

# Newsletter

Issue 49: April 2017 Editor: Allan Trotter  
Email: [eastbankmrc@btinternet.com](mailto:eastbankmrc@btinternet.com)

## Editorial

**Please note the following date.**

**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. SMRS Committee meeting, 19:00, Clubrooms.**

**All members are invited to attend and participate at this meeting.**

## Secretary's Notes

Dear Members,

Things are happening pretty fast at the moment - or not as the case may be! We were advised by Network Rail that the work on our clubrooms was due to start in week commencing 20th March so four members of the Committee dismantled Portland Street on the Friday club meeting on 17th March. However on the following Monday we learned that the contractor whom we met was not going to re-plaster the upstairs rooms as included in their recent application to Sefton Council but is still intending to replace the windows which internally at least appear to be sound! However the contractor is still proceeding with the external work which is most important for ensuring that the building is weatherproof, although it appears that work will not happen until after 9th April as the permission for track access has lapsed. Suffice it to say that our landlords, Network Rail are not the best of communicators and most of the above has been discovered by indirect methods.

Preparations continue apace for the forthcoming one day show, scheduled for 29th April, just over 4 weeks away. There are 13 layouts booked to appear. Next Friday, 31st March there will be an Open Committee meeting from 1900 at which you will be able to hear more details of the event. Please do come and participate.

The removal of Portland means that we no longer have an active OO layout so we will be looking for volunteers to re-commence work on Talisker. If you are interested please reply to the Secretary.

We have inherited a large number of videos from the John Phillips estate. Some of these we are keeping, others will be sold at the show or before. The Committee has decided not to dispose of John's complete set of British Steam Railways so that we can watch them at our meetings.

## **End of the line for Portland Street our club OO test track?**

Portland Street, our club OO gauge layout, has been with us for a number of years, and whilst not modelled to any specific prototype has nonetheless provided a reliable test bed for running a variety of OO models.

The layout structure was put together over ten years ago with the joinery work being led by Joe Griffin and the wiring being led by Keith Gregory. Although not conventionally scenically developed there are a number of scenic dioramas which were undertaken by Hilary Finch.

The layout was never intended to be fully scenically developed – or taken to exhibitions – but for a number of years has provided a place for members to run new purchases – or newly constructed models. As such the geometry of the track and curves were carefully laid so as to accommodate modern ready to run rolling stock and scratch and kit build rolling stock whose tolerances required a minimum of 3 foot radius.

The Achilles heel of the layout has always been its lack of portability, especially the fact that it could not be dismantled into its component sections – something which is very much a lesson for future projects.

This disadvantage was demonstrated a couple of winters ago when it became necessary to move the layout to undertake remedial plaster work in the room following an especially damp winter.

At this time, the control system for the electric points began to demonstrate its age with a number of the push to make switches burning out and plans were developed for renewal of the wiring with a view to making the layout plug and play for both DC and DCC.

Now, further building work planned by Network Rail including re-plastering with a special plaster designed for heritage buildings means that any further remediation work on the layout had to be suspended and as a precaution most of the track work was lifted.

With so much of the recent history of our club tied up in the layout it would have been a shame to allow the demise of Portland (at least in its present form) to pass without ceremony and following a consultation by the Minister of Transport, regarding the future of the 'Portland Street lines' and the following result was announced:-

# **BRITISH RAILWAYS**

## **London Midland Region**

The Minister of Transport has considered the Report prepared by the Independent Inspector in response to the objections made to the Transport Users Consultative Committee and has given his consent to the withdrawal of all rail services between Portland West, Portland Town and Portland East (known as the 'Portland Street lines').

The Inspector notes that whilst some hardship will be caused to regular users of the service, the area is well served by road transport and that there are a number of road services in the area which will be capable of offering alternative transport of passengers, parcels and goods.

Hence, all passenger and freight services will be withdrawn over the Portland lines with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and from that date Portland Town station will be closed.

Further enquiries should be addressed to:-

Maybot Motors, One-way House, Brexit Street, Portland  
Corbyn's Lost Coaches, Byelection Road, Portland  
Dave and George's Austerity Buses, c/o Nassau, Bahamas  
Cleggies Coaches, Oblivion Row, Portland  
Nigel Garage, You-kipp Cabs, Boomerang Row, Portland

By Order  
General Manager  
Euston Station



Accordingly, as is its custom, the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society organised a "last train" over the line and several well known enthusiasts attended the ceremony as they listened to a recording of the last train to Preston from Southport on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1964.

The following day, the wrecking crew moved in to recover most of the track leaving just a single track circuit which itself was removed and the layout structure itself was finally removed on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March due to the impending start of work by Network Rail.

And the last word from the stationmaster at Portland Street:-

Thank you for your past support. **Jim Ford.**

## **Sleeper Trip 2016**

Shunning Scotland, last year's Sleeper Trip was to explore the delights of England's Riviera, particularly the many main and branch lines ultimately amalgamated into the GWR. Six club members embarked on this trip which was structured around a sleeper train, obviously, and a three day stay at a camping coach based at Hayle in Cornwall. Stays at Totnes and Minehead completed what was effectively a full week's trip.

Tuesday. Day 1 Derek, Jim, Tony and I met up at Lime St. Virgin First Class lounge to stock up on coffee, biscuits and the new addition, muffins. Pockets bulging we boarded the 11.47 Virgin service to Euston. During the trip we were served in no particular order, wine, coffee, bacon Panini and chocolate cake. An uneventful journey, we then met up with Frank and Malcolm. After poking our heads outside and seeing the torrential rain we adjourned to the Doric Arch to regroup and plan. Numerous options were considered until it was decided the Tate Modern offered the best chance of staying dry. Emerging from the underground on the South Bank there was some confusion as to direction but eventually we set off along the river towards the Tate. The walk enabled us to catch several tourist attractions en route including St. Paul's, Tower Bridge, Southwark Cathedral, Southwark Market, The Golden Hind and The Globe. Depositing cases we explored the museum, desperately trying to work out what were exhibits and what weren't. The most fascinating 'installation' was a group of men erecting what looked like an enormous tree made up of several parts.



Next stop was Paddington to meet up with Jim to have dinner. Jim had opted to explore the rather drier delights of Walthamstow and Willesden via the Northern Line and the Overground and had written himself a sick-note excusing him from the Tate Modern. He reports that Walthamstow really does exist (he changed trains on the platform) and the Tube does go there, but he was unable to find the office where Sir Humphrey

had offered Frank Wiesel a desk in the first episode of Yes Minister. We then

retired to GWR's first class lounge for wine, snacks, coffee and Cornish grown tea before boarding our Night Riviera sleeper to Penzance.

Day 2 We alighted at Hayle, very early, and quietly placed our bags in Harvey's Halt, the playhouse, conveniently located next to our sleeper coach.



We then adjourned to the nearby Asda for second breakfast. Then back on the train back to Bodmin Parkway. The plan (Plan A or B or even C?) was to take the Bodmin and Wenford Railway on the branch line from Bodmin Parkway to Bodmin General, however timings were out somewhat and we had a couple of hours to wait at Bodmin Parkway. This station, originally part of the Cornwall Railway, is some 3 miles outside Bodmin. There wasn't much to do. However the ever resourceful Tony found that a bus was due that would take us to Bodmin General where we could pick up the B & W and we could do a return trip. So after a brief bus ride we had an opportunity to partake of a mid-morning cream tea at Bodmin General before boarding the service back to Bodmin Parkway pulled by GWR '8750' Class 0-6-0PT 4612. Then back to Bodmin General, a very dramatic ride with the loco working hard up an almost continual incline. The afternoon was to be spent at Nick Wood's who had offered to open his Bodmin and Wadebridge garden railway to us. After a taxi ride we arrived at Nick's and after beer and sandwiches we set to operating on his impressive layout with pneumatic signals, block workings and several locos in steam. Nick had been a founder member of the SMRS and in between workings was more than willing to reminisce about the clubs early days. The most dramatic element of the line was an impressive viaduct constructed by Grace. (\*\*\*) Nick's railway is Railway of the Month in August 2016 Railway Modeller).



Many thanks to Nick and Grace for their wonderful hospitality. After a rushed taxi ride back to Bodmin Parkway, we picked up the train back to Hayle where we booked into our Sleeper Coach for the first night of our three night stay.



Day 3 and after a first breakfast at the coach we jumped on the train to St. Erth before joining the branch line to St. Ives for our second breakfast at Wetherspoons. A gorgeous day strolling around St. Ives for some and a boat trip for Jim. Before we knew it we were back at Wetherspoons for dinner. The only slight disappointment was that the

Tate Modern (Southwest) was closed for extensive rebuilding so we were denied to opportunity of viewing and comparing their collection with Tate Modern London. Overnight we had become critics of modern art. A local bus back to St. Erth (ringing the changes) and our second night at the coach.

Day 4 dawned and I thought we were going to Falmouth but somehow we ended up at Newquay. I had somehow mixed up my Plan A and Plan B or was it Plan C? A leisurely change at Par on the opposite coast meant we were able to partake of liquid refreshment in the local pub conveniently located on the railway bridge. Then the 20 mile trip across to the Atlantic and a walk down the harbour branch line at Newquay. Another opportunity for a Cornish Pasty and before we knew it, we were heading back to Par for our connection to Hayle. Ever flexible we decided not to alight at Hayle but to continue for the brief 7 mile trip to enjoy the delights of Penzance. Unfortunately there weren't any, unless you have an avid interest in Davy lamps. Then it was a short ride back to Hayle and award winning fish and chips taken al fresco on the sleeper coach outside dining area.



Day 5 and after checking out of the sleeper coach and saying goodbye to Frank we took the train to Totnes where after a short walk we arrived at the South Devon Railway station at Totnes Littlehempston. We took a return trip to Buckfastleigh hauled by GWR outside cylinder 0-6-0PT 1369.

The railway is an impressive operation and we were able to travel on Hawkesworth coaches. Buckfastleigh does have many

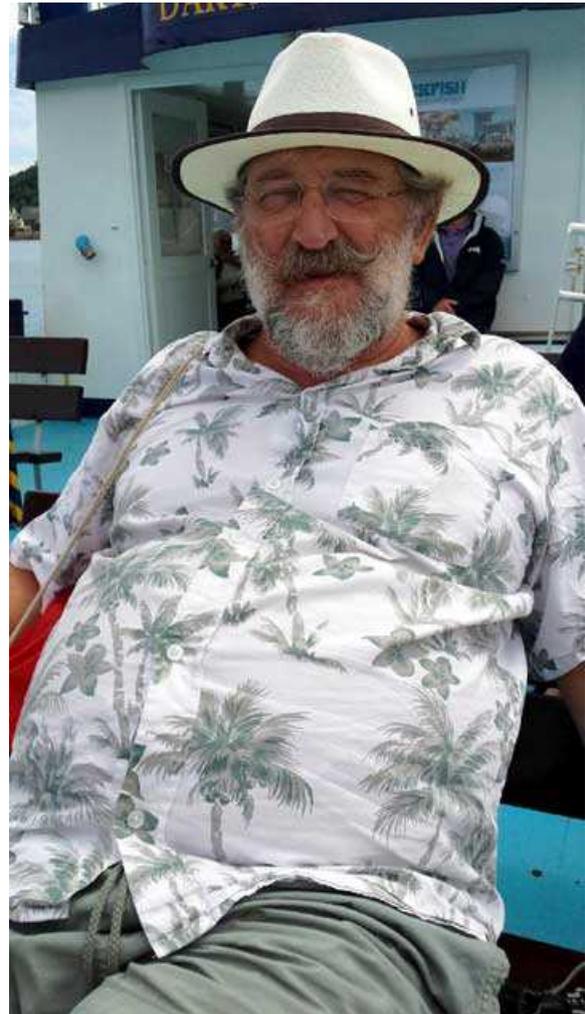
attractions including a museum, workshops and an extensive garden railway. We were hauled back by GWR 6412 and after picking up our luggage set off on a short walk to our B&B. Our B&B had the added attraction of a pub with a micro brewery right opposite, Jim and I felt the need to test it out only to find found ourselves in the beer garden in the midst of a row about Brexit.



Day 6 saw us embark on an ambitious 'Round Robin' trip. Firstly a river cruise from Totnes to Dartmouth, then a short cruise on the Kingswear Castle a coal-fired paddle steamer (Jim went twice), followed by a ferry across to Kingswear then on the Dartmouth Steam Railway (upgrading to the Devon Belle observation car) to Paignton. As an extra treat Derek had arranged for the Red arrows to do a fly by as we approached Goodrington Sands at Paignton.

The final leg of the round robin was an open top bus from Paignton back to Totnes. An excellent day, highlighted by the Red arrows but spoilt by me

discovering a pub in Dartmouth than had all the staff dressed in Hawaiian shirts almost as garish as Jim's. I will let you choose.



Day 7 and after booking out of our digs we headed for the station and our train to Taunton. Here we were to board the bus to Bishops Lydeard to ride the

West Somerset Railway to Minehead, our final overnight stop. Unfortunately at Taunton we were informed that we had no chance of getting on the bus as it would be full of people going to Butlins in Minehead. A large taxi was ordered and in no time we were at Bishops Lydeard. After a brief opportunity to see the station we boarded the train for the 23 mile trip to Minehead with GWR 4-6-0 6960 Raveningham Hall at the front. As it was still early in the day consideration was given to exploiting our rover ticket to the full and doing 3 complete journeys. This only appealed to Jim, so 4 of us returned from Minehead only as far as Watchet before returning to Minehead. This meant we were able to travel behind a different loco, this time SDJR 7F 2-8-0 no 53808 and also be back in Minehead in time for an afternoon cream tea. A final meal in Wetherspoons and an early night.



Day 8 Homeward bound. The group split with 3 returning on the West Somerset Railway and Derek and I taking the bus from Minehead to Taunton. We all met up at Taunton Station for our train home and it was only now that we had our first real problem. The 8 carriage train had failed so only 4 carriages were available; seat reservations were meaningless so it was a rather cramped ride back to Birmingham New St. We had enough time at Birmingham to examine and critique the new station concourse before getting our final train together to Liverpool Parkway.

Thanks very much to all those who did all the organising, Tony for the tickets, Jim Derek and Frank for the accommodation and for all the options,

**Derek Pratt & Richard Jones.**

**END**