

NEWSLETTER 98 : June 2021

Newsletter Editor : Andrew Chrysler
Email apc253@gmail.com

Editorial

My absence from the last couple of zoom meetings can mean only one thing... I've been off for a short holiday. I have also been adding to my stock of photographs for "Where's Andrew?" in the future, so I won't be telling you exactly where I went!

One place that I haven't been to is the Isle of Wight, where the Island Line is still suspended. The infrastructure improvements have largely progressed on schedule, with 6.5 miles of rails trimmed and rejoined and new sleepers and rail fitted at various locations, new power cables and an upgraded power supply, new signalling cables and equipment, while Brading has seen the most work, with a new passing loop for a regular 30 minute service interval, removal of the footbridge for refurbishment (and installation of a temporary replacement) and raising the platforms for improved accessibility at both here and at four other stations.

Vivarail are yet to announce a date for the re-engineered Class 484 trains to be ready to enter service, so I do wonder if the Steam Railway will have their preserved Class 483 running before Island Line has a passenger service. In any case, I have a few days holiday booked on the Isle of Wight

in August, whether I will be able to ride on the new trains is, however, anybody's guess.

Closer to home, the Lesley Road Circular Railway (although actually oval) has had its first (mostly) successful test run, and the concrete foundation for the track is mostly satisfactory, with just one corner still giving cause for concern... although the locomotive no longer tips over at this point it still leans, no doubt alarming potential passengers. Heavy rain before the concrete had "set" has been blamed, but gradually building up layers seems to have done the trick. A little more levelling, and the track can be cemented in place before adding cat litter ballast. Hopefully the neighbourhood cat will realise that it is to be used for railway purposes only.

Gauging trials have revealed that edging stones in the garden may require slight adjustment. I am considering inviting Island Line to a "twinning ceremony" as both projects have been beset by delays...



Ian's article on the Lynton & Lynmouth cliff railway reminded me of a childhood holiday in Devon, and the steepness of the walk down (and, more importantly, back up) in Clovelly, which might have started my fascination with funicular railways. I recall visiting Mallorca in the early 1970's, and -

although we were not staying there - riding on the funicular railway at the Majorica Hotel in Palma. From my memory, there was just one car on the line, rather than the more usual counterbalanced pair. Google research tells me that the line is still in use, although the old, open cars have been replaced with modern enclosed ones.



Chairman's Report

Ian Shulver

I have to confess that, this month my report will be a little brief compared to some of my previous ones. With the unlockdown progressing we have been able to welcome some of our children (and grandchildren) to stay for the first time in almost a year. Consequently we had a lot of work to do such as making up beds, cleaning and of course putting some stuff in the freezer so we did not spend all this week cooking. I think by the end of the week we will be absolutely shattered.

Early in May I did manage to do a small amount of scenic work on my Filleigh layout. I completed the down platform with its retaining wall and embankment, but still need to add some detail - station name board, seats and perhaps people. I am still considering whether I can make the platform signal at the western end a working one - I would like to but it may be a little too much like hard work. What little I have done so far looks quite good and I am looking forward to doing the rest, but this will have to wait until the double slips arrive from Hattons.

It is good that a small number of us can meet at the clubrooms and a number of us made full use of this to repair the roof on the shed. The polycarbonate sheets have been positioned and fixed in place but we still need to complete the weatherproofing of the ridge. I am not 100% happy with what we have done so far so will have another look at it in a couple of weeks time. Whilst working on the roof we did notice that the walls were spreading a little so Colin and myself will do some remedial work in a week or two.

Hopefully by the time of the next newsletter we will be able to meet at the club without restriction.

Ian

Secretary's Report

Jim Ford

Comrades. As with your chairman, we have been welcoming family this weekend and this meant that earlier today, Dolgoch was out on my garden railway for the entertainment of Eric, my youngest grandson! It is also the reason why my copy is a little late in being compiled.

Firstly, a reminder of where we are with lockdown. Since Monday 17th May groups of six have been able to meet/eat inside the clubhouse and there is now no limit on the size of outdoor workgroups. However it is going to be some time yet before members will be able to regularly meet together inside, probably late June, for which we await further decisions from HMG.

Those of you who have read the history of our club (which is available on the website) may have noticed that it is a little vague as to when the club actually started. I am the longest serving current member and I joined the club in about 1974, a short time after it had acquired an independent existence from Steamport, the museum which was situated in the former engine shed in Derby Road. But we didn't have much idea as to what had gone before. Anyway, a former called Keith Wallace has been in touch with me from Chesham, and he tells me that he was member in those days along with Nick Wood whom some of us will be visiting in Cornwall later this month and Chris Grey, who was a member of West Lancs O Gauge group when I last saw him. Keith has drawn our attention to his website which contains the early history of our club. There is a photo including Nick Wood and Chris Grey looking at Nick's N scale layout of Crainlarich at http://www.hall-royd-junction.co.uk/Hall_Royd_Model/Steamport_club.html. I'm not quite sure why this is named after the Hall-Royd signal box but that is a pleasant reminder of my days commuting to Leeds from Preston between 1995 and 2000 when I used to look out for that box. This response from Keith is very timely as Ian is currently updating our club history. It seems that the Society started in Steamport in 1971, so technically we are already 50 years old.

I get a lot of contacts via the website proving its value and it must be easy to access to attract so much traffic.

The garden railwaymen continue to meet and run on my garden railway each Tuesday, some time between the hours of 1100 and 1700. Now that numbers are no longer restricted outdoors, any members are welcome to join the permanent members, but it would be wise to check with me on 01704545395 beforehand – if only to check whether there is enough cake which the Clinical Director bakes each week! If you are coming over lunchtime please bring a sandwich – teas and coffees (and cake!) will be provided.

Dr Jim Ford, Hon Secretary SMRS. Flat 1, 42 Hesketh Road, Southport PR9 9PB

07748760686

Where's Andrew?

Tony Kuivala correctly identified last month's photograph, which was taken in Scarborough of the disused St. Nicholas cliff lift, just the other side of the Grand Hotel from the Central Tramway which is still operating. In fact, Scarborough had no less than five funicular railways, of which two are still in service.



Some time ago, I bought a Kindle copy of "Small Island by Little Train" by Chris Arnot, which led to my increased interest in narrow gauge and miniature railways.

I particularly like that you can usually get more "up close and personal"

with the stock than you are able to do on standard gauge. I don't know whether this is because of the low platform height, meaning that the wheels and other gear are more on view, but when travelling, I try to seek out the smaller railways. This picture is of one of the railways featured in the book, and is a 15 inch gauge line running for about a mile. It was taken on my recent travels, but where am I?

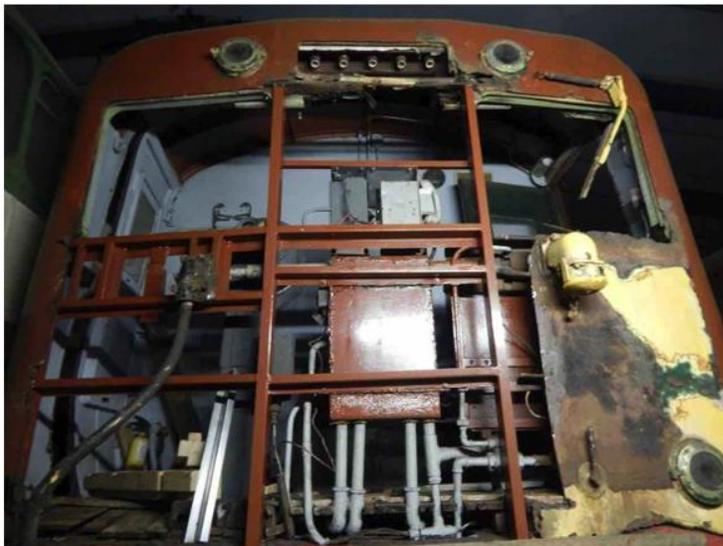
Restoration Progress

Paul Gorton & Tony Kuivala

The best laid plans! Whilst we had planned to concentrate on the unrestored section of the trailer coach, Covid had other ideas. Restrictions have delayed both of the bus movements to provide us with the space. And the lockdown restricted our team from carrying out the necessary work. All this is still scheduled to be done as soon as it is possible. Whilst we were unable to do what we planned it didn't stop restoration completely. Attention was split between the motor & trailer coaches. One vestibule of the motor coach was refurbished a few years back. But the second one still required work. The motor coach is home to our many spares & these were re-stacked to provide better access to the door vestibule. The set of doors was stripped of several layers of peeling & pitted paintwork & repainted. One broken door window was removed & will be replaced shortly.

The interior vestibule was then stripped, filled where necessary & repainted. The welding of the accessible body side of the trailer has largely been completed & another window has been refitted. The final window on this side will be done as soon as the door pocket strengthening has been finished. Smaller parts continue to be refurbished, such as the seat handles, grab handles, ash trays etc.

We are not alone in suffering Pandemic effects. Where we are in a strong position is that as operational workshops, Merseyside Transport Trust has created a Covid Secure environment.





Since last July we have remained open within the Rules and Regulations. Activity was reduced rather than curtailed. Last autumn we reached an agreement with MTT to take on additional space for furtherance of the work on the offside of Trailer. This is delayed and not likely to take place for a little while yet for understandable reasons. The beneficial side of coin is that we are not incurring the temporary extra expense yet. As you are aware we are in need of a professional welder for offside. Quite unexpectedly in February one appeared on our radar. We grasped at the opportunity for completion of intricate work on nearside. Unfortunately this never materialised. We are not without hope. Restoration may only proceed within the strictures of our Business Plan. In simple terms – cash flow. But work has not ceased, only slowed down. What we have been achieving is much sorting through spares, improving tidiness, tackling small improvements at minimal cost. Some work has been undertaken on Driving Car. Currently we are progressing with the refitting of window frames in the Trailer. As the Road Map progresses we expect things to pick up.

Images by Paul Gorton

Words for SMRS Newsletter by Paul Gorton and Tony Kuivala April 2021

The Class 502 Preservation Trust

Smallbrook Junction Station

Andrew Chrysler

When is a junction not a junction? When is a station not a station? Both these questions can be asked with reference to Smallbrook Junction Station on the Isle of Wight, and I will attempt to answer this conundrum.



In its present form, it is not strictly a junction, but an interchange. The lines of Island Line and the Steam Railway do not meet, and passengers need to disembark at one platform and walk through to the other to connect between the lines. The station was opened by British Rail in 1991, when the steam railway was extended eastwards from Havenstreet. Previous to this, the preserved line was less than half its length, running in a westward direction from Havenstreet to Wootton.

In its previous form, Smallbrook Junction was constructed in 1926 and was in use until 1966. Previous to the junction being built, the lines between Ryde Pier Head and Ventnor (still in use as "Island Line" but slightly truncated with the terminus at Shanklin) and between Ryde Pier Head and Cowes ran separately until the points at Ryde St Johns. There was no station at Smallbrook, and the junction operated only during the summer months. The signal box at Smallbrook was manned for the summer months only, in the winter the lines operated as before 1926 (i.e. parallel but separate lines) and were controlled by the signal box at Ryde St Johns.



The Isle of Wight Steam Railway has had a long term intention of extending to Ryde St Johns, and if this was to take place, Smallbrook Junction Station would no longer be needed. There is no road access and it exists purely for passengers to transfer between lines, and with the current suspension of Island Line for engineering works, currently Smallbrook Junction Station is arguably neither a junction nor a station.



At Smallbrook Junction, our locomotive runs around as the brightly painted Island Line train arrives from Ryde

Boudicca Blues, or Bye-Bye, Boudicca

Jim Ford

The pandemic has catastrophically affected all public transport with the Government advising people against buses and trains and air travel almost at zero – and traffic levels now soaring post-lockdown to carbon emissions busting levels. But it has also hastened the end of some classic forms of transport like the familiar Boeing 747 Jumbo and even its planned successor the Airbus A380 Superjumbo, the largest airliner ever built, of which the very last left the production line this March, and the earliest are already being scrapped.

The even more complete seizure of the Cruise Industry has led to a number of perfectly serviceable classic ships heading to the breaking beaches of Turkey and the Indian subcontinent, including familiar Liverpool visitors such as Marco Polo, Magellan, Black Watch and Boudicca. It is ironic that these smaller ships are being recycled when the presumably more economic

massive ships are not and even vast new ones are being built like the brand new MSC Virtuosa, of 181,541 tons and capable of carrying 6334 passengers which is making her maiden staycation voyages from our port. Perhaps these massive ships may yet follow the wide-bodied jumbos and Superjumbos to oblivion.

Virtuosa will be visiting major destinations such as Glasgow, Liverpool, Belfast and Southampton. Can you imagine arriving in Lerwick on such a ship? Many ports such as Venice already restrict access to just smaller ships due to the sheer numbers and their impact on port facilities. Somehow, I don't think that these monster ships will achieve the 49 years of Black Watch, the 56 years of Marco Polo or the incredible 73 years of Marco Polo's sister ship Astoria, built in 1948 with an ice-strengthened hull as the Stockholm which sensationally collided with and sank the Italian Liner Andrea Doria. If you are going to cross the path of another ship, make sure it's not one with an ice-strengthened hull!

The fabulous Boudicca as known to a number of our members, hit the beach in Aliaga, Turkey recently and the elegant Black Watch (based at Liverpool), lies at anchor awaiting the same fate. In 2017, as the finale of our sleeper trip, Southport MRS members sailed from Greenock to Liverpool aboard Boudicca in a memorable overnight voyage, undertaken on the night of a General Election when Theresa May sought to extend her majority with a 'strong and stable' mandate; however the electorate judged her 'weak and wobbly' and perversely took away her majority, in the way that electorates do sometimes. No comment about what followed!



Here four of our members test their sea legs in a rather breezy Firth of Clyde aboard Boudicca. A more extensive narrative of the voyage can be viewed on:-

<https://www.railwaygardener.co.uk/Sleeper-trips/The-trips/2017-Shetland-cruising/Boudicca-cruise>

Black Watch, Boudicca and their German sister Albatros (formerly owned by Phoenix Reisen and an occasional visitor to Liverpool but now also languishing in Egypt and likely to follow her former sisters) were revolutionary ships when built in the early 1970s, Designed like the QE2 with tiered open sun decks aft and a similarly styled funnel, Royal Viking Star, Sea and Sky were designed for world cruising and set new standards for leisure travel. Most cruise liners of that era were converted from North Atlantic or Australasian liner service and lacked features like private bathrooms and full air-conditioning that nowadays are taken for granted. The ships were so successful that they were all lengthened in the 1980s but by then they had been overtaken by a new generation of purpose-built cruise liners with interior shopping malls, more balcony cabins – and less open teak decks. The newer ships have been largely designed for more restricted destinations such as the Mediterranean and the Caribbean, with more dependable weather, and mostly have flat bottoms, so they don't perform as comfortably in the North Atlantic or the Bay of Biscay. And many larger and younger ships have also been scrapped as the trend for even larger ships has grown.

Two of the Royal Viking ships joined the Fred. Olsen Fleet, the Royal Viking Star becoming the Black Watch in 1996 and her sister, Royal Viking Sky joined as Boudicca in 2006 after a more chequered career. Both ships were extensively refurbished and re-engined in the mid-2000s and built up a sentimental and loyal following among re-booking passengers and continued sailing for Fred. until the pandemic when the ships were laid up in Rosyth. Both ships continued sailing right round the world until then, Black Watch circumnavigating the world with Boudicca having sailed from the UK to Australia and back in Winter 2019/2020, and both ships left Rosyth to an emotional farewell last Autumn, with their familiar Fred. funnel painted black – as one passenger said just like Tudor Queens wearing black hoods for their execution. The poignant lament for Black Watch leaving Rosyth is recorded on <https://www.facebook.com/frances.totterdell/videos/5152410924772621/> FB.

We are privileged to have voyaged extensively on both ships and here is Boudicca in happier times.

Boudicca overnight in Zanzibar Autumn 2017 en route Liverpool to Mauritius from a dhow



Boudicca was on a repositioning voyage for the Winter creating a unique opportunity for Liverpool passengers to sail direct to the exotic Indian Ocean. The only disappointment was the cancellation of port calls in Madagascar due to the outbreak of plague. Her Summer Liverpool season had started with SMRS members aboard as she sailed from the Clyde. I made this

picture into a pseudo-1930s Art Deco style poster for my maritime-themed cellar bar. Daytime Transit of the spectacular Suez Canal was followed by fortification for protection against Somali pirates. This resulted in an unscheduled stop off the Comoros Islands where Captain Degerlund tried to distract passengers by a fantastic sunset whilst offloading some armaments that we probably shouldn't have had aboard....



Boudicca in Greenland from Liverpool September 2016

In Greenland we transited Prince Christiansund passage and visited glaciers and circled giant icebergs. And as we left Greenland we were treated to a fantastic display of the Northern Lights.



Boudicca anchored off St Helena en route to Namibia, South Africa and Australia 2019

A beautiful tropical island but seemingly Napoleon didn't think so.



Last lingering beer aboard Boudicca alongside at Cape Town, October 2019
The characteristic evening cloud curtain creeps over Table Mountain.
Boudicca was absolutely sparkling as a party of South African travel agents enjoyed an al fresco meal at the Poolside restaurant. Nobody guessed what a catastrophe was already unfolding in China. Next day we went by the Blue Train to Pretoria and returned to the UK by air via old friends in Malawi. And our voyage from Tokyo to Hong Kong aboard Boudicca in January 2021 was not to be for us – or for Ian and Heather Shulver, who were booked on the same trip. RIP Boudicca – happy memories for so many.

And Finally...

I felt that I just had to share this photograph from the Isle of Wight...

