



## NEWSLETTER 92 : Dec 2020

**Newsletter Editor : Andrew Chrysler**

**Email [apc253@gmail.com](mailto:apc253@gmail.com)**

### **Editorial**

With the current lockdown, holiday plans have once more come to nothing. We had planned to be in Gran Canaria from late November, but instead we are "confined to barracks". I suppose that we were lucky to get away in October - we left Merseyside just over a week before "Tier 3" restrictions began, and as there was no official advice to curtail holidays and return home, we remained on the South Coast for the remaining days we had planned.

We revisited the Hayling Seaside Railway (which was the subject of last month's "Where's Andrew?") and discovered that it is currently being offered for sale, due to the retirement plans of the current owner. Any plans that I might have had of possibly buying it were, however, cruelly dashed by the management on the far too sensible grounds of cost, together with the - not inconsiderable - inconvenience of the 269 mile commute.

In the absence of travel, my mind has turned to previous holidays, and in particular a "Road Trip" from July 2017 where we stayed at several pubs / B&Bs - most for just one night - and visited several UK attractions, many with a railway connection, which has led to the short article in this issue.

The very recent announcement that Southport is to enter Tier 2 is welcome news and I fully intend to travel to somewhere hot without further delay. I hope to publish the next edition of the newsletter before New Year (and disappearing for sunnier climes in early January), but will close by wishing everybody a very Merry Christmas.

Andrew Chrysler

### **Events Diary**

A weekly meeting is held on the Zoom platform. All members are sent a link by Ian Shulver - please remember that the link changes for each meeting so please be certain to use the most recent one.

### **Chairman's Notes**

It looks to me that we will still not be able to meet up as a group at the clubrooms for some time. Hopefully, the vaccines on the horizon may allow us to get together in the spring (potentially a whole year without a proper meeting!). Thank goodness for zoom, which although not ideal, at least meant that we could have a natter. However, with recent pronouncements, it will be possible for two people at a time to meet at the clubrooms, of course whilst maintaining social distancing. Although potentially we are allowed up to six people in the garden, I believe that we should restrict that to four to maintain social distancing. I somehow think that this is a little academic at this time of the year.

Recently I have been doing a little bit of moviemaking so that Barry can prepare a compilation film to promote both our club and our next exhibition (whenever that is), hence both Clairmont Old Quay and Shell Cove cluttering up the rooms upstairs. For the moment, I propose to leave them erected so that if you wish to, you can 'play trains' (Note that stock for Shell Cove is in a box under Monsal Dale). If you do wish to operate them, or Monsal Dale, please remember to replace the covers at the end of the running session. This really does make a huge difference to keeping the track clean. In fact, although none of the layouts had been used for many months, I got very acceptable running with no track cleaning at all (something to remember for your own layouts at home - not certain how the garden railway people would manage it!!!).



A few weeks ago we were dismayed to find that the roof, or rather the asphalt covering, of the new shed had deteriorated badly and was letting water in. A sub committee looked at what options were available to us. A professional roofer gave us a quote which was silly money – we could have got a new shed

for only a little bit more. We did in fact look at getting a new shed but the sizes of 'off the peg' ones did not quite fit the space we had available (might think about this in the future). This left us with making a temporary repair to see us through to spring when hopefully we can do a decent repair ourselves. Tony came up with a cunning plan to protect what was left of the roof and to stop water getting into the shed. Unfortunately, this meant wrapping it up like a Christmas present (see photo). Hopefully this will see us out to spring when the weather should be more propitious and let us repair it at leisure. My thanks to Tony, Derek and Frank for the great job they have done. By the way, I am considering commissioning them to come and wrap up my present this Christmas

Last month I wrote about constructing my new layout, Filliegh. After much thought and looking at the track plan and visual effects, I decided to go with the larger baseboard which I have now made, albeit without supporting cross members. I will install these once I have laid the track and positioned the point operating mechanism. Talking of which, I need to make a decision on this at some stage. Will it be solenoid, slow acting motors or mechanical (wire in tube or even rods). Ideally, I would go for Tortoise motors, but I have not got the space for them.

Well, this newsletter is our Christmas edition, I must wish you all the best for the festive season (whatever that is this year). Stay safe and I hope to see you in the New Year.

Ian Shulver

### **Secretary's Notes**

First of all I must thank my friends for the sterling work that they did on the shed roof. I was due to attend but due to a misreading of the WhatsApp message in my dysfunctional Iphone, I thought that the session had been postponed until the following Tuesday - I couldn't understand why - but those who attended seem to have done an excellent job which should withstand whatever the Winter may throw at us.



## Allan Trotter RIP

Jim Ford, Secretary of Southport Model Railway Society reports the sad passing of fellow Italian Railways Society member Allan Trotter, after a long illness at the age of 69. Born in Helensburgh, Allan moved to Southport after marriage to Ruth and early retirement from BT. He was a prolific railway photographer and railway modeller and for many years he organised Model Rail Scotland. His record of contemporary and overseas railways can be seen on Eastbank MRC, the virtual model railway club Allan maintained with friends, which also records the many layouts that

he built and exhibited, often collaborating with David Black.

Allan's tastes were catholic. Three American layouts, (*Pennsburg*, *Mythia* and *Andersonville*) featured in *Continental Modeller*, as did *Magersfontein*, his South African layout. But IRS members will know him for *Tavola*, his Italian layout, which featured in the May 1993 edition of the *Continental*. *Tavola* was built with overhead electric traction but Jim acquired it from Allan (minus the overhead for which Allan had other plans) several years ago and uses it to feature his historic steam era Rivarossi collection. In this guise *Tavola* will appear (lockdown permitting!) at Southport Exhibition as a tribute to Allan, on Saturday 7th November at All Saints Hall, Park Road, Southport PR9 9JR.

Allan was great company with a wry take on life and his friends will long remember his spirited and authentic Scots rendition of the Selkirk Grace on Burns Night before his health finally declined. However IRS members will recall his visits with Jim to the Winter Meet and his slides from the eighties. Allan looked forward eagerly to his *Binari* and boasted that he didn't go to Italy for the culture but for the trains!

I have attached a copy of the obituary for Allan that appeared in the recent copy of Binari - the magazine of the Italian Railways Society. I sent it in the Springtime but the magazine has only just appeared. At the time we were still expecting to be able to run our Autumn Family Show which gets a mention but that was not to be.



Things look optimistic on the vaccine front - my wife is busy organising the programme for East Lancashire although they don't know yet which vaccine will be coming. I for one, will be at the head of the queue and fail to understand why people appear afraid of having vaccines - especially for an illness which is as dangerous as this one for older people,

which I can say from experience. So hopefully we will begin to be able to get back to normal in the Springtime.



As regards railway activity I have pretty well finished the brick arches in the garden (just the railings to add) and am continuing to work on rehabilitating my 00 gauge line in the cellar which was started 40 years ago as an attic layout. This week I managed to get the single line level crossing working again. It is

operated by a wonderful collection of levers, cams and microswitches cut out of nickel silver sheet and operated by an old Triang motor, which makes a sound rather reminiscent of Thunderbirds. I wouldn't make it this way nowadays as we didn't have precise servos in those days but it hasn't been easy refurbishing it with eyes and fingers that are thirty years older.

This newsletter is our last one before Christmas so I will conclude by wishing everybody a Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year.

Jim Ford

### **Where's Andrew?**

First correct answer was - once again - from Ian Shulver who correctly identified the location as the Hayling Seaside Railway and also answered the two supplementary questions - the branch line train (from Havant) was indeed referred to as the "Hayling Billy" and the Hayling Seaside Railway was originally laid (as the East Hayling Light Railway) in the grounds of Mill Rythe Holiday Camp which, incidentally, was the setting for the film "Confessions from a Holiday Camp" made in 1977 (which had absolutely no influence on my decision to take my first job at Pontins two years later.)



This month I am somewhat further away than Hayling Island, and although the weather on the photograph looks seasonal, it was in fact taken in mid March.

We boarded this train in the morning, arriving in a snow-covered New York in the evening, after a long (but relatively comfortable)

journey, on the eve of St Patrick's day, and we arrived somewhat hungry, as the train's buffet car ran out of food just after lunchtime (and drink a few

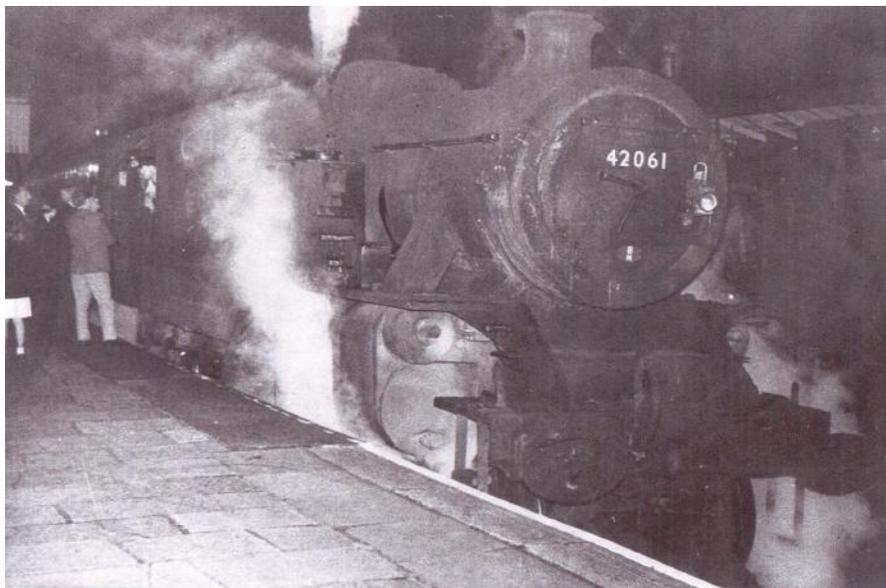
hours later) and after we spent the last hour of the journey stationary in a tunnel - apparently due to a signalling fault - we came to the conclusion that British Rail was indeed vastly superior to Amtrak.

Bonus question - which station in New York did the train terminate at?

### **The last day: Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 1964**

**Keith Hick**

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 1964, the last day of passenger and freight services on the West Lancashire (Southport to Preston) Railway. The day dawned sunny and bright and I was due to play in a golf competition at Ashton & Lea GC, north west of Preston, representing Longridge GC in the annual Charity Cup., along with my father, Frank. Fairburn 2-6-4 tank 42132 on the 9.24am to Preston was followed by Standard 2 78040 on the 10.45am to Southport. Then, it was off to the golf course. I well remember seeing several excursion trains on their way to Blackpool during my round of golf, running alongside the Ashton & Lea course, including a couple of surviving Jubilees, complete with yellow cab side warning stripe. It was a day of highly charged emotions which did little to help my golf score, although I enjoyed a respectable round.



A specially prepared smoke box headboard had been prepared by Alan Castle, for Standard 2-6-0 78041, of Lostock Hall MPD. 78041, the classmate of 78040, carried the head board throughout the day: *'The West Lancashire*

*RailwayCo; 1882 - 1964; LAST DAY; Sunday September 6<sup>th</sup> 1964'*. The WLR crest completed the image, centred on the head board.

Following an evening meal at the golf club, it was time to head home. I explained this was too good an opportunity to miss riding on the very last

Preston to Southport service later that evening, so my father dropped me off at Preston station around 10.00pm in good time to catch this valedictory train. Arriving on the platform, the Southport service was already loading those wishing to pay their last respects, with unkempt Fairburn 2-6-4T 42061 simmering away at the front end. With sufficient time to walk up to the loco, I exchanged a few words with Driver, Ronnie Halsall and his Fireman, along with several others. Only many years later did I receive a copy of a photograph depicting myself alongside the loco just before the 'off'.

All too soon the sound of the Guard's whistle, a green flag and so began the last journey from Preston to Southport via the 'Lettuce Line', as the West Lancashire became known in its early days, courtesy of its route through the farmland around Banks, Hesketh Bank and Tarleton. Fog detonators had been placed on the track and with a cacophony of minor explosions, the train made its way out of Preston's East Lancashire side of the station, towards and then beyond Whitehouse Junction, Penwortham and ultimately, Southport Chapel Street. Crowds greeted the train at each station and local dignitaries, complete with their chain of office, mingled with the masses, as if to emphasise the importance of the line to the local population.

The clackety clack of the rail joints, soon to be forever stilled, together with the swirling steam and smoke outside the windows, were soon joined by the sound of the brake application for Churchtown station. Slamming the compartment carriage door well after 11.00pm, I 'acquired' a Churchtown totem station sign propped up against the wooden platform fence. Down the slope to ground level and into the night air, I arrived home five minutes later with my trophy. Despite my protestations that the line was closed and, "they didn't need it any more", my horrified parents made it clear the sign must be returned the following morning. So, somewhat crestfallen, the sign was duly returned. However, there was a postscript to that story, more of which later.

### **Accidental Modelling - How To Do It Proper**

**Derek Pratt**

There are those who carefully plan their model railway buying, to fit not only their budget but also their layout requirements. A particular railway company, a certain era, the correct livery etc., are all specified with some care, to ensure a consistent appearance and to minimise the risk of

rivet-counters pointing out annoying errors. Good luck to them, I say, slightly enviously. I have never reached such dizzying heights of modelling accuracy, preferring to go down the alternative route characterised by such bold statements as 'but it looks OK from here', 'it was a shedmaster's special' or in stressful moments, 'it's my layout, so there'. This approach has the advantage of catering for the type of purchase, which although fully justified by retrospective risk assessment, may not quite fit with one's overall acquisition strategy. An impulse purchase perhaps, or as I prefer to call it, accidental modelling.

This approach has much to commend it, as it allows a freedom of stock growth that more rigorous methods do not permit. The resultant collection may often be described (admiringly I always think) as 'eclectic', 'unconventional', or even in extreme cases 'avant-garde'. The process becomes spontaneous and refreshing, liberated from current norms and restraints, and creating a unique one-of-a-kind stock list. The fact that few others would want such an assembly is not in the least relevant.



As an example, consider my current set of railcars, until recently hovering around the half-dozen in quantity terms, mostly suitable for the tight curves of portable 16mm layouts. Another one, particularly of the longer-wheelbase type, was not planned for. However, the appearance on Facebook of a newly-introduced railcar by Timpdon Models, was instantly recognised as an opportunity to create a new plan. Timpdon has a long history of excellence in garden railway products,

initially in electronic controllers and latterly in both ready-made and kit-built coaches and wagons.

The important thing to do in such situations is not to overthink. The essential questions are no more than three: 'does it look nice?' and 'will it run on my tracks?' are the two essentials, with 'can I afford it?' tacked on more as a defensive measure against any subsequent and potentially hostile questioning from one's nearest and dearest. Two out of three is, almost invariably, a more than comfortable majority, although a straight flush of all three boxes with emphatic ticks in them is a much more satisfying result. In this case the railcar did indeed look nice, in both red-and-white and green-and-white, and with both bogies articulated it should cope with my balloon loops. Question three was dealt with summarily by choosing the cheapest option, the manual-control build-it-yourself version.



A mere two days after placing the order a package arrived, with lots of well-cut wooden parts, real glass for the windows and proper instructions, complete with well-drawn diagrams. And, would you believe it, the parcel also contained a parcel van kit, in a matching style! How had that happened? Another

accident, that's how, precipitated by a back-story which suddenly came to me whilst cursor was being applied to 'Buy' button. The railcar company, name unknown but probably Irish, had just been awarded the Amazon delivery contract for Ballylenon and District. A mere cardboard-box-throw from Ballykissangel, if you were wondering. Prompt acquisition of suitable package transport was essential, as that nice Mr Bezos likes things delivered fast, if not quicker.

It is outside the scope of this article to detail the construction of the models, suffice it to say they went together without much trouble, and were decorated with some added 3D-printed bling, including a full complement of passengers, driver and conductor. Kit design has certainly come on in recent years; in this case there were no less than four laser-cut layers to each vertical elevation. Careful study of the instructions was required to ensure everything went where it should, and had the right sides painted in the right colour before assembly. I opted for blue-and-sand, just to be different, with varnished maple interior woodwork and teak seats. Again that nice Mr B ensured I was not kept waiting for suitable painting materials.

The end result more than justified the means of acquisition, although I think a sound card would be useful to drown out the rather tinny noise made by the metal gearing. Maybe one with a record-your-own option would be good, particularly as a certain 2ft gauge railway just up the road from me has at least twenty petrol and diesel prototypes to choose from. Another happy accident perhaps?

### **A car journey mostly inspired by Railways**

**Andrew Chrysler**

Our summer holiday in July 2017 started at Gretna Green... ostensibly to visit the wedding planners, although the ceremony had already been booked by telephone for April 2018, but - as we have discovered recently with "zoom" - making arrangements face-to-face is infinitely more preferable to trying to do so over the telephone. Additionally, it was a good excuse to give my car a good run.



The "devil's porridge" museum records the history of Gretna (the new town) and the massive HM Factory Gretna, built during the first World War and which stretched nine miles from Longtown in

England to Dornock in Scotland. The name comes from the cordite that was mixed at the factory, described as "the Devil's Porridge" by Arthur Conan Doyle who coined the term when visiting as a War Correspondent witnessing the mixing of cordite by the "Gretna Girls". The railway link was satisfied by a locomotive parked outside, unusual in having no firebox so that no sparks could have caused a fire, it relied on stored pressure. Akin to our own clubrooms, the museum has had a few temporary homes before moving to its current location. A display also pays tribute to the Quintinshill disaster that occurred close by.



Also worth seeing in the area is the Solway Aviation Museum (by Carlisle Airport) where there are several indoor and outdoor exhibits, including a Vulcan bomber which is accessible for visitors to sit in the cockpit... provided that their knees are sufficiently agile to climb the rather awkward ladder.

*Hotel - Greens at Gretna, just over the border, it advertises as the "First Hotel in Scotland" and since it's purchase by the company that also owns the blacksmiths and two other local hotels, it has been somewhat modernized with a lovely restaurant and bar being added.*

Carnforth Station Visitor Centre was the next stop... there is a rather nice period station buffet and a museum, focused mainly on the "Brief Encounter" connection with a few films being shown. Again, akin to our clubrooms, trains no longer stop at this station.

*Hotel - the George Washington Inn, which is on the original road to Scotland, and no doubt it was visited by many couples running away to "do the deed" once over the border.*

The Keighley and Worth Valley Railway goes without need of any introduction, our only regret was that we only spent one day there.



*Hotel - Hare and Hounds Country Inn, Hebden Bridge. A lovely pub with a lot of character, good bar meals and an excellent breakfast.*

After a stop in Masham for a visit to the Black Sheep brewery, we continued to Beamish Museum... several railway exhibits including an informative tour of a signal

box by a knowledgeable guide who was able to fill in a few details about Quintinshill, and where the replica 1813 loco "Steam Elephant" was (jerkily) hauling a few (uncomfortable) carriages, proving that despite their worst efforts, Northern Rail aren't really that bad after all.



*Hotel - the Lambton Worm, Chester Le Street. A lively pub, quite modern, with live music in the lounge and rather ornate furniture in the bedrooms. An awkward staircase with a difficult top step would possibly make this hotel unsuitable for the less agile. After banging my knee for the umpteenth time on the ornate corners of our bed, I*

*considered myself amongst the "less agile".*

Leaving Beamish, we stopped for a few hours at Goathland (for the "Heartbeat" connection) but as we were heading for Eden Camp there was

not time to visit the North York Moors Railway, an omission we have resolved to put right in the future.

*Hotel - Beansheaf Hotel, Pickering. A pleasant out-of-town hotel with a warm welcome and modern rooms. The owner's dog was very friendly.*



After a visit to Ilkley Toy Museum our final railway visit was to the Embsay and Bolton Abbey steam railway, which we found to be a tale of two halves, the station and the gardens were well kept, while the carriage we rode on was encrusted with dirt and dust. Perhaps this carriage was pressed into service for the summer, but it left a poor impression on us.

*Hotel - The Cow and Calf (Vintage Inns) Ilkley. A rather disorganized pub, but with friendly staff and an excellent location. We had read reviews before staying, and we had no complaints. Subsequently we stayed here again in July, just after "lockdown" was relaxed and again had no complaints, there was ample space for social distancing, the evening meal was excellent and although breakfast was a "grab and go" affair to eat in the room, it was sufficient for us.*

## **And Finally**

Taken on a damp day in early 1983 this image is from Martyn Hilbert who is author of Merseyrail Electrics books etc and who has agreed that SMRS may use it.

Many of our current Members will not be aware that diagonally opposite us was this Signal Box which was taken out of use on 28 October 1990 and replaced by a portacabin as an interim measure until 1994 when, with a

CCTV link, IECC Sandhills took over nearly all Merseyrail activity, plus Southport to Parbold (exclusive) and Bidston to Dee Marsh Junction on the Borderlands route to Wrexham. The crossing gates were replaced with lifting barriers when the box was closed.

