

NEWSLETTER 107 : Mar 2022

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Editorial

Andrew Chrysler

It's hard to believe that it was almost two years since we were all placed under "house arrest" with unprecedented restrictions on our ability to travel when and where we pleased, and instead we became - via the medium of television - tourists by proxy. Model railway components, Lego and jigsaws were all in extremely short supply as most of us tried to occupy ourselves throughout the long, long hours between the daily officially sanctioned outside walk (or exercise).

Television programmes such as Susan Calman's "Grand Day Out" and "Grand Week By The Sea", together with Paul O'Grady's "Great British Escapes" became essential viewing during lockdown for us, and once we were allowed out and about again we spent some time visiting parts of the country that they had shown us. We visited "Alpaca Annie" on Romney Marsh where Paul did yoga with the alpacas, but being less flexible, we opted to meet and greet the alpacas from a standing position, and we also rode on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, where getting in and out of the carriages tested my flexibility quite enough.



Susan Calman introduced us to Great Yarmouth, where we spent a few days and enjoyed the Model Village and the Venetian Waterways last year, and in this new series she has returned to Devon.

We had first visited Seaton last year, both for the Seaton Tramway and the Beer Heights Light Railway and have booked to return this year for more of the same, together with the opportunity to drive a tram for a couple of hours, but in this series she visits Babbacombe, where she rides on the Cliff Railway, and we have resolved to extend our Devon visit to include a visit.

It appears there is also a Model Village at Babbacombe, which completes the trio of model villages built by the Dobbins Brothers, the others being Southport and Great Yarmouth.

Already being happy users of Premier Inn hotels we had already booked three nights at Seaton, and after seeing the programme, we have added two nights at Newton Abbot - although there is a Premier Inn in Torquay on the seafront it does not score as well on trip advisor reviews, has no free parking and is substantially more expensive - and in any case it is only a mile or two closer to Babbacombe. The journey home can be broken at their Evesham hotel, making two more manageable journeys of under three hours each.

Tentative plans for later in the year include a visit to Bourton on the Water, again for the model village but also for the Cotswold Motoring Museum. While it is good to be able to travel abroad once again - especially for a dose of well needed sunshine in the middle of winter - I have to admit that the last two summers, where we have been restricted to UK holidays have meant that we have visited some rather interesting places, and sitting in the sun with a good book is clearly no longer the only holiday option for me.

Contributions, Please

Closer to home, my "Article Cupboard" is once again looking decidedly bare, so please consider making a contribution to the next newsletter. Whatever scale you model in - articles about all gauges; Z, N, TT, OO, OO9, O, G, or even the larger "12 inches to the foot" scale are all more than welcome. If you have already contributed, thank you (and - at the risk of sounding like Oliver Twist - can I please have some more) and if you haven't yet contributed, please don't be shy. Just send pictures, text etc to apc253@gmail.com

Exhibition Video

Peter Mills has been in touch and has provided a link to a short video (around 8 minutes) from our exhibition in November.

<https://youtu.be/Qf6k9C-npMs>

Alternatively, you can go to YouTube (either as an app or in your browser - youtube.com) and search for Southport MRS

Zoom Meetings

Ian Shulver sent this screenshot from our zoom meeting on 4th February. He says that he was pleased to see so many members online.



I have just settled down to write the Chairman's notes for this newsletter and realise that I am struggling a little to find something to write about.

I understand that a combination of storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin have caused havoc with the fences between ourselves and our neighbours so I guess one of our tasks over the next weeks will be to repair the damage. However, that will require the efforts of a few able bodies once we can source fence panels, and find a day when it is not too blowy (6ft panels are a bit tricky to handle and slot into the fence posts).

I mentioned last month that we now have one operating 9mm circuit on HS3 and I am pleased to say that the clearances have now been sorted out so that OO9 stock should be able to run on it. Progress with the second circuit is well under way and hopefully should be completed by the time the next newsletter comes out. Although there does not seem to be much progress with scenic work at both ends of HS16.5, work is underway both physical and in the mind. Getting involved with this is a great way to try out your artistic and practical skills, or even learn a bit. The key players in this activity are Colin, Timothy and Graham but, of course, any of you can join in. Ultimately we will be doing the same sort of thing on HS9.

The revamped Fishy Tales (aka Talisker) and now renamed *Talisker a dhà* (or to those without the Gaelic – Talisker 2) is coming along nicely. Those of you who have visited the club recently will have noticed that the OO9 track laying is progressing at speed. Frank is in the process of adding "Slippery Sid" (wire in tube) for point operation. This has not been used on any of the club layouts since the days of Dulverton, some 30 years ago. There are also quite a few "buildings" in place to give a flavour of how the distillery will look like. At some stage Barry will be writing an article to put a bit more flesh on the project. It is hoped that the layout will be able to be presented at our Autumn show, albeit as a work in progress.

Finally, could I please remind those of you who have not yet paid your subscriptions to do so as soon as possible. I draw your attention to the Club's Constitution that states this should be paid by March 31st, but please do not leave it until the last minute.

Where's Andrew?

Last month, I was in Seattle, home to Starbucks coffee, and the coffee shop from "Frasier" - Cafe Nervosa.

The first photo was on the Link (light rail) which, among other routes, runs from the airport to the city centre. The second photo was on the monorail which runs from the city centre to "Seattle Center" which is near to the iconic Space Needle.



As international cruising has now firmly returned, there is (once again) an international flavour to this month's picture. Taken from the upper deck of a cruise ship, this photograph is of a town with a branch line terminus. But where am I?

At a recent get together, a few of us were debating the options and ideas of the new Talisker layout proposal. I was keen to find an attractive juxtaposition for the standard and narrow gauges, someone suggested split levels and a continuous loop to keep something running whilst other ideas included the ability to change the layout's appearance so that we could run "period" and "heritage" stock in different running sessions.

As modellers, all of these ideas make sense but what do the general public want to see? Mrs M is a veteran of many exhibitions and has been both in admiration and critical of layouts featured. Her two key criteria for success? Movement and scenery. It has to move and the scenery must look good.

What moves is largely irrelevant – it could be British, foreign, Thomas, 1860's or modern day – providing it's moving and moving most of the time, it gets a vote. It doesn't even have to move at an appropriate speed – she admits to not knowing enough to be able to comment on whether that coal train is moving at a scale speed or not! Shunting is OK, but locomotives that crawl around as if to show off their creeping ability and then spend an age between forward and reverse shunts are not a winner. Neither does it matter whether the shunt is carried out correctly, whether the engine passes through the goods shed or why the fish wagon ends up in the cattle dock.

Scenery needs to look as if it's a real place. People are her biggest complaint and in the smaller scales, this is always a problem. The fact that the architecture is drawn from 4 counties is not a reason not to like something and attempts to create a regional flavour by using railway architectural style is simply lost on her lay eye. Neither does poor scenery earn a "save" with gimmicks – ducks moving on the pond, that bloke cycling down the lane or the ubiquitous chimney sweep's brush emerging from the chimney pot.

As a modeller, my view is different. I need to see uniformity in trains and although I do not know enough to comment on which Panniers ran on which parts of the GWR system, I can recognise that a "King" hauling a coal train on a branch is plain wrong. Scenery needs to look as if I could live there. I prefer to see trains in the scenery rather than scenery added around the tracks and "atmosphere" is a key component for me.

So as Talisker Distillery (or Carbost perhaps?) develops, should we be trying to please those punters who will be able to detect that our Standard Class 2 2-6-0 is a WR example rather than a Scottish one, those who might know enough to know that we have just switched from "Period" mode to "Heritage" mode because that Hunslet Austerity tank wouldn't normally run with those Mk I coaches, or those want to see something attractive with plenty of movement? I would suggest that we would be hard pressed to keep all three groups happy at the same time.

In my experience, very few people fall into the first group and those that do are often dismissed as "rivet-counters" for whom we choose not to cater. Those in the second and third groups will cover the vast majority of our viewers (that's me and Mrs M). Before we start laying track and cutting up lumps of polystyrene, if you have a different perspective of this question, please do come and tell us – it might save a lot of wasted energy!!

Talisker a Dhà

Talisker Distillery is very real, opened in 1831 by Hugh McAskill on land leased from the Clan MacLeod near to the town of Carbost on the east coast of the Isle of Skye. Rebuilt in 1887 and extended at the end of the century, it survived a serious fire in the early 1960's and was still producing Whisky when a number of our intrepid travelling club members visited a few years ago. Club members recently raised a toast to the late Jim Ford with a dram of Talisker in the clubrooms.



Photo - Visit Scotland

What is less known is the decision made by the Company in the 1860's to build a second distillery (Talisker a dhà) near to Spynie Castle on the River Lossie. The Spey valley saw its first distilling licence in 1824 and rapid expansion followed as a result of the favourable conditions of water, peat and transport links. Talisker a dhà was established just to the east of the Spey producers, drawing water from the slow-flowing River Lossie and using the Spynie Canal to move peat, coal and produce.

The canal had been built in 1811 as an attempt to drain the Spynie Loch but that attempt failed and the small canal became a transport link for the area, providing a link between the Loch and Lossiemouth.

In 1865, the distillery was linked to the peat bogs in the south and the wharves at Lossiemouth in the north by the narrow gauge Lossiemouth Canal Railway. Standard gauge railways had become established in the region with the Morayshire Railway in 1852 – their line becoming part of the Great North of Scotland network in 1863, the LNER in 1923 and BR (Scottish) Region in 1948. The distillery sat in the shadow of Spynie Castle and a GNoS branch to that place left the Elgin-Buckie line to the east of Linksfield Junction. From the opening of the GNoS line, grain arrived by this route whilst peat and coal still travelled on the traditional narrow gauge line and the whisky continued to be sent south to the Highland Railway line at Khanbryd.



Photo - Visit Scotland

The new club layout, featuring both the narrow and standard gauge lines serving the distillery has been born out of the stalled project known as "Fishy Tales" and plans to re-use as many of the Talisker buildings as can be found. The old format of eight boards, forming a large square, has had to be discarded as this no longer fits within the space available. Instead, just two boards will be used to give a space 10ft x 2ft on which the narrow gauge will provide a continuous run and the standard gauge will run to a small terminus on an elevated section. The time period will be set at 1960-ish.

The narrow gauge line carries on, financed by the distillery and a growing interest in tourism. In 1952, the Talylyn Railway had opened as a tourist line and as the national network started shedding its steam engines, smaller concerns gathered patrons. On the standard gauge, ex-LNER Scottish engines and a few BR Standards handle the light freight traffic whilst DMUs have been introduced for economic reasons on passenger workings.

Spynie Castle continues to be the home of the Laird and his private halt remains in use – in fact, his private coach is still maintained by the narrow gauge railway and lives in its own shed close to the foot of the castle. Technically, on the low level, the layout will feature Peco 009 track, "Slippery Sid" wire-in-tube point control and DC electrics.

On the upper level, Peco Code 75 OO gauge track will be used, SEEP point motors and DC control. The only signal will be a Dapol motorised model. As progress is made and we start getting something running, pictures will appear here.

In the interim, if you are able to bring some skills to the party, or if you are keen to learn about anything we are trying to do, come along and have a chat (biscuits are always welcome)!

Were They Cheaper In Bulk? (or did Scarborough really need five funicular railways?) **Andrew Chrysler**

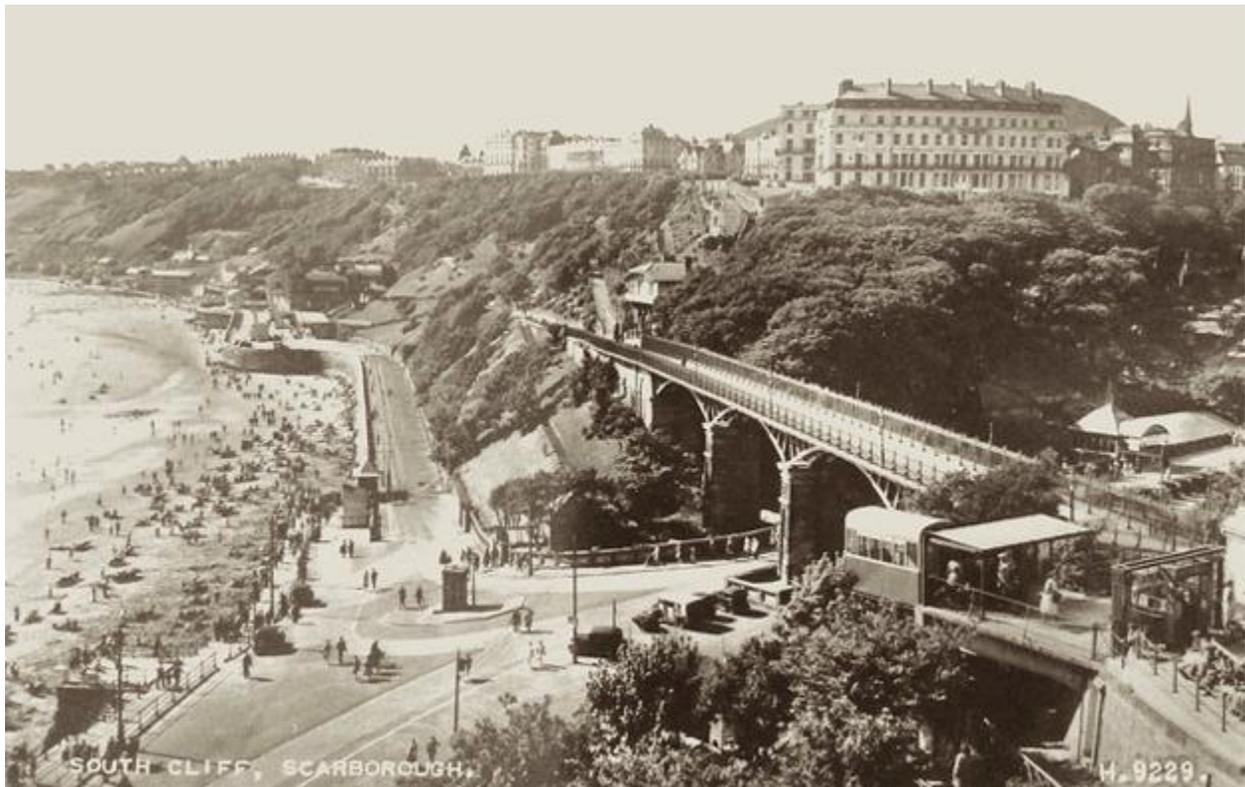
Some time ago, the “Where’s Andrew” was the Central Tramway in Scarborough, but there were as many as five funicular railways in that coastal resort, and two are still running. The Central Tramway opened to the public on 1st August 1881, when it was powered by steam (uniquely in the British Isles) before being converted to electric power in 1920. It wasn’t the first funicular to open in Scarborough, though.

The title of “first” belongs to the Spa Cliff Lift, which opened on 6th July 1875 - and was the first funicular not only in Scarborough but the first in the UK. It is powered by water, pumped firstly by gas engines (which were rapidly replaced by steam pumps in 1879) and subsequently electrified in 1935.



Above - an old photograph of the Spa Cliff Lift

Both of the above still operate, while the St. Nicholas Cliff Lift was closed in 2007 due to safety concerns - with an estimated £445,000 being required to bring it up to modern health and safety standards. As it is separated from the Central Tramway by just the length of the Grand Hotel, potential passengers are not seriously inconvenienced. After closure, the two cars were moved to the upper station and, together with the station building, have been converted into the St. Nicholas Cafe. The lower station has been converted to an Ice Cream parlour, "The Seastrand" and the rails are still in existence.



Above - St. Nicholas Cliff Lift

The three above funicular railways are all on the South Bay, while the North Bay, which originally had two, now has none. The Queens Parade Cliff Lift was opened in 1878, and was dogged by bad luck, with one of the cars breaking free and crashing into the lower station on the opening day, and this continued with a series of mechanical breakdowns and landslips, and it closed permanently after just nine years in 1887. The nearby pier shared its luck, being destroyed by a gale in 1905.

Finally, the North Bay Cliff Lift, a relative newcomer, opened in 1930. It remained in operation until 1996, when it was closed rather than carrying out necessary repairs. Over the next two years it was dismantled, with components being donated to Launceston Civic Society, and currently in storage at the Launceston Steam Railway in Cornwall.



Above - North Bay Cliff Lift

And Finally...



Ex-Island Line 483008 demonstrates the correct use of a face mask at Sandown while awaiting for the delivery of 484005 (when it will form a return load). Photo - Luke Govus.