SOUTHPORT MODEL RAILWAY SOCIETY

Newsletter

Issue 58: January 2018 Editor: Allan Trotter
Email: eastbankmrc@btinternet.com

Editorial.

New Year, new models, new prices.

Browsing the model railway manufacturers' web sites, there is a plethora of new items on offer. One thing that is very obvious is the ever increasing level of visual detail on these models. To give one example, the Class 156 unit from Realtrack as made by Rapido has full underframe detail, lighting and bizarrely, a fully detailed toilet interior is specified. Just why this is provided is not clear as the toilet window is opaque!

All this detail comes at a cost of course and at £210.00, is some five times the cost of a pre owned Lima model. Whether this considerable extra expense is good value for money, only the more affluent can decide by means of their wallet. Reading through the various on line forums, it seems that these excessive prices are being fuelled by born again trainspotters of a mature age and with a surfeit of disposable income entering the hobby.

This ever increasing cost in the pursuit of perfection does not only apply to the model railway hobby however. On the real railways transport minister Grayling (known to his friends as "Failing Grayling" by the way) has cancelled many proposed electrification projects out with the London area and with good reason. Costs for these projects have escalated completely out of control because the planners and designers are demanding much higher specifications than is really necessary. This quest for excellence completely ignores the good old fashioned idea of value for money and is actually a retrograde step on their part as all these cancelled projects will eventually put these very people that demand it out of a job.

Whilst the railways are being compelled to continue with diesel powered trains, the government has a policy of the prohibition of internal combustion powered automobiles with these to be replaced by battery powered electric road vehicles. This may at first seem environmentally idyllic but as usual the politicians are not actually intelligent enough to understand that electricity is not a fuel; it is an energy transmission medium. How and where is all this extra energy going to be generated? That's a lot of windmills!

If further railway electrification out with the Greater London area is ever to recommence under the current extravagant regime, then in effect we are going to end up with a railway network that none by the very wealthy will be able to afford, in fact just like the way the model railway hobby is becoming.

Diary of forthcoming events.

23-24-25th Feb 2018	Monsal Dale exhibiting at Modelrail Scotland, Glasgow
24th Feb 2018	Canadian Pacific, Southport Lecture Society, Jim Ford
10th Mar 2018	Night Ferry, Southport Lecture Society, Allan Trotter
28th Apr 2018	Spring Model Railway Exhibition, All Saints Church Hall

Chairman's report.

I hope you all had a very happy Christmas and received lot of appropriate goodies (model railway of course). My family of course did not, it was all much more sensible stuff (additive for gin and tonics, trousers and chocolates, they can share them).

I was sorry that I had to leave the party early on Friday night but I had instructions from the grandchildren to be there when they arrived, depending on which set of grandchildren it was, I either had a 50% success rate or a 50% failure rate. I must thank Jim for doing all the organising of this event, he did a splendid job. I should also thank those who so generously donated prizes for the raffle and to Frank for running it.

Both Jim and myself will be away for the whole of January and probably only contactable sporadically via e-mail. Frank has kindly agreed to be the primary contact point during this time with Tony being the contact for things specifically in connection with the Clubrooms. On which point, I have been contacted by the contractors who have informed us that the remaining work on the building will recommence on or about the 15th January. Apparently they have track possession that weekend and will be putting up scaffolding again so that the work on the south elevation can be done (pointing, gutter connection, kitchen roof and cladding etc, as well as painting). We have decided that the club night for the month of January will be on Friday only, reverting back to Tuesday and Friday from February.

Could I please remind members that subscriptions, held at £35 for this year, are now due. Please let David have your subscription (cash or cheque) as soon as possible since we do have to pay rent, rates, insurance and electricity.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for the New Year and will see you in February. **Ian Shulver.**

Secretary's report.

A Happy New Year to members from myself and Fiona. And thanks to all of you who attended our Christmas Party and made it such an outstanding success. I am sorry that the impending arrival of painters from the Network Rail contractors prevented the operation of Fishy Tales which is now approaching its first milestone (all track down and aligned). Similarly Clairmont Quay is awaiting its re-wire. Monsal Dale ran well all night but with the cold weather not many would want to venture upstairs.

It was nice to meet up with old friends and I hope that you were able to sleep well after the ghost story. Network Rail's contractor is intending to paint the inside windows during January which reduces access to Fishy and they are also proposing to erect scaffolding and complete the outstanding external work over the weekend possession of 14/15th January but maybe we shouldn't hold our breath as they were originally doing this work in November. If you attended the party, you will have seen the damp patches inside our lounge as a result of the failure to connect the downpipe.

In view of the continuing work by Network Rail on the project, the Committee are proposing that for the month of January, the club will only meet on Friday nights and in the absence of the Chairman and myself during that month, Frank Parkinson has kindly agree to act as stand-in for Chairman and Secretary.

Once more, a Happy and Prosperous New Year is offered to all members and we hope to see you at the clubroom and attending club events in 2018.
Jim Ford.

Treasurer's report.

No report submitted.

Exhibition Coordinator's report.

No report submitted.

Contributions from Members.

West Country Electrification.

I have recently been reading The Taunton to Barnstaple line – a history of the Devon and Somerset Railway by Freddie Huxtable (Lightmoor Press) and was amazed to find that the Board of the Great Western Railway had, in 1925, commissioned a report from Sir Philip Dawson. This was published in 1927 and was entitled The Electrification of the Main Line Taunton to Penzance and Branches West of Taunton.

Before I discuss this particular document though, who was Sir Philip Dawson? He was born in 1866 and, unusually, was educated at Ghent and Liege Universities before becoming a member of the Institutes of Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers. He was a partner in consulting engineers Kincaid, Waller, Manville and Dawson working mainly on dock developments and electrical supply and traction projects throughout the British Empire. His work was clearly of a very high professional standard as indicated by being awarded both the George Stephenson Medal (ICE) and the Gold medal by the Institute of Transport, and, again unusually, was able to converse in French, Italian, German, Dutch, Portuguese and Russian. Early in the 1900's he received a commission in the Volunteer Force (the precursor of the Territorial Army)

eventually rising in rank to lieutenant colonel and commanding the West Kent Regiment. He did not see active service during WW1 but worked in the Ministry of Munitions and Board of Trade (Water Power Resources Committee). After the war he became active in Conservative politics and in 1921 was elected to represent Lewisham West following a by election, retaining his seat until his death in 1938. His politics were said to be right of centre and in his later years was in opposition to the India Act and was an admirer of Benito Mussolini (do I hear cheers from a couple of our members). Indeed shortly before his death he became Chairman of the Anglo- Italian Parliamentary Committee.

However, back to the 1927 report. Prior to this report, there had been an earlier one discussing GWR branch lines, reviewing the potential for energy savings by replacing steam traction with rail motors, but also taking in signalling and staffing matters. Maybe the review was given added impetus following the general strikes of 1924 and 1926; the latter originating in the coal industry and which largely brought the railways to a standstill. The 1927 report was clearly very comprehensive looking at political, economic and technical matters and was one of the earlier ones acknowledging that road motor services were a serious competitor to the railways. It gave play to improved safety (better visibility) and as for economic aspects, recognised that electric traction offered an improved average speed for both passenger and freight traffic, quicker turn-round times, lower downtime, quicker locomotive preparation times, lower maintenance costs and reduced deterioration (of the track bed?). Also mentioned were the reduced operating cost of coal and water.

On the technical side the report went into some detail, but was lacking in others. The main omission was that there was no specification of the voltage to be used but it did specify various conductor diameters for the overhead supply. It also gave diagrams showing track feeds and substation positions. It reviewed the type of locomotives that might be employed (1200-1400 hp) as well as indicative costs based on locomotives currently being used on the continent. It also mentioned that mixing steam and electric operation was not desirable. The capital cost of the conversion of all lines west of Taunton was estimated to be almost £3.4m. Presumably the report was purely a review and history has told us that any recommendations given about changing to electric traction were not followed through.

However, all was not lost to the pro-electric fraternity because in 1939 there was a follow-up report on electrification west of Taunton. This was prepared by Metz and McLellan and was independent of the 1927 report. The report, precipitated by a significant rise in coal prices, was a much shorter document estimating the cost of conversion to be £5.1m but with a return on investment of just 0.75%. Although this was a positive return, it was clearly not deemed significant enough and in any event WW2 intervened putting paid to any infrastructure investment anywhere on the railway system.

Were the decisions made by the GWR board in 1927 and 1939 not to proceed with electrification correct? I am sure that many of the railways built in the mid

and late 1800's were justified on much less sound economic and technical arguments and more on egos. Of course accountants and financiers were becoming more influential, not to mention the lobbying and hidden agendas of others such as the Trades Unions and the coal mining industry. I would like to think that if the proposed electrification of lines to the west of Taunton had gone ahead, there would have been less compelling reasons for Dr Beeching's axe fall so heavily and many local communities would still have an alternative to roads to reach out to the rest of the country.

Finally, if electric traction, even as it existed in the 1920's, had been around at the time that IKB was building his extensive rail network, I am sure that he would have opted for it. **Ian Shulver.**

Italy Breaks Speed Records. (Railway Magazine, January 1940)

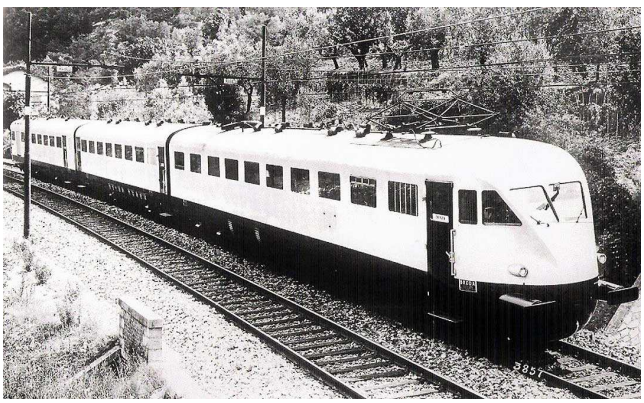
Publication of the official details makes it clear that on the test run of July 20th, 1939, from Florence to Milan, Italy secures a world speed record of the greatest importance. By covering the 195.8 miles from Florence to Milan in 115.2 minutes, a start to stop average of over 100 miles per hour was obtained for the first time in railway history, so far as we know from all published records; the actual start to stop speed was 101.8 miles per hour. The train used was one of the latest ETR200 three-car articulated electric units, completely air conditioned with accommodation for 100 first class passengers, kitchen, baggage and mail space and three lavatories; each triplet measures 206 feet 3 inches overall and weighs 107.5 tons empty or a little under 120 tons with a full compliment of passengers and luggage. One of these units was illustrated on page 278 of our October 1939 issue. On this occasion the Italian Minister of Communication, the General Manager of the Italian State Railways and a distinguished company of engineers and journalists were on board. Prior to this the fastest railway run in Italian history had been made by one of the earlier three-car sets, which on a similar test run, on July 27th 1938 covered the 132.9 miles of the Rome-Naples Direttisima from Rome to Naples Central in 83 minutes at a start to stop average of 96.1 miles per hour, attaining 201 kph on the 1 in 167 falling gradient from Campoleone to Cisterna; it is only recently that detailed particulars of the latter run have also become available.

Among the extraordinary features of the latest achievement were a speed of 82 to 90 mph maintained steadily up the 10.75 miles from Prato to Vernio, on an average inclination of 1 in 106; also the fact that the great Apennine Tunnel, which with its length of 11.5 miles is the second longest in the world, was entered at 99mph and left at 109mph. Along the Florence-Bologna Direttisima there is considerable curvature; out of 22 curves between Prato

and Vernio twelve are of 30 chain radius but as just mentioned the speed over this length was a no point less that 88 mph.

At S. Benedetto, immediately beyond the main tunnel (there are 28 tunnels in all between Prato and Bologna) speed was reduced to 90mmph for a 35 ch curve and there were similar reductions for 40 chain curves between Grizzana and Vardo, so that there was restraint on speed from S. Benedetto down to Bologna. The maximum speed reached on this section was 118mph. Nevertheless, the time for the 60.2 miles from Florence to passing Bologna at 50mph was exactly 39 minutes, notwithstanding the fact that from Prato to the summit level in the Apennine Tunnel, 1,058 ft above the sea, the line rises 845 ft. From Bologna to Milan the line is throughout on very easy gradients and apart from the slacks for curves mostly slight, the train had a clear run. The altitudes are 144 ft at Bologna, 111 feet at Modena, 256 ft at Fiorenzuola (beyond Fidenza), 170 feet at Piacenza, 256 feet at Lodi and 462 feett at Milan. The slowings were 83 mph through Modena (30 chain curve), 87 mph at Reggio Emilia for a curve of the same radius, 93 mph at Parma (50 chain curve), 100 mph at Fidenza, 63 mph at Piacenza (20 chain curve), 81 mph at Lodi (40 chain curve), and 75 mph at Rogoredo (30 chain curve).

Elsewhere the speed was kept continuously at well above the 100 mph mark. From Bologna to Fidenza it was mainly between 108 and 120 mph and after a slight check through Firenzuola on a faintly falling gradient the highest speed for the journey, 203 kph or 126 mph was attained. The remainder of the trip until the slack at Rogoredo heralded the approach to Milan was run mostly at 90 to 102 mph, up a steady rise which from Lodi onwards averages an inclination of about 1 in 700. Including all the slacks enumerated from Bologna onwards the 123.7 miles from Lavino to Rogoredo were run at an average of 109.2 mph, an astonishing performance.



Captions. *The picture on the left shows an ETR200 three car articulated train in service on Italian State Railways. The picture on the right shows an ETR200 train on static display at the 1939 New York World Fair. Note the authentic Italian style overhead electrification. Also, the astute observer will notice an example of LMS coaching stock in the background.*

As a result of experience gained on this run, it has been decided substantially to accelerate these high-speed units at the next revision of the Italian

timetables. Between Bologna and Milan, 135.6 miles, the fastest time will be cut from 113 to 105 minutes giving a start to stop average of 77.5 mph. Bologna to Florence, 60.2 miles will come down from 51 to 48 minutes (75 mph), Florence to Rome, 196.4 miles from 187 to 180 minutes (65.5 mph) and Rome to Naples Mergellina, 130.5 miles, from 108 to 102 minutes (76.8 mph).

With a reduction in the duration of stops the fastest overall time between Milan and Naples, 522.7 miles apart (almost identical from London Kings Cross to Aberdeen) will be curtailed from 7 hours 59 minutes to 7 hours 26 minutes. This overall speed of 70 mph will be the first in Europe to exceed 70 mph for a journey of over 500 miles in length. Deducting stops the running time of 7 hours 15 minutes will require an actual average speed of 72.1 mph for the entire distance. **Allan Trotter.**