

NEWSLETTER 90 : Oct 2020

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Editorial

Sitting in Frank's garden on a sunny afternoon, I have to confess that I was bitten by the garden railway bug. We don't have a large garden, and much is flagged and decked, but there is about enough space for a small oval. The



management has given her permission and construction is planned to commence shortly.

The target is to start running trains by spring, but as with all major infrastructure projects, delays and going over budget are inevitably par for the course. Indeed the costs have already

started to spiral, with the purchase of a bridge - which I have been given to understand is an essential feature on any garden railway.

Andrew Chrysler

Events Diary.

There is a weekly "zoom" meeting. The link for this meeting is sent by email each week. Please be certain to use the current link, old ones will not work.

Chairman's Notes.

Well, I really did think that we might have eventually been able to meet at the clubrooms later this autumn for a sort of social event, albeit socially distanced and wearing appropriate protection. However, it looks as though that is now impossible and will be that way for some time. Indeed, I believe we should limit the number of people in the building at any one time. Please take note of the national and local rules (which seem to be changing almost daily) regarding numbers of people allowed to meet and comply with them.

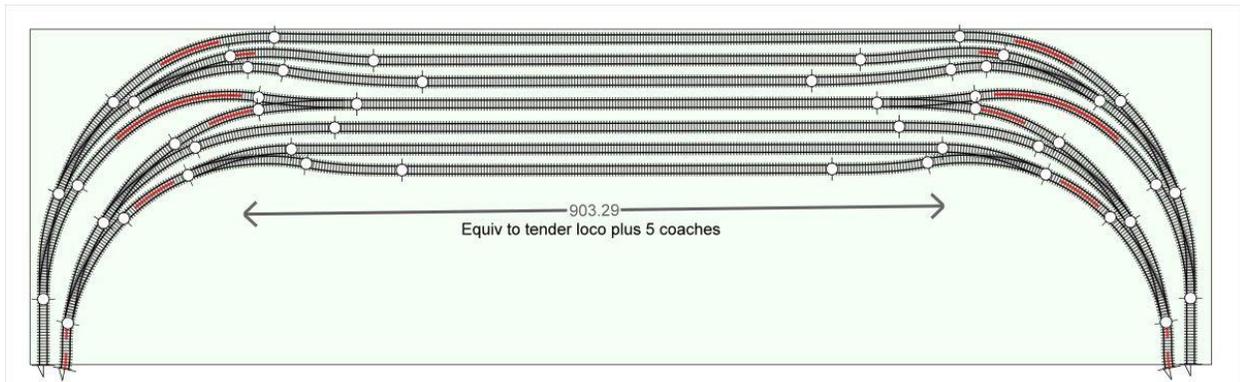
Back to club activities. It is very nice to see so many of our members making use of our virtual meetings via zoom. It would be great to see the few who have not attempted to meet by that format. If you are unsure of what to do, please give me a call and I will try to lead you through the technology - it really is quite simple although a little more difficult for the host (me) when I struggle to see the writing on the laptop screen.

I would like to welcome to the Club a new member, Ken Peers. Ken was introduced by Colin and is a N gauge modeller. I have also been in contact with Paul Jackson who we have not seen at the Club largely due to the Covid restrictions and Paul's heavy workload. Hopefully we will meet him shortly on our zoom platform.

At long last I have updated our membership booklet and hope to get this out to you within the next couple of weeks or so. You will recall that over the summer months I have been copying to you (via a link) various railway themed photographs that have appeared in our newspaper. Unfortunately over the last month this sort of photograph has dried up. Has the editor changed from a railway buff to someone more interested in nature?

The club has a couple of small layouts (Shell Cove and Clairmont Old Quay) that will fit into the back of a car and so can be offered to local exhibitions/fetes etc (whenever this sort of activity starts up again). However, Shell Cove has always caused a bit of a problem in the fiddle yard area (intermittent derailments, problems with the points and some inflexibility in operation). We have always wondered how to improve this situation but the geometry of the points available at the time made any

changes difficult. I understand that PECO now make a curved point in N gauge setrack (2nd and 3rd radii) which appears to fit the bill. I had a play around using Anyrail design software and it appears that we could have a fiddle yard with 7 roads (3 in the up direction, 3 in the down direction and a single bidirectional road with the longest road accommodating a 5 coaches and a tender loco, as shown in the diagram below.



I think this is worth a further look. Unfortunately this will require 14 points at a cost of £150-£200. Reducing the number of roads to 5 would save 4 points. It all depends on how generous the committee is likely to be with releasing funds.

I think that will be all for now - I need something to write about next month!!

Ian Shulver

Secretary's Notes.

Well, I'm still attending the clinic to have my leg wound dressed (sustained at the clubroom in mid-August) but it is beginning to heal although may take another month, as it is down to 3cm across. However, I am also pleased to report that I have achieved much more effective hearing aids following transfer to the Aintree Audiology department. I'm beginning to feel like Private Godfrey in more ways than one.

The last couple of weeks I have attended Eastbank Lane at around 2000 on Tuesday for about an hour to run some of my trains. Although I have a large layout in my cellar, it is really a collection of secondary lines set vaguely in the West Country so it isn't really able to offer much scope for highballing – at over 40 years old with handbuilt track on traditional boards, it is also showing its age a bit.

Anyway, last week I ran my Kernow Gateway stock and O2, Oxford Adams Radial and Hornby push-pull Maunsell All rtr stuff. I already have some kit-built versions of the same prototypes in different liveries. I will be trialling these in the next few weeks, but my first thoughts are that the new stuff has serious problems with the skin of rice puddings, although it looks perfect!

I have put some video of both of this week's runs on our WhatsApp group for those of you who access this. I have been attending at club time on Tuesdays and as long as you come with masks, I don't see why a couple of others couldn't also attend and enjoy the wonderful environment which Barry, Rowan, Frank, Colin, Graham, Ian, and others have created.

This week it was the turn of a Heljan Night Owl and my class 89. The former is quite heavy and may pass the rice pudding test (when I fit the couplings!) and the latter had no issue with all of the club coaches as it is built on a traditional Hornby chassis and is also quite weighty. The class 89 is from a class of one built by BR and then retired as the production run never happened and was briefly reactivated by GNER in the late nineties. I was based in Leeds at the time and quite often had to travel to KX and used to watch out to see if I was going to get Avocet. I think it suffered the rare distinction for a train of being named by Mrs Thatcher (eek!).

Meantime, in my garden railway during the fine weather I have been working on installing barriers around my 3 foot gauge line. On one famous occasion, a train of Accucraft Isle of Man coaches was captured on video following "Old 97" over the edge. And on another occasion I had to sprint after and save a Baldwin in steam when the tender with all the r/c gear detached. I will do the same on the more vulnerable parts of the 2 foot gauge as well. Fortunately I have a good stock of oak floorboards salvaged from the house conversion.

I have notified a number of sources that our exhibition this November has been deferred but that we hope to hold one next year which will focus on members' work during lockdown.

Jim Ford

Where's Andrew?

We had two correct answers for "Where's Andrew?" last month. Tony Kuivala was first with his answer, the North Bay Railway at Scarborough, despite my

using a misleading clue, the loco number, which was not on the photograph used. I suppose that I should really wear my reading glasses when working on the newsletter. Honorable mention to Ian Shulver who was also correct.



"Big Phil" was good enough to escort me to the train shed across the tracks, and started the oldest one, a Diesel built in 1931 to move it into the light for a better photograph. Big Phil isn't particularly large, but the name was to distinguish him from the other Phil, "Furloughed Phil" who wasn't there at the time. There are no prizes for guessing why Furloughed Phil wasn't at work.



This month I am remembering those days when cruise travel was possible with a picture of this excursion train.

We were joined for the journey by a local choir on these distinctive double deck carriages before catching a minibus back to our ship. The ride was somewhat shaky -

especially on the top deck - but perhaps that can be put down to the effect of the Rum Punch.

The Shimla to Kalka Toy Train

Ian Shulver

I recently had an opportunity to view part 1 of Peter's video of the excursion that he and other members of our Club made to India and the Himalayan

Darjeeling Railway in 2011 and this reminded me of a visit we made a few years earlier in 2008. As well as visiting the usual places of interest around New Delhi, part of the tour was to Shimla and a journey on the Heritage Toy Train from there to Kalka. Like the HDR the Shimla Toy Train goes from the northern plains of India into the foothills of the Himalayas but is on the western side of the country. The attached maps show the location of Shimla and Darjeeling.



Barog station



Shimla, like Darjeeling, was one of the hill stations where the British Raj repaired to during the summer months to escape the oppressive heat of Delhi and other administrative centres. But back in the late c19 or early c20

the only sensible means of travel was by train. However, the foothills of the Himalayas was not ideal territory for standard gauge trains and so the tradition of building narrow gauges railways from a railhead on the 'lowlands' up to the pleasant hill stations came about.

The railhead for Shimla is Kalka and from there the line climbs for some 96 kilometres gaining over 4800ft in altitude over this distance.



The rather fine entrance to Barog Tunnel.



Kumarhattidagshaj station (altitude 5118ft) and another train on its way to Shimla.

The Shimla- Kalka Railway was initially proposed in 1891 but construction did not start until 1901. It was completed in 1903 during Lord Curzon's reign as Viceroy and Governor-General of India. The gauge of the railway was 2' 6" (762mm) and over the course of its 96km journey it passes through 103 tunnels (although one of these is not in service), the longest being *Barog* at 1.1km.



Jutogh signal box and station conveniences.



Bridge 83. Most of them are on curves, some even on reverse curves

There are also over 950 bridges and viaducts but oddly enough there are no girder bridges on the line with only one plate girder span and one steel trestle. Many of the viaducts are multi-arched with up to five levels and resemble in style Roman aqueducts. The ruling gradient of the line is 1 in 33 and less than one third of the line has straight track – many of the curves are extremely tight, the tightest having a radius of 122ft. There are twenty stations.



Another elegant four storey arched viaduct on one of the loops.



At the head of one of the loops on the steep decent close to [Kalka](#)

In the early years regauged 0-4-0 locos from DHR were used but were not powerful enough and soon retired to be replaced by slightly larger 0-4-2T engines manufactured by Sharp Stewart. These were quickly followed by a large purchase of 2-6-2T from Hunslet and which handled most of the rail traffic during the steam period.



A museum piece, but what was it originally used for – would not be able to pull much up a 1:30 gradient!



One of the railcars, believed to still be used.

In 1928 a pair of 2-6-2+2-6-2 locomotives were purchased. These were very powerful locomotives and could haul long goods trains. However, for commercial reasons they were soon regauged and transferred to the Kangra Valley Railway in Pakistan. Steam operation finished in 1971. Diesel locomotives made their first appearance in 1955 with an articulated model. Currently locomotives are diesel-hydraulic. Railcars have also been used on the line.

Shimla station is situated on the side of a relatively steep hillside and is at an altitude of 6811ft with the town perched precariously around it. The part of the town that we saw had a very English feel to it – including a very English church, a town square, cafes and ‘proper’ shops. From the promenade around the square there were stupendous views to both the north and south.



Looking towards Shimla station (just out of sight)



Carriage shed from station

Still Here

Like a lot of clubs, SMRS has been serving a vital purpose providing “fellowship” for its membership during the lockdown and continues to do so within the restrictions in place for social gathering. Either through the regular Zoom meetings or smaller, socially-distanced meet-ups, it’s been good to stay in touch. However, this activity does not address the need we have for interaction with the outside World and recruitment of new members.

I would be very surprised if, during the recent months, a number of ex-modellers haven’t discovered old train sets, collections in the loft or even old layouts that have been stored away for many a day. There will also be people who have transitioned from work to Furlough to retirement or simply

Barry Miltenburg

just stopped working and who have found railways/model-making as a hobby in their new circumstances. And of course there will be younger enthusiasts who are discovering model trains for the first time.

To reach out to these people, a number of clubs are holding **Virtual Exhibitions** – a collection of video clips posted online showing off the talents of their membership. In some cases, “guest” layouts have been included. I would like to propose that we give this some serious thought. I am happy to use my limited “Movie Maker” skills to edit the whole thing together, adding an appropriate sound-track providing that the members are able to come up with the video clips.

We have Monsal Dale of course and it would be easy for me to do a guided tour of the club rooms to show our facilities (I might ignore the loo!). Claremont Quay and Fishy Tales as a W.I.P. plus some footage of something running on the test tracks upstairs could also be added.

Member’s layouts, both indoor and outdoor, would provide useful content as would a feature on Ian’s hotel building and some of Derek’s whimsical pieces to prove that we know how to enjoy ourselves. The location of the layouts would present no barrier (Malcolm’s layout may be many miles away but easy to include) and we can put the footage together at our own pace rather than trying to meet the usual exhibition (mad) deadlines. We probably know a few modellers between us so a couple of “guest” layouts might be a possibility.

I presume that we have the ability to post videos on our website. There is no point using YouTube because our intended audience is local. Our good relationship with The Champion will ensure that we can get some “Advertorial” column inches both ahead of and after the release date of the footage. Directing interested parties to our website for the “exhibition” also gives us the chance to fill in around the edges with pictures of our overseas trips, past activities and the usual contact details.

This might sound a strange suggestion from a member whose own layout currently resides in boxes and paper-plans but I am more than happy to contribute as editor/encourager or even cameraman. If nothing else, if Fishy Tales can be made to run, I can contribute some rolling stock!!

Farewell to the Class 483

Andrew Chrysler

While flicking through the newsletter archive, I came across an article from October last year written by Peter Mills detailing his visit to the Isle of Wight, and this reminded me of my visit in August this year, when we took a last



ride on the 1938 ex-London Underground stock which is destined for replacement this winter.

We were staying in Shanklin, and rode to Ryde Pier, where there is a Costa coffee shop, with the intention of pausing for lunch. Coronavirus, however, had different ideas, the Costa is currently operating as a take-away only, with much of the seating area in use to provide socially distanced queueing for the ferries.



When I explained that our journey was not to continue to Portsmouth by ferry, a helpful ticket collector directed us to a sheltered bench in a quiet location where we drank our coffees and waited for the next train back.



We stopped for lunch at Ryde Esplanade, and by this time, the rain had stopped, and we enjoyed fish and chips in the sunshine, which was brief - but well timed, as the rain started again while we were waiting for our return train. The second photograph shows the considerable curvature of the platform at Ryde esplanade, which - along with the Ryde tunnel - are the main factors limiting the choice of rolling stock.

We will be visiting the Isle of Wight again next August, when we hope to ride in more comfort on the newer Class 484, which are based on 1978-81 ex-London Underground trains originally manufactured by Metropolitan Cammell and rebuilt by Vivarail, of which a total of five 2-car units are on order.



Arrangements are in hand for preservation of the Class 483, with the "London Transport Traction Group" declaring an intention to run one on the Epping Ongar Railway in Essex, utilising an on board power supply.

The Isle of Wight Steam Railway announced in 2017 that they intend to preserve some part of a unit as a static

exhibit, but their plans may well have changed, although nothing concrete has been announced, but - finally - the Isle of Wight Steam Railway will be able to boast of having older trains than the main line.



Nine Years Ago

October 2011 was the date of the Club's very first newsletter, which reported on an Illustrated Talk given by Ian Shulver on the "Comberow Incline" in Somerset, the first outing of "Monsal Dale" in its "finished" state and a report with this photograph of the recent (38th) Exhibition.

And Finally...

Jim Ford recently contributed to the letters page of the Liverpool Echo, and whilst not directly railway themed, it is transport related (and indeed many of Lusitania's passengers would have travelled by train to the docks) and he has offered it for this month's "And Finally" feature.

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Story of 'Lusy' would be major blockbuster

TUESDAY'S article about Kevin Roach's new book on the Lusitania ('Human stories behind the sinking of the Lusitania', 22 September) highlights a fascinating story which has yet to feature in a major film.

Titanic films have been hugely successful, not least for the associated cities, but although many of Titanic's salons were from Liverpool, the American owned White Star Line had already moved its operations to Southampton.

By contrast, Lusitania and her sister, Mauretania, not as new or quite as large as Titanic, were the world's fastest and sailed from our own Pier Head where visiting cruise liners tie up.

Lusitania's story is Liverpool's own, and what a cracker it is - the intrigue of German threats and spies aboard and Churchill's role who failed to despatch a cruiser and the Admiralty preventing that cruiser from rescuing passengers after she sank in just 15 minutes - not much longer than it takes an airliner to crash out of the sky.

The sinking took place exactly one hundred years to the day before David Cameron's 2015 election (nuff said), resulting in the cancellation of the commemorative lunch at St George's Hall with the same menu that Lusy's passengers (her Liverpool nickname) had enjoyed just minutes before the

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Dr Jim Ford, Southport

torpedo struck.

Not only are the stories about the ship and its sinking very dramatic, but her enigmatic captain, Bill Turner is a fascinating character himself.

A gruff and taciturn Scouser, known as Bowler Bill for his habit (acquired in sailing ships), of going ashore in his Captain's uniform with a bowler hat to emphasise his authority, he is alleged to have summoned the Chairman of the line to his Day Cabin to complain about the ship's defects.

Imagine an airline pilot, however senior, summoning Willie Walsh or Michael O'Leary to the flight deck before take-off? But Turner was a hero decorated twice for humane rescues, once diving into a dock to rescue

somebody from drowning.

His grumpy manner - as compared with his smarmy peers, endeared Bill to passengers (whom he nonetheless referred to as 'the animals') and to deepen the mystery further, he dined at his favourite German restaurant in Manhattan before he sailed on that fateful crossing.

His character would be a perfect role for our Ricky Tomlinson, but with the city's newly found status as an international film producer, this creates the perfect opportunity to tell this very Liverpool story of the 'Lusy', in which our own streets could play themselves and provide a post-Covid launch for the new cruise terminal.

As a former merchant seaman himself, maybe Mayor Anderson himself could pick this potential city blockbuster up with Littlewoods and other studios via the Liverpool Film Office?

Dr Jim Ford, Southport