



Newsletter

Issue 51: June 2017 Editor: Allan Trotter
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Editorial.

Now that the weather has shown some improvement, it is tempting to think that Summer may actually be with us. So when you are away on any interesting excursions, take some brief notes and a few pictures so that you may share your experiences with other members. A mighty tome is not required, just a short article. As mentioned before, please do not embed images within the document or email; send them as individual jpeg files.



On a recent excursion in April we enrolled on a tour named "Gulf Stream Isle" with Ava Travel of Leyland to the Isle of Man. Included on the tour was a round trip journey on a Douglas Horse Tram to the Manx Electric Railway station, then from Douglas to Laxey by MER and then on to Snaefell Summit by the Snaefell Mountain Railway. Completing the railway experience, there was a journey from Douglas to Port Erin on the only remaining part of the Isle of Man Railway. The lines that once existed to St. Johns, Foxdale, Peel and the Manx Northern to Ramsay have long since been abandoned. It is astonishing to find that so little has changed on the Isle of Man since the last visit there in 1975. Road traffic density still seems to be at 1975 levels, almost all car parking is free and there is no evidence of any SS (Sefton Stasi) type jobsworths preying on unsuspecting visitors. The most retrograde thing noted was that the famous Yates's Wine Lodge is now some kind of financial institution. At the Douglas MER station we thought we had found one of the famous Manx cats which was sitting watching the trams. However once someone offered it a Dreamie, it stood up, meowed and wagged its tail, it was discovered that this was not the case. Anyway, a visit to the Isle of Man is to be thoroughly recommended. **Allan Trotter.**

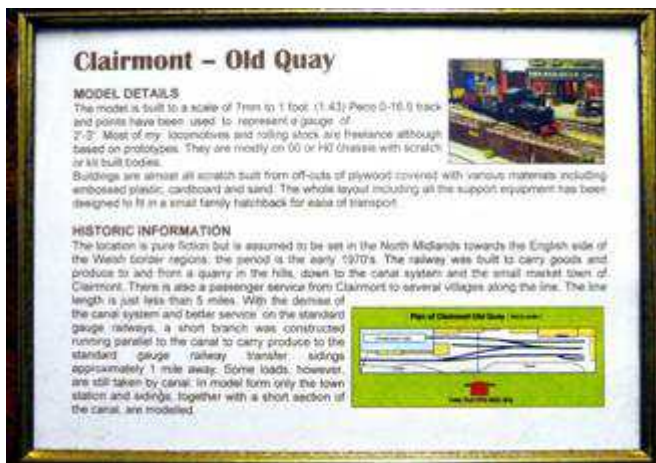
Chairman's report.

Since the last newsletter was issued, we have had our first Spring Exhibition. Like the Autumn show, this was a great success and enjoyed by all. We seem to have hit on a winning formula with these one day shows, a family orientated one before Christmas and a more serious modellers' one just before summer gets going. Please put the following dates in your diary for our next shows, the **18th November 2017** and the **28th April 2018**. Our grateful thanks go to all those who helped out on the day and especially to Terry (for organising the layouts), Jim (for back office work), David (catering), Allan and Frank (sales stand) and not least to all the exhibitors who generously gave their time. In terms of the sales stand, we had been fortunate over the last year in amassing a large amount of stock, most of which has now gone, so the bottom line at future shows may not be quite as fantastic.

Clairmont Old Quay.



Another item of good news it that through the generosity of the late Trevor Foster's estate we now have a 7mm scale narrow gauge layout, Clairmont Old Quay. This is a beautiful little layout, built to an extremely high standard that was on the exhibition circuit in the late nineteen nineties but has not been seen for fifteen years or so. It came complete with stock and controllers so it really is a 'ready to run' layout, although we do need to provide a few cables as well as some nuts and bolts to get it operational. As soon as there has been more progress by the contractors on the clubroom building, we hope to erect it and have some running sessions.



Electronics for Model Railways.

Have you ever wondered what diodes, transistors, bus wires, current, voltage etc are (just to name a few technical terms) and how you might put this knowledge to good usage on your layout. Well all is explained in a book called *Electronics for Model Railways* by David Dick. This is not just any book; it does not exist in WH Smith or Waterstones but as an eBook on the MERG website. Of great interest, it is free to download. There are three parts with a total download size of just over 40Mb in pdf format and running to 22 chapters over almost 500 pages. It explains all the basics of electricity and electronics and how it is applied to model railways as well as providing a number of projects such as traffic lights, servo controllers etc. The download can be found at: <https://www.merg.org.uk/ebook.php>

This is a useful adjunct to Allan Trotter's model railway electrics articles to be found at: <http://www.eastbank.org.uk/circuits.htm> **Ian Shulver.**

Secretary's report.

The AGM proceeded uneventfully on 12th May at the Scarisbrick Bowling Club. Due to a number of apologies, the numbers were down sufficiently that we ran the meeting Board Room style around tables and it certainly worked better for those of us who are deaf as a post.

None of the Committee positions were contested and the outcome is as follows:-

Chairman: Ian Shulver

Deputy Chairman: Allan Trotter

Secretary: Jim Ford

Treasurer: David Reames

Ordinary Committee Member: Ian Graham

There remains the opportunity for another member to join the Committee.

All of the re-elected officers confirmed their willingness to stand aside in future if "new blood" comes forward.

Terry Tasker accepted the renewal of his position of Spring Exhibition Co-ordinator.

It was once more noted that although the club has a positive bank balance that this was substantially due to the recent successful exhibitions and especially the sales stands. Some further discussion took place around how to improve membership numbers and other regular income.

Interest from member was expressed in external visits to neighbouring clubs as well as heritage and miniature railways near and far.

Since the AGM, modest progress on "Fishy Tales" has continued, with three new curved points being installed at one end of the fiddle yard to ease the dog leg, without further comprising the length of trains that can be held. This was especially satisfying as it proved possible to do this without needing to consider the earlier idea of singling the track 'Saltash style' at this point.

Once more we have been the beneficiary of gifts following the sad demise of our friends. In this case we have been given a whole exhibition-style layout complete with bespoke hand built rolling stock, created by the late Trevor Foster who will be better known to the GOL community for his outdoor layout. The layout, "Clairmont Old Quay" is in On16.5, a gauge that has not been seen by our club before, allowing the use of OO gauge mechanisms and wheels with 7mm gauge scenic items. It is in my view, one of the best of this genre, having been exhibited widely in the north-west about ten to fifteen years ago. We haven't assembled it yet (fingers crossed) but the layout comes complete with a high quality controller and automatic shuttle. Trevor's widow Carletta wanted the layout to go to a good home and it is a layout which is easily transportable and suitable for us to exhibit locally or even further afield.

Later this week a number of Southport members will be embarking on the annual "Sleeper Trip" which this year is visiting London, Inverness, Aberdeen, then by sea via Kirkwall to Lerwick in the Shetland Isles where a special tour

has been arranged. We then fly south to Glasgow, then for two nights in Dunoon before sailing home to Liverpool aboard Boudicca with two of our wives joining us for the "Party night".

Coming up shortly is Woodvale Rally on 17th and 18th of June, so if you want to attend and help with the Southport MRS display, then do get in contact with myself or another club officer. **Jim Ford.**

Treasurer's report.

No report.

Exhibition Co-ordinator's report.

No report.

Back to the Future?



On first examination of this picture it may be assumed that the image was captured some forty years ago in 1977. In reality all that was needed was a digital camera, no DeLorean DMC-12 was required. The date of this image is actually the 12th of May 2017 and the location is Preston Station. The locomotive was amongst other vintage vehicles with

the West Coast Railways Mk.2 Pullman charter train. Perhaps the British Rail colour scheme is a foretaste of things to come? **Allan Trotter.**

Visit to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, 13th May 2017.

Breakfast in the County Hotel in Carlisle started at 08:00 and since we were intending to catch the 09:24 train to Keighley, an orderly queue formed by those requiring sustenance. Then on to the station to purchase tickets where we were pleasantly informed that a special Rail Ranger day ticket was available for the Settle & Carlisle Line for the princely sum of £9.90 with a senior railcard. At the platform our carriage, actual a single two car Class 158 DMU awaited. Once the doors were released, positions were taken up around the table seats. A trolley service boarded at Appleby and advantage was taken of tea, coffee and even soup, the latter being excellent. The trolley service departed at Settle.

Arriving on time at Keighley at 11:37 we had eight minutes to transfer to our 11:45 connection on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway for the five mile journey to Oxenhope. Despite this apparently tight connecting time, this was accomplished without difficulty. Tickets for a round trip were purchased, £10.00 for us seniors. The train was made up of Mk.1 vehicles with 2 TSO,

RMB, 2 TSO and a BSO in the consist. After settling into a TSO, it made us really appreciate the comfort and spaciousness of properly designed long distance locomotive hauled passenger vehicles, in complete contrast to the cramped high density commuter style seating of the Class 158 units that are supposed to be suitable for Inter-City services. I surmise that the present day traveller has become accustomed to the veal crate like condition on aeroplanes and now accept this as the norm on long distance trains too.

After some delay due to the late working of a maintenance train we arrived at Oxenhope where, once the locomotive had run around the train, we were back off to Haworth where a break of just over an hour was enjoyed. The it was back to the luxury of a Mk.1 BSO for the short journey back to Keighley. It is a pity that the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway Company is not a registered mainline Train Operating Company and permitted to continue on with their excellent Mk.1 vehicles to Carlisle. Perhaps the quality and spacious comfort of the Mk.1 carriages would embarrass the management at Northern Rail?

Anyway, back to reality and at 15:12 it was time to get the shoehorn out and squeeze into the table seating of a Class 158. One thing though, it does ensure that you are on very friendly terms with your fellow passengers. This time there was no catering provided and an announcement from a dining car steward calling out "First sitting for afternoon tea" was but a faint memory of journeys past. We arrived at Carlisle on time at 17:28 after a pleasant run over the scenic Settle & Carlisle Line. **Allan Trotter.**

A Groucho goes gricing.

In my youth, during those dark days which followed after Dr Beeching, when we thought that the railways were going to disappear altogether, the magazines had regular features on the railways of South America which in those days were fully intact, still run with British equipment and usually steam powered. A recent expedition to Buenos Aires and thence a voyage via Patagonia, Cape Horn and then up the West Coast of South America through the Chilean fjords and Valparaiso to Lima therefore provided an opportunity to see what had survived.

Regrettably I have to advise that as a network the railways have substantially disappeared from the continent, outside of the major conurbations.



There is an extensive suburban network in Buenos Aires and a cut and cover metro system rather like those that exist in Belgium, for which the main difficulty is finding sufficient change to buy tickets in this country with rip-roaring inflation (the metro is about the only place that is not desperate to be paid in green dollars). The suburban network appears to have two gauges - broad gauge and possibly metre gauge, and I got a few photographs and a brief video before being stopped by the security staff at the Retiro station.

A short and experimental tramway in the rejuvenated docklands area had ceased operation with the loaned Madrid tramcar covered by a tarpaulin. There were buses everywhere and 12 lane highways with levels of atmospheric pollution that must be causing considerable cancer, lung and heart disease in this most elegant capital city, ruled by a president who seems to be progressing by the minute, to the sort of dictatorship which is par for the course for the continent. The cause for all of the country's economic ills appears to be the continuing occupation of the Falkland Islands by the British, even though we fought to get them back 23 years ago and have maintained a presence in the islands since 1819 - just three years after Argentina managed to shake off its Spanish rule.



Travelling south we spotted a delightful Welsh station in Gaiman where the Welsh Dragon flies alongside the Argentinian flag, but the last train ran in 1961 in Welsh Patagonia and a Beyer Peacock locomotive is rusting away on a plinth at Puerto Madryn. They still speak Welsh, however and hold an eisteddfod and we were treated to a very mean Welsh tea following our visit to a penguin colony (penguin is actually a Welsh word).



A different type of colony was experienced in Tierra del Fuego, where the railway which once served the prison colony at Ushuaia has been rebuilt as a tourist attraction taking you into the southern tip of the Andes. The railway was re-built to half metre gauge and as such is almost unique in the world which has resulted in some considerable difficulty in obtaining suitable rolling stock. Nevertheless they have managed to equip themselves with two reduced size versions of K-1 and another loco which looks like a reduced version of a Manning Wardle. Overall it was a very enjoyable experience, followed by a return on a catamaran along the Beagle Channel, with plenty of interesting wildlife. Ushuaia is the site of the memorial to the 1983 Falklands/Malvinas deaths so was a particularly insensitive place for Jeremy Clarkson to once more make a fool of himself last December (before he more recently fell on his sword), and in so doing to divert the attention of the entire Argentinian nation from the failings of their current and the former president General Galtieri onto the unprofessionalism of English broadcasters. Unfortunately the prison is no longer accepting admissions.



As we progressed up the western coast of Chile through the magnificent fjords and close to several places where the southern Patagonian ice field (the second largest in the world after Antarctica and Greenland) spills over into the ocean, we saw some evidence of former railways but nothing active. In particular at Puerto Montt (formerly the railhead for the Chilean Lake District and the northern fjords) which was settled by Sudetenland Germans in the 19th century, there were two mogul locomotives, one British and one American, plinthed by the bus station and surrounded by an indian encampment, but with the line stretching hundreds of miles north to Santiago alongside the Pan-

American Highway unused despite several attempts to revive it in recent years.



Even at the delightful and photogenic cliffside city of Valparaiso, with its 15 funicular railways, the previously busy dockside lines are disused although there is an active suburban railway running alongside. The city does however boast a trolley bus service with trolleys that may be the oldest in the world and certainly date back into the 1950s. More entertaining however were the drummers who play in front of the cars halted at traffic lights!

At Arica, the port for La Paz in Bolivia, the rail system to there and Peru, although apparently intact was disused with several plinched locos and the former railway station turned into a museum which was itself closed and derelict. And the folly of such neglect resulting in a monopoly for road transport was confirmed by the picketing of the port by lorry drivers accompanied by a slow procession which prevented local schoolchildren from coming aboard our ship to give a concert.



Finally, after a stopover at General San Martin, the port for Pisco, where a sad little 0-4-0 was plinched in very arid desert conditions at the entrance of the port with no evidence of their having ever been any rails, we arrived at Callao the port for Lima, and again the rail system not disused although still in evidence and once more accompanied by excesses of

pollution and congestion. Overall the continent, like much of North America has yet to rediscover the advantages of rail transport, but there is so much to see of a cultural and historic nature that it is easy to miss the trains, with very

friendly and honest people to make you welcome. Watch out for "Rails of the South – the video".....

(ps Groucho is a slightly derogatory south American term for English speakers; Gricer is a slightly derogatory English term for rail enthusiasts!)

Postscript

The above was written over two years ago and I have since returned briefly to Peru. Whilst there was evidence of continuing petroleum traffic at Callao, the port for Lima, the sad little plinthed 0-4-0 at the port of Paracas (now no longer known as General San Martin) has disappeared, hopefully not as a result of the cutters torch! **Jim Ford.**