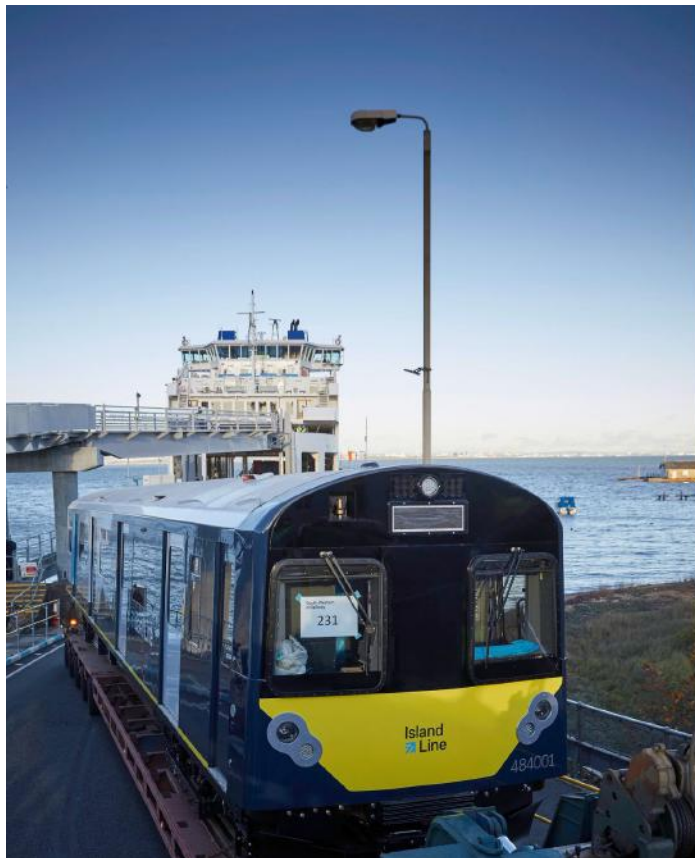




NEWSLETTER 93 : Jan 2021

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Editorial

First of all - Happy New Year! It certainly promises to be that for rail passengers on the Northern Line, as the last of the Pacer railbuses are retired, with 142004 having the "honour" of the last journey from Kirkby to Manchester Victoria.

Built around 1980, with a planned service life of 20 years, they have been kept going for twice that. Still, they are but spring chickens compared to the Class 483 trains running on the Isle of Wight, which were originally built for London Underground in 1938.

This New Year also brings good news for passengers on the Island Line, as the new (to the Island) Class 484 trains will shortly be replacing the 80+ year old Class 483. 484001 was - appropriately - delivered first, with the first car travelling on "St Clare", the 2pm Wightlink ferry from Portsmouth on Thursday 19th November, transported by road to Brickfield Siding, near to Sandown station where it was set on rails, joined by the second car later the same day, and, running on batteries, subsequently moved to Ryde Train Care Depot (by Ryde St Johns Station) overnight. Thanks to South Western Railways for the photograph, which appeared on Twitter with the caption "Another Londoner leaves the big City for Island life". I will be following events and hope to travel on the class 484 trains in August.

Andrew Chrysler

Events Diary

A weekly meeting is held each Friday 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 Report

As I write this we are coming to the end of another year, and my goodness what a year, both personally and for the country as a whole. First of all in early January I was hospitalised briefly with Giant Cell Arteritis which caused double vision and some loss of sight in both eyes. This curtailed much of my modelling, and helping with the renovation of the clubrooms for the next few months. Just as things were slowly improving and I was able to do some limited modelling, the medication I was on resulted in the formation of cataracts which has further set things back. Bright lights are a killer, as is small and non-contrasty writing. I am on the list for a cataract operation in the New Year, hopefully sooner rather than later and that it will mean that I can start to drive again (this will be much to Heather's relief).

As far as the Club is concerned we started on a very positive footing. Various members put in a huge amount of effort in the first ten weeks of the year painting and decorating the clubrooms. Although it was not completed by the time lockdown commenced, it was fortunate that a couple of members managed to finish the work. And I must say that the lounge, entrance vestibule and stairs now look fit for purpose. There are a few minor things to do like sorting out disposing of books, DVDs. prints etc but is probably best done as a "group" exercise. The garden has also had a bit of

a makeover thanks to the efforts of two or three of the garden railway enthusiasts. Gone are all the old exhibition barriers , as are the weeds (do not know what the spring will bring though. This clearance is in preparation for a laying down some 45mm gauge track. The only disappointment was that sometime during the year a good proportion of the asphalt of the new shed roof disappeared and we did not realise it until we found in November that water was leaking in and had caused damage to the underlying plywood. Again thanks to the efforts of the stalwart garden railway gang, a tarpaulin now covers the roof. Hopefully it has been tied down securely enough that Storm Bella will not rip it off. We did get a quote to replace the roof but the price was out of this world (I suspect the guys did not want the work).

So much for the bricks and mortar side of things. What about model railways? Well of course, the upper level 32mm gauge track has been operational for some time. However it has not, of necessity been used much this year due to people spending their time on building refurbishment and then with the Covid issues. But it is there for people to use if they wish to. The middle level, or HS16.5, is likewise now fully operational and available for use - even down to the remote operation of the run-round loop points. Hopefully we will be able to soon see Jim's Hornby live steam OO trains running. Activity on the lower level, or what will be the 9mm gauge track, was deferred for a number of reasons. Firstly, we already have a couple of functioning N gauge layouts that could be used in the interim and so the urgency to get cracking on track laying was not there. Then, once the Covid restrictions kicked in, it did not seem appropriate to start track laying without a consensus on what was required. Of course this was compounded by the non, or limited, availability of track due to everyone wanting it (modellers loo roll syndrome). So, obviously a project for the coming year.

I probably should conclude this missive now otherwise your editor will be complaining that there is not enough space in the newsletter for others to contribute. I hope you had a happy, albeit quiet Christmas and that the New Year brings a welcome respite from the strictures of 2020. So, please stay safe and we look forward to the vaccine being a success and us being able to meet once again in person. With my best wishes.

Ian Shulver

Secretary's Report

When I wrote last year's January newsletter we had no idea of the significance of events unfolding in China. Or at least most people didn't, but my colleague with whom I share a Medical Panel did. Medics have been waiting for the big pandemic since at least the time when I qualified in 1977 and there have been several false starts, including SARS which was much more lethal than Covid 19 but less easy to transmit. My colleague was pretty certain that this was it, and he was right. As soon as it appeared, I was interested in the long term effects of the illness, as the mysterious illness called encephalitis lethargica caused longer term illness and disability for a few years after Spanish Flu, and sure enough now we have Long Covid.....

With vaccination commencing, it is expected to be able to bring some control to transmission, but even that is not simple because we are dealing with a quite different virus from the one that causes influenza, one which is much closer to the common cold, which as we know infinitely mutates. It is very unlikely that a single vaccine which destroys the virus (as happened with Smallpox) can ever be developed due to this capacity for change. So the Covid is likely to be with us for a long time and we are likely to need regular vaccination to keep it at bay for the foreseeable future.

It is too early for a review of the impact of the virus and the government's response (I think it will always be too early for this for the current PM!), but it has virtually destroyed the business of the railways with government advice to use private transport. Yet the railways are potentially the remedy to so many of our current problems, including the lorry queues in Kent. If all that traffic had been in containers on rails then 8000 lorry drivers would have been enjoying Christmas with their families. And it will be the same when the Brexit Bureaucracy starts - containers 'stuffed', customs and regulators cleared and sealed at inland ports could travel through to Europe through the tunnel or even on ferries without turning Kent perpetually into the toilet of England. Was it not the loss of handling caused by containerisation that took all of the port trades out of Liverpool?

Similarly, with passengers. The last ten years has seen substantial dieselisation of private cars and an unprecedented growth in polluting SUVs, followed by a lockdown which promoted private transport. Yet to deal with the toxic impact of dangerous air in built-up areas we need measures to

contain access by polluting private vehicles. But we can see just how unpopular these measures are in the absence of alternatives such as light and heavy rail which have been widely developed not just in Europe but even North America and less developed worlds, even without local politicians grandstanding the issue. Ironically it was the earlier Labour government which cancelled light rail projects in northern cities as big as Liverpool and Leeds when our continental competitors authorised such schemes, even in smaller places in batches of ten or twenty at a time.

That mistake is so evident in the cities which did survive Mr Darlings' cull as I found out when I visited Nottingham just before the Lockdown and rode the excellent tramway, ironically built partly along the alignment of the former Great Central Railway. Every journey was crammed and not surprisingly with a tram every few minutes. We have an excellent local railway in Merseyside, but it only covers a small part of the County and lots of the City and the Wirral is excluded. When I worked at Aintree Hospital I used to ask members of staff who were off sick, as to how they got to work. The reply "two buses" needed no clarification and I cannot see too many motorists being lured out of their diesel SUVs by this alternative!



It is the new year which is why I have allowed myself to stray off the focus on model railways and our club, which has been well covered already by our chairman, but I wanted to concentrate on the challenges that face us both from the pandemic and outside the comfort blanket of Europe. But to bring

us back into focus on model trains I include a photo of a station well known to older members although the snow-covered picture of Dulverton was clearly taken long after closure to judge by the location of the tennis court!

Dulverton being the subject of our N gauge layout many years ago.

Jim Ford

Where's Andrew?

Last month, there were no correct answers - but there were also no incorrect answers either, so for this month I am staying rather closer to home.

Last month's answer - I was at Niagara Falls station in Canada, where we boarded the train, only to have to disembark again after travelling half a mile, with our luggage, to go through US Customs. The Canadian station has ground level platforms, which forced us to lift heavy suitcases up to the carriage, fortunately the American station had a raised platform, which made the hour-and-a-half process of disembarking, queueing, going through customs and eventually boarding the train again (which was only permitted once every passenger had disembarked and the empty carriages checked by US agents) a little "easier" than it might have been. The onward journey of over 10 hours ended at Penn(sylvania) Station in New York. This 12+ hour journey made me realise why so many US travellers go by air.



This month (although actually, the photograph was taken last October) I am at a location which can only be accessed via an underpass from the main line station - after passing through the barriers and crossing under the main line, we needed to go through another underpass before climbing the stairs back to ground level. Any answers please to

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**Closure Golden Jubilee commemorative coach tour:
Sunday 7th September 2014:**

Keith Hick

Having received an invitation from Tony Kuivala to join this tour, fifty years to the day the Southport-Preston line closed, I embarked alongside Chapel Street station, along with a sell-out contingent of local people. Stops or pauses were made at all the station sites between Southport and Preston, beginning with St Lukes on the outskirts of the town centre. Whilst no trace of St Lukes station remains, everyone viewed the location of the first West Lancashire station from 1878, no doubt thankful trains still ran through the cleared site to Manchester. A sprightly John Cotterall, author of the booklet entitled, 'The West Lancashire Railway' dating from 1982, joined Tony and myself for the photo stop overlooking the station site. A highly enjoyable visit had been arranged to see the West Lancashire Light Railway's two foot gauge line at Hesketh Bank, within a stone's throw from the now obliterated WLR station. Live steam and hot oil abounded from the narrow gauge locos and a quick visit to the workshops to view the railway memorabilia, including photographs, station and signal box items from the WLR, proved a highlight. Arriving at Lower Penwortham, the River Ribble stone pier remnants carrying the original WLR over both river and Broadgate, were viewed. A stroll along the track bed to the site of the Lower Fishergate WLR terminus then and it was time to rejoin the coach.

Whilst I was giving a commentary over the coach PA system during the return journey, Dr Jim Ford offered me a recording made by a friend of his father, of the final Preston-Southport train exactly fifty years earlier – the very train I had travelled on. So, the MP3 player was placed next to the microphone and the surreal sound of the last train could be heard throughout the coach as we sped towards Southport. Equally surreal, as the coach turned into Preston New Road, I saw the Churchtown totem style station sign owned by



Jim on the luggage tray. "How did you acquire this?", I asked Jim. His reply caused me to chuckle. "That's interesting" I said, "do you realise we have virtual joint ownership?" and

related my tale late at night on 6th September 1964 when I arrived home with my 'trophy'. Just before I stepped down from the coach at my drop off point, I then asked Jim, "How did your father acquire it and how much did he pay?". Apparently, Jim's father paid five bob (25p) the morning after the line closed, when he visited Churchtown station, by then of course closed, but some clearing work was being completed. Having returned the sign, as ordered by my parents, earlier the same morning to the station before work, Jim saw the funny side and we laughed at our 'joint ownership'! Today, such signs are highly collectable with valuations to match.

Reflective thoughts:

And yet, and yet.... Today, part of the West Lancashire Railway, together with the Liverpool, Southport & Preston Junction Railway, remains in use. 1965 had seen closure of the direct Manchester-Southport line through Blowick. Removal of the level crossing and carriage sidings, of earlier school day fame, together with part closure of St Lukes station on the East Lancashire side, were soon completed. Trains were diverted permanently through Meols Cop, providing residents and commuters with an outlying station to Chapel Street, utilising the L&Ys 1911 built link between Butts Lane and Pool Hey junctions. This means trains today traverse parts of the WLR and LS&PJR to reach Wigan, Manchester and destinations further afield. So, the tracks used by the 'Lettuce Line' and 'Altcar Bob' so many years ago still carry railway traffic today, albeit at a fraction of yesteryear's levels.

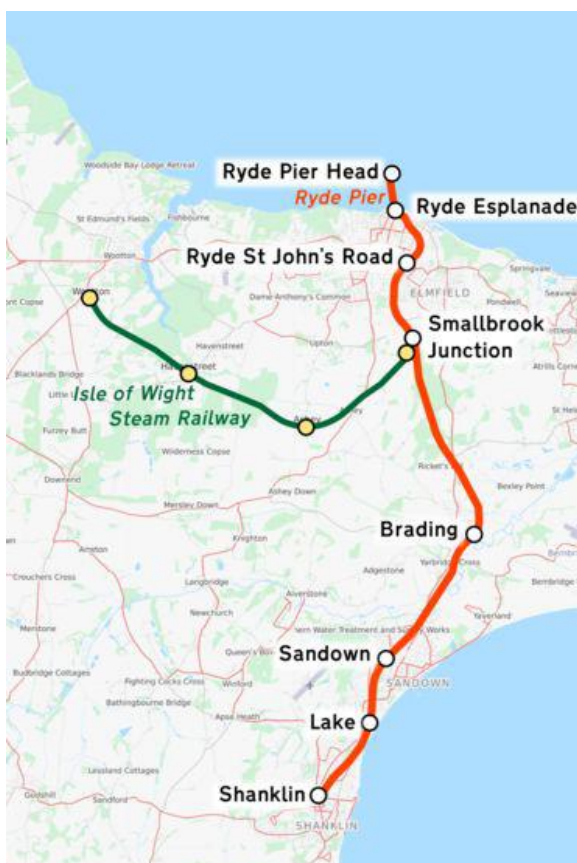
The use of Pacers on the Manchester line has been a contentious issue for several decades with poor timekeeping and the overall level of service a pale shadow from the steam-hauled era of 'Club' trains. Countering this disappointing and dispiriting experience, the MerseyRail Liverpool-Southport service ranks as one of the best in the UK for performance and timekeeping. New MerseyRail trains delivered from 2020 promise to build upon this impressive foundation. With abandonment of franchising and introduction of improved rolling stock for the Manchester line, quality levels will improve the passenger experience of travelling to and from Southport by train.

In the UK's pandemic-riven landscape of 2020, it is impossible to predict how important the railways will become. However, one inescapable fact remains, without the railways, Southport would not have grown into one of the UK's most desirable places to live.

It could be argued Southport is in a twenty-first Century railway backwater. However, the outstanding success of MerseyRail's network, itself a product of the more socially enlightened days of the 1970s, with record timekeeping and brand new rolling stock, harbours a wholly different belief. Climate change and other imperatives have altered public attitudes to such an extent, how we live and travel will rely increasingly upon the reduction of carbon footprints. This is where the railway's future lies: in being more efficient, economical and less polluting than overland vehicular or air transport.

Hopes for the future include increased electrification throughout the UK. Hybrid or hydrogen-powered trains may one day provide a comfortable service to Manchester. Restoration of the Burscough curves, continues as a goal for the Ormskirk, Southport and Preston Travellers Association (OPSTA), once again enabling travel by rail between Southport to Ormskirk and Preston. Other potential long-term plans include third rail electrification from Ormskirk to Southport to complete a triangular 'loop' line to/from Liverpool, utilising a restored South Burscough curve.

Advent of a government-inspired 'Reversing Beeching' policy, backed with £500 million of public money, announced during early pre pandemic 2020, offers some hope Southport may once again be linked to Preston by rail. Whether hope is converted into progress on the ground, only time will tell.



Merseyrail Class 503 for the Island Line? **Andrew Chrysler**

In the 1980's, there were several options being considered for rolling stock to serve the remaining 8.3 miles of railway that escaped the closures following the Beeching Report, shown in red, and running from Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin, and had been electrified instead of being closed.

This line first opened in 1864, initially terminating at Ryde St Johns Road with the extension through Ryde tunnel to Esplanade and Pier Head stations

opening in 1880. The only other railway remaining on the island is the Steam Railway, shown in green.

Gauging trials were undertaken for the Class 503, which were built for LMS by Metro Cammell and were used on the commuter routes between Liverpool and the Wirral. This photograph shows a mocked up profile of the Class 503 roof profile, carried on a Class 485/486 car. A British Rail report, dated 25 April 1983, noted that the underfloor equipment on these units would be unlikely to require the service to be withdrawn on Ryde Pier during heavy seas more often than was experienced already, the issue being seen to be more the shorting of current from the third rail more than the vulnerability of the underfloor equipment, but the report did note that Ryde tunnel would need to be converted into single track operation.

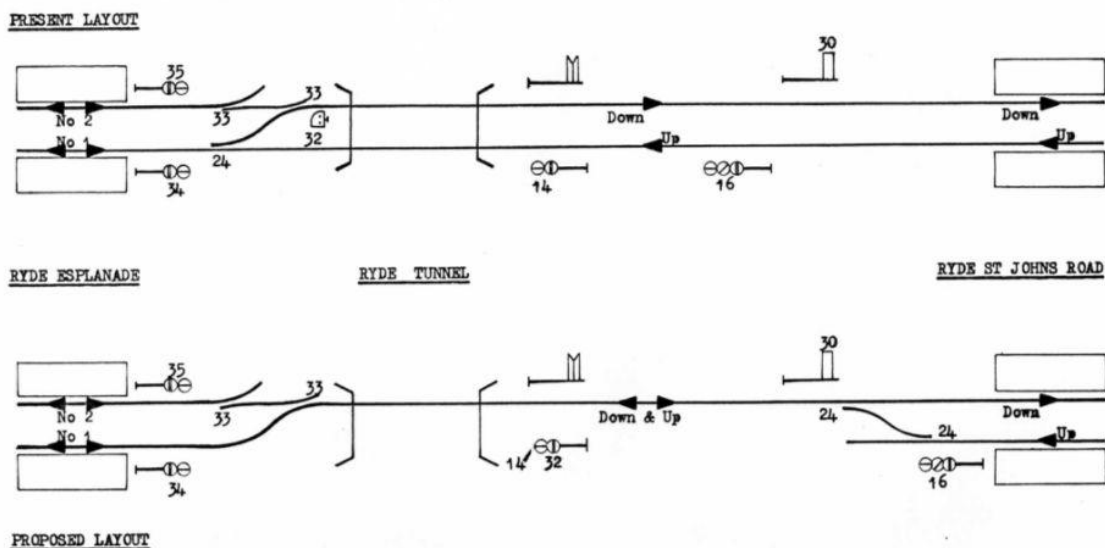


This report is interesting in that - with the imminent introduction of Class 484 units - there has been no mention in the Press of any substantial changes to Ryde tunnel. However, with

a service based on two trains (at 30 minute intervals) the only need for a passing place would be at Brading, and indeed a service based on three trains (at 20 minute intervals) could be achieved with passing at Ryde St John's Road and Sandown so there is no real reason for Ryde tunnel to remain twin track, especially as both the Esplanade and Pier Head stations only use single track and one platform. In any case, St John's Road is less than a mile from Esplanade station, so the loss of double track through the tunnel would only have minimal - if any - effect on timetabling.

Additionally, the report made no reference to the need to lower the track bed in the tunnel, which was raised 10 inches during electrification in an

attempt to alleviate flooding on this section, which is below sea level. The height of the tunnel was 11ft 8in in the steam days - already 10 inches lower than the mainland. Much of the issue comes from interaction between the curvature of the tunnel roof and the curvature of the train roof, which is further complicated by sharp reverse curves and a combination of single and double track bores.



The report noted that London Underground were unlikely to dispose of any suitable stock before 1990, and further noted that many of the problems then being experienced on the Island were related to the use of deep level underground stock in the open air, in particular draughts in passenger spaces and rainwater ingress in the driving cabs. It is to be hoped that the "new" Class 484 stock - being used on surface and near-surface lines, will be less susceptible in this regard.

In the event, the Class 483 were introduced between 1989 and 1992, their predecessors having been initially expected to last about 10 years but the maintenance crew at Ryde managed to make them last for more than twice that period, and the class 483 - being already 50 years old - were not expected to last 30 years on the Island, but with similar herculean efforts have - incredibly - been kept (mostly) operating.

On the other hand

Barry Miltenburg

Since my first interaction with SMRC about a year ago, I have come to admire, close up, the general approach to their hobby adopted by the

"16mm guys" – social, freelance, laid back – lots of qualities painfully missing from the 2/4/7mm modellers for whom the locomotive number MUST be correct if it's going to pull THAT train on THAT line on THAT date.

The saving grace, thankfully, seems to be Rule 1 – "It's my railway, I'll do what I want". That too is to be admired.

However, the laid-back approach that some adopt would not suit me. My soon-to-be-started system will feature some 60 locomotives hauling 55 trains containing 100 coaches and over 750 wagons. Most of that rolling stock is already in hand and has been acquired because I have not deviated from my initial plan. That plan was pulled together 10 years ago when I had the vision to create my "perfect" layout. I set the location ("Eastern/North Eastern Region borders) and date period (1959-62). From there, I only bought those locomotives, coaches and wagons that suited such a scheme.

I am no rivet counter and do not have a problem using stock repainted to represent something else (like the omnipotent Hornby Clerestories) but I do balk at the thought/sight of anachronisms like blue diesels, pre-grouping engines running years after their scrapping dates and (for the 1960's), pristine PO coal wagons. BUT, I am trying to paint a picture of BR at the turn of the decade and need things to be reasonably accurate to be able to succeed.

So, is my approach right, or "righter"? Certainly not. It might suit me and the project I am looking to build but maybe another approach is right for another set of requirements. That is the essence of Rule 1. Your own approach is right for you and we are fortunate as a hobby to be able to accommodate an approach for each and every one of us. Yes, my approach is influenced by others who have gone on before and it may influence others who follow, but it will never be the "right" way.

The key factor for me is what I can learn from the approach of others. Can I take something from a very different approach that I can adopt for my own use? Actually, I think I can. Everybody who contemplates modelling the old Eastern Region starts with a vision of A4's on long expresses racing North (or South) but actually, there is plenty more. M&GN trains plodding their way through the middle of nowhere, endless coal trains across most of the system, seaside trains to the windswept North Eastern coast running Saturdays only. As modellers pick the elements they want to portray and mix together, so can I. My system does not represent a main line with

Pacifics and long trains. I have seaside excursions, coal trains and meandering stoppers, however unlikely the juxtaposition of such elements, Rule 1 applies and that's what I shall do.

In my mind, I'm dead right. The fact that you consider it less so is actually one of the healthy aspects of our hobby.

And Finally...

Back to the Isle of Wight, for this photo of the outgoing Class 483 on Ryde pier. Thanks to the IW County Press Camera Club for this photo.

