

A Working Engine

Tim Keenan tells of a National gas engine which is still being used.

I first heard of National oil engine Type O.B. serial number 42433 some nine or ten years ago when a friend, with whom I was working at the time, said.. "I know where there is an old engine — and it's still working!"

The National, rated at 16hp and built in 1933, had been purchased second-hand, some 40 years ago, by the well established local building firm of Harry Cro Ltd., Grange Works, High Street, Minster, near Ramsgate, East Kent. The National apparently replaced a Richard Hornsby lamp start oil engine which drove the six or seven wood working machines that are still in daily use in the firm's wood working shop. The Hornsby was removed because it was thought that the blowlamp tended to be a fire hazard as the engine house is situated near to the wood store.

As far as is known, the National was last serviced in 1958/9 by a chap who worked on marine engines. A new set of rings was fitted, the valves reground and general wear on the bearings was taken up.

The engine is painted in National dark green with the name picked out in gold with black background on the left hand side of the crankcase. It is of the cold starting heavy oil type with 4ft x 6ins, and black painted flywheel with an outrigger bearing. It is always started with two starting handles, one on each crank end, so two men are required for this purpose.

Mr Philip Cro, the present proprietor of the firm, told me... "We've had no trouble with power cuts. Although we do not work the engine every day, we do start it up. It has always been most reliable." During the severe winter of 1986 the engine's water cooling pipes and tanks froze solid, as did the cylinder head. Fortunately this type of National has a piece of flat round plate acting as the head with the injector bolted directly to it. So it was not difficult to fabricate a replacement. However, the engine was frosted yet again in the bad weather which the whole country experienced in January 1987. Again the pipework was damaged but this time the cylinder block

Top Right: *The wooden shed which houses the National in Cro's yard. Note the cooling tanks and high exhaust outlet.*

Centre Right: *The machine wood working shop at H. Cro Ltd. houses six or seven machines which the National still drives.*

Bottom Right: *The new cylinder head plate can clearly be seen.*

