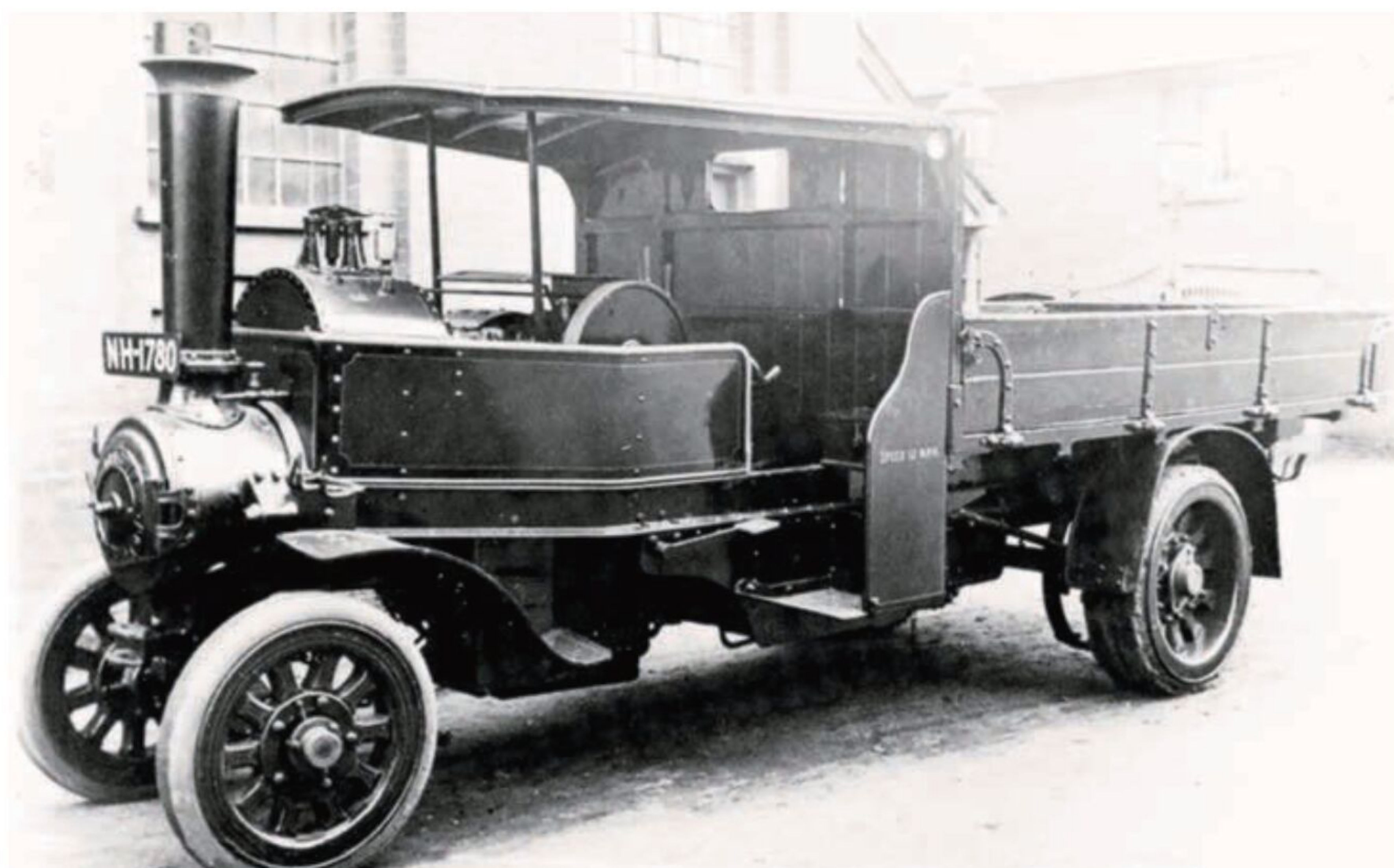


Fig. 7. Three-ton wagon No. 228 fitted with Baully wooden wheels. Their container would not have been used on railway journeys as the sideboards attached to the roof would definitely put it out of gauge.



Three-ton overtypewagon No. 287. Although not yet lettered and lined it must have been ready for delivery to have had its photo taken. Perhaps it was wanted for war work as it was 1915.

STEAM WAGONS

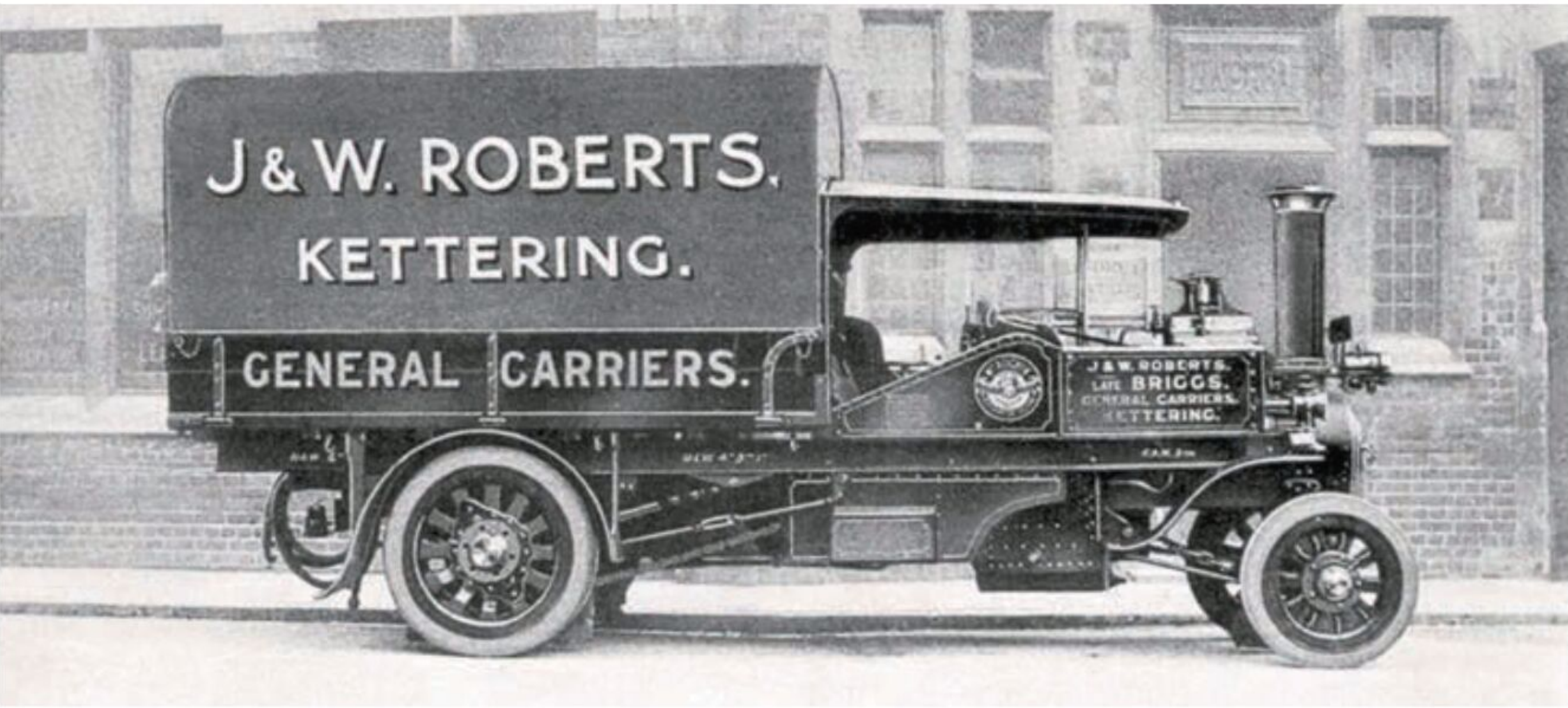


Fig. 9. Three-ton wagon No. 299 was bought by J&W Roberts after taking over the firm of Briggs of Kettering.

Fig. 9 shows 3-ton overtype wagon No. 299, which was built on Monday June 5, 1916, receiving the registration NH 1840 and sold to J&W Roberts of Kettering, Northants. Although a drop-sided wagon, it is carrying what appears to be a non-standard container, probably easily removable to enable the wagon to be used for other purposes. By 1923 she had been sold to Fred Smith & Sons of Belvedere, Kent, its last recorded owner before being scrapped in 1934.

Here's a line-up of three of Hall & Co's Allchin wagons (Fig. 10). They were all 3-tonners, works numbers (from left) No. 696 of March 15, 1918; No. 1501 of July 31, 1919 and No. 1094 of December 2, 1919. Hall & Co were very good customers, indeed they were Allchin's best customer, having bought their first wagon in November 1917 and their last in June 1924, during which time they had purchased 24 vehicles from them.

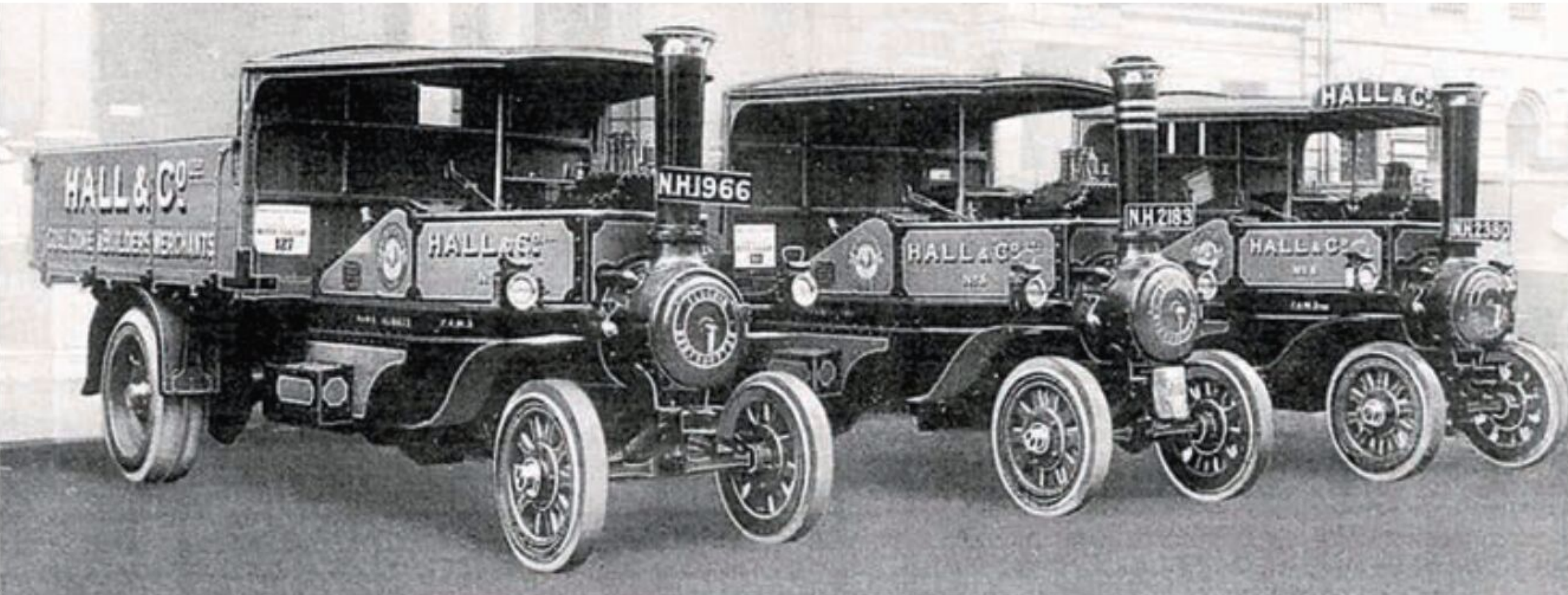


Fig. 10. Hall & Co's wagons Nos. 696, 1051 and 1694. It would seem that they are entering an event of some kind as they have entry number sheets on the right hand side of their cabs. Regrettably the rest of the wording is too small to read.

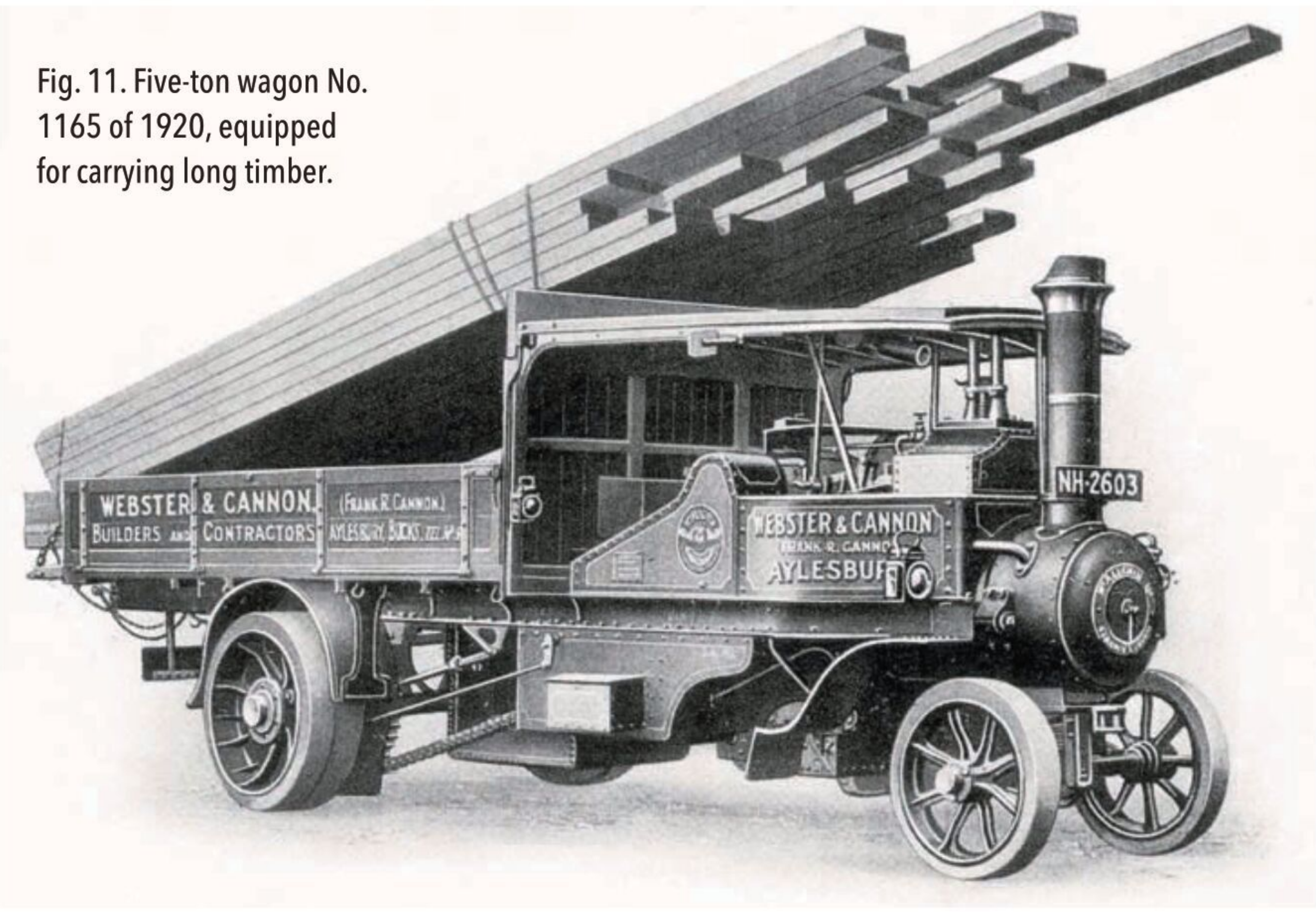


Fig. 11. Five-ton wagon No. 1165 of 1920, equipped for carrying long timber.

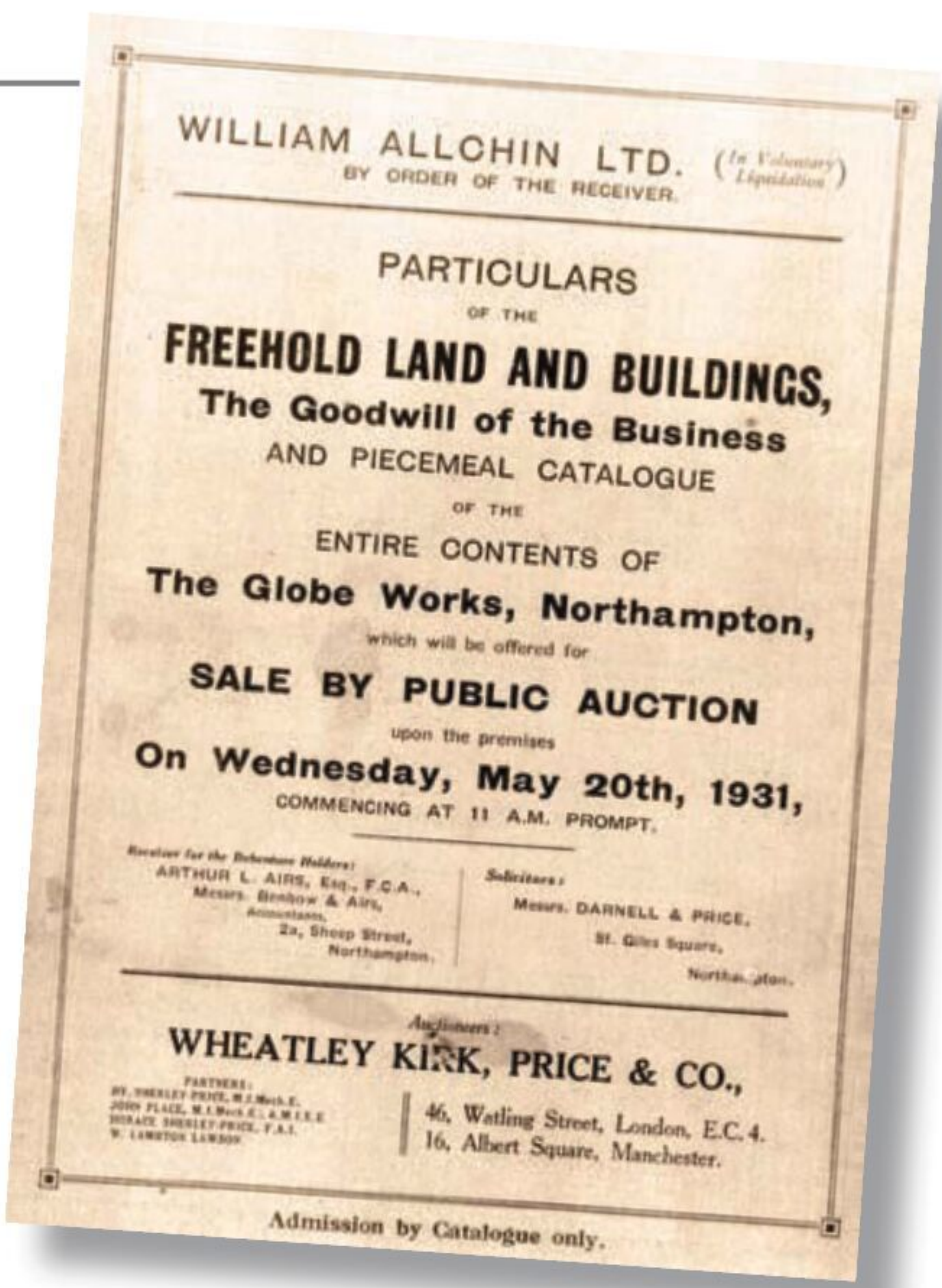


Fig. 12. The end: cover of the Allchin works and equipment auction catalogue of May 20, 1931.

Fig. 11 shows 5-ton wagon No. 1165, which was built on Monday April 6, 1920, and registered NH 2603. It sold to Webster & Cannon of Aylesbury, Bucks. On a date not recorded (but guessing in the 1930s) it was sold to dealer George Taylor of Redbourn, where it was converted to a tractor. The date of scrapping is not recorded.

Allchins may have been a small company in wagon terms and like so many other steam engine builders they became set in their ways and could not adapt to the intricacies of the internal combustion engine, indeed many of them had no wish to be involved with this new mode of propulsion.

So the inevitable happened on Wednesday May 20, 1931, when the firm was sold at public auction (Fig. 12).

Altogether there were 264 lots. Lot 240A was stated as a 6-ton steam wagon with a 3-way tipping body 10ft 9in by 7ft by 2ft high, fall sides and end cast steel road wheels with solid rubber tyres.

Another interesting lot, No. 242, was an old Aveling & Porter 7hp traction engine 'with wheels' – again no works number was quoted.

What intrigues me most is an item that is included under the heading of the goodwill of the business: 'The drawings, records and sketches, all the recent drawings etc, are stored in a 15-drawer fireproof plan chest, embracing details of current models'. 'A quantity of shop tracings on rollers and a collection of older drawings' and then a mouth-watering statement: 'Bound catalogues and leaflets, a varied assortment can be inspected in the loft over offices.'

It would be wonderful to know what eventually happened to all these items, but I guess we'll never know. ■