



NEWSLETTER 89 : Sept 2020

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Editorial.

This month I am on the Isle of Wight... possibly the nearest that I could get to abroad, and there is no quarantine on return! As well as visiting the IOW Steam Railway (of which, more later) I also took a journey from Shanklin to Ryde Pier Head and back on the Island Line, taking a few photographs on my way, as this will be the last year of operation for the venerable Class 483.

Built originally in 1938 for the London Underground, ten trains made it to the IOW to replace the classes 485 and 486 which were introduced to the island in 1967, already 44 years old by then. Two trains remain in service, albeit with frequent failures, and the depot at Ryde St Johns Road works miracles keeping them going with cannibalised parts.

"New" trains - already 40 years old - are being remanufactured and will arrive in the new year, and the line will close from 4 January to 31 March for modernisation works - the track needs to be lowered under two bridges and the platform height needs to be increased, again by track lowering for the

new stock. In keeping with the second hand nature of the Island Line, the "new" track that is being laid is itself second hand.

There was a recent fire at the electrical substation feeding the 630v third rail - already in a poor condition that there is a substantial voltage drop at Shanklin, the most remote end of the line, hopefully this will also get a much-needed upgrade.

A passing loop south of Brading is on the cards, allowing a 30 minute interval between trains. At present, a passing loop is at Sandown station, with the line doubling at Ryde, so the service is at rather awkward 20 and 40 minute intervals (although there used to be three trains an hour the service was reduced several years ago). It will be interesting to experience the difference next year.

Events Diary.

There is a weekly "zoom" meeting. The link for this meeting is sent by email each week. Please be certain to use the current link, old ones will not work.

Chairman's Notes.

Another month has gone by – cannot believe how quickly time flies. I hope you are enjoying the photographs which seem to appear in our daily paper on a regular basis. But what have I been up to this month? Although I seem to have been rushed off my feet. Not a great deal has been to do with railway modelling. In the first instance, I think you know that I had a (almost) failure with my laptop which necessitated purchasing a new one.

Trying to set this up, recovering data from the old laptop and then transferring that data seemed to take forever. Fortunately, I managed to rescue most of my files and photos (a good number were backed up but not all) so all was not lost. The operating systems on both laptops were inevitably different so until I get to grips with Windows 10, everything takes just that bit longer. We have also had family here on a couple of occasions and of course that really does eat into one's time (in a nice way though).

Nevertheless I have been to the clubrooms on two or three occasions and am pleased to say that, firstly, the layout lighting for both HS16.5 and HS9/12 circuits are now fully functioning (please remember to switch of if

you use them) and secondly Monsal Dale has been set up in the downstairs north room and allows those who are so inclined to run N gauge trains.

In terms of my own modelling activities, I have been trying to set up my test track with a rolling road connected to an ammeter/voltmeter to check on how locomotives are performing. I purchased a small speed controller for the princely sum of £6 and a suitable digital ammeter/voltmeter for about the same price. These were put into a homemade box and wired up as recommended in an article in the 2mm Association Newsletter. It worked perfectly using the suggested 9V battery with speed control at least as good as with a Gaugemaster controller is almost 10 times the price. However, some of the locos I have need a little more oomph than 9V to get them moving a reasonable speed so I hooked up a 12V AC transfer along with a bridge rectifier to hoping this would be suitable. Unfortunately it did not work – perhaps a smoothed DC supply is needed so will have to find a capacitor to go across the rectifier. Update next month (hopefully).

On a more sombre note, a number of you will be aware that Jim tripped over some items left on the floor in the clubroom and badly gashed his knee (should have been wearing long trousers and also looked where he was going – I say this in jest), but it could have been much worse. I believe a fuller report and recommendations are being prepared, but in the meantime if you are at the clubrooms on your own, please be careful where you tread and do not leave stuff on the floor which people can trip on. If you are upstairs, use the barrier that is at the top of the stairs. And finally let someone know that you are at the clubroom and what time you expect to leave.

Ian

Secretary's Notes.

Well, another month, but at least not another funeral! But I did have an accident at Eastbank Lane no less – more about this later.

To celebrate my 66th birthday we headed to Wales for three days in Porthmadog, and travelled on the Ffestiniog Heritage trains to Tanybwllch on each day. Social distance requirements mean that there are no buffet or train toilet facilities and all passengers travel in traditional compartments

which are sanitised between journeys. Only complete round trips from Port to Tanybwllch are available and have to be booked on-line in advance at a cost of £50 per compartment with two free adults included. Up to 4 children can also travel in the same bubble for £1 each. Passengers seemed happy with these arrangements and this recent weekend the railway was fully booked in advance.

Allocation of compartments is done by the guard, so if you want first class, be early. A 'bug box' counts as a single compartment so a family can have a carriage to itself; but you have been warned, these four-wheel vehicles are very bumpy! The Tanybwllch café is open and understandably doing a roaring trade during the 55 minute layover of each train. As each train arrives, the previous one leaves with all the passengers locked in to prevent mixing on the platform. There is now also a daily train from Caernarfon to Bedgelert but Tanybwllch to Blaenau and Port to Bedgelert remain closed.

During our visit we witnessed but did not travel behind the newly restored large George England locomotive Welsh Pony. I put that right a week later when I secured a members ticket on a late afternoon train hauled by the Pony which is painted dark purple lake without any brass plates and a plain painted number 5. The brass plates in both languages and the green livery will come later. The lockdown has been unfortunate for Boston Lodge as they were due to unveil not just the restored Welsh Pony but also James Spooner, their new Fairlie.

This most recent weekend we journeyed down to Towyn and travelled on the Talyllyn Railway's Gin train which stopped at each station for a taste of a different Dyfi gin with a very good picnic at Abergynolwyn.

It is looking extremely unlikely that we will be able to hold an exhibition this November but hopefully by next year the vaccination programme will have started and begun to restore some normality.

For the last couple of weeks I have been attending our clubroom on Tuesday evenings at 2000 and running some of my trains. This is an attempt to begin to restore our limited attendance. Up to three other members in masks may want to join me. I didn't make it this week due to the foul weather and my leg injury. If you want to join me, please place a message on the Whats App group or message or email your intention.

Last Tuesday, I brought along a good length rake of Southern Region Mark 1s and Bulleids with my unrebuilt Merchant Navy and in the process of discovering a bad track distortion in the middle loop of the inner OO line, I fell over the Clairmont stock box which had been left sticking out into the room. Whilst we obviously need to be careful and look where we are going, it is true to say that two of our members have substantial sight impairments and others may have early cataracts like me. Clearly we need a 'slips trips and falls' risk assessment. Anyway contact with the polished stockbox resulted in a four hour wait to have the skin of my shin fixed back in place which had rolled up like a carpet and four weeks of clinic dressings will follow. As always with the NHS, care was superb but you never bring enough magazines for the reading as you wait an eternity!

Jim

Where's Andrew?

It looks like last month's teaser stumped everybody. The location was the Telford Steam Railway, which is only open on Sundays and is far smaller than the nearby Severn Valley Railway - but is run by a team of very



welcoming volunteers, and offers an opportunity to get "up close and personal" which the larger railways can't offer. It is usually possible to ride in the brake van, which makes rather a change from the usual carriage, and as the loco does not "run around" you get an excellent view going forwards as well as backwards.

The clues to this month's teaser can be found in the track gauge and the locomotive number.

A further clue of a geographical nature can be had by extending the journey from this coastal location via Grewelthorpe, on my return to Southport.

The Story of THAT shed

Barry Miltenburg

I have already outlined, via this Newsletter, the outline of the plans I have for a railway empire in the garden of our new home in Southport but the story of actually creating it has become something of a saga. To avoid me having to bore everyone with the story over and over and in order to share my highs and lows of the journey, I thought that another Newsletter article was in order.

The original plan for this empire called for a space some 24 feet x 16 feet although, at the time, I was unaware of the consequences of such a demand. Having moved to Sefton and read the Planning laws, I was happy that I did not need planning permission and, indeed, could sneak a bit extra

space as the house had a 70 feet x 50 feet garden. Thus, like Topsy, the shed grew to 28 feet x 16 feet 6 inches. Please forgive the Imperial measurements but I don't do French.



The actual track plan had not changed during this expansion programme, the layout just got bigger within the area and, therefore, the only real change was the storage siding lengths and the sizes of (the 53) trains being accommodated.

I had, of course, read up on Building Control and knew of the requirements having qualified as an electrician in recent years. Part A deals with construction standards, Part B with fireproofing etc. I was

satisfied that I could comply with all the requirements – the main areas of

focus being fireproofing and construction. The shed is being built by a firm near Lancaster who normally build agricultural property and hence they had little knowledge of the Residential Building Control restrictions. You will appreciate that the "Garden Centre" shed suppliers fell off their chairs when faced with a request for a building of this size!

Enter the Building Control Inspector.

It's clearly one thing to have read the Building Control rules and another to know how they are interpreted and applied. I knew that special requirements came into play if the shed floor area exceeded 30m² (that's 35.8 square yards in English). I had covered off all those bases with the offer of a structural engineer's report on the roof construction, special fireproof treatments for the walls etc. At first, the Inspector was happy and during an initial site visit was impressed with the dossier of information that I presented to her, but in a subsequent email, she raised concerns about the roof trusses. I sorted that with the structural engineer's report. She then insisted that the pad had to be supported on a suitable base with the footing

grounded on "clean sand" – a local requirement.



A test hole in the garden revealed that the clean sand was some 30 inches below the surface. That would involve the removal of some 40 tons of soil and replacing it with 60 tons of compacted hardcore with a top slab weighing another 12 tons – all to support a wooden shed weighing just over a ton. I pleaded a case that this was somewhat overkill and whilst she offered an alternative (using a suspended floor over an excavated pad), she then dropped the bombshell of all bombshells.

As the shed was over 30m² (35.8 square yards), it was treated as a "Building" albeit one made out of wood. A Building has, by her

definition, a life expectancy of 60 years and therefore, the shed had to be certified as fireproof for 60 years.

Apart from this being absolute nonsense, it was an impossible ask. I could not get the timber high-pressure emersion treated. The shed would never be certified as compliant.

The answer? Reduce the shed size down to under 35.8 square yards. I



calculated that this equates to 46,500 square inches or a shed 310 inches x 150 inches (25 ft 10 inches x 12ft 6 inches). That is exactly what I have done. The plan was reduced back to its original size and then tweaked into a longer, narrower site. The track plan remains unaltered and trains

are a bit shorter but on the bright side, shorter trains means a lesser requirement for rolling stock (about £1500 worth as it happens!!).

And so, we end up here. The shed had already been commissioned in my haste and so the builder had to dismantle and reconstruct parts of it to fit the new size. In doing that, he has been an absolute hero. The initial delivery of panels happened on August 18th with the remainder coming the following day when construction begins. By Friday 21st, it will be built and large quantities of ale will be consumed by its new owner in celebration!!

The house renovation moves on at pace so by the New Year, I fully expect to be making a start of my dream layout – after all, I now have the shed, the point-work, the track, locomotive fleet, (most of the) rolling stock and loads of other stuff gathered during these layout-less months.

If I don't reappear from hibernation until the middle of the year, you'll know why.....

A grounded coach continued

Frank Parkinson

As predicted at the end of my previous article and as you can see the coach is completed.



Materials used are again from scrap boxes, the "dunny" roof and verandah are from baked bean tins left to quietly rust in a corner somewhere, the oil lamps are washers and offcuts of plastic rod, would have been nice to have lights in them but..... the paling fence laboriously cut

from the ubiquitous coffee stirrers. The picture set in the greenery of Moss Park L R is purely for show of course, as the model is largely built of wood and wouldn't last five minutes in the recent downpours. A useful addition to the layout though as it can sited anywhere, particularly where the Mind Your Own Business grows and there is plenty of that ! See you next time.

Heritage Railways in the "New Normal"

Andrew Chrysler

I took the opportunity of visiting the Isle of Wight Steam Railway in August, and thought that it might be of interest to compare the experience to my last visit, in summer 2019.

The Isle of Wight Steam Railway is based with offices and workshops at Havenstreet station, and extends 9 kilometres from Wooton station to the west, which has road access, to Smallbrook Junction in the east which can only be accessed by Island Line trains, running between Ryde and Shanklin. Island Line trains only stop at Smallbrook Junction on days when the Isle of



Wight Steam Railway is operating. Map courtesy of Wikipedia member "Peeky44".

This year, tickets were sold in advance, for a complete round trip from Havenstreet, and were available on line. Tickets starting from the

other stations were also available but in limited amounts, by telephone only, and indeed on the Saturday that I visited Island Line was not operating, due to track "improvement" works over the weekends. Anyone who has ridden the Island Line (or the "railway rollercoaster" as it is fondly known) will understand how much it is in need of improvement and it is scheduled to close on 4 January for a few weeks to prepare for the new(er) trains.

Provision has been made for socially distant queueing, and the gift shop is operating with a maximum number of people inside at any time, while the platform and train remain almost unchanged, save for the addition of the



ubiquitous hand sanitiser dispensers, one can be seen to the left of the station name board.

A compartment is reserved for the sole use of a family unit, to provide social distancing. The compartments were numbered, and boarding the train was easily achieved with

ample staff directing passengers to their compartment. At the end of the journey, passengers were asked to remain in their compartments and were allowed out with enough time between compartments to avoid crowding the platform. As we disembarked, we observed the staff cleaning door handles, door frames and windows ready for the next departure.



Our train was hauled by Hunslet 'Austerity' WD198 "Royal Engineer", a 0-6-0 saddle tank built in 1953 which entered service in 1956... making it about 20 years younger than the main line trains on the island.

In all, Coronavirus precautions did not detract from our visit, and, dare I say it, with

less crowds around, it was a very pleasant experience.

And Finally.

The Night Mail, updated for 2010. Contributed by Tony Kulvala.

This is the Night Mail, crossing the border,
Bringing the Child Support Maintenance Order:
Lots of coaches running behind her,
Each full of bills and Final Reminders.

The buff envelopes with the rubber bands,
The threatening notes and the tax demands,
All the junk mail is still sent down the tracks,
While more urgent stuff tends to go now by fax.

Pile on the power, the loco lifts,
Tons of catalogues, tawdry gifts,
Offers of luggage, offers of trips,
Red and Black envelopes, YES and NO slips.

Coupons and carbons and counterfoils too,
Each with an offer that's ONLY FOR YOU!
"Dear Mr Blank, in the whole of your road,
Our computer has picked you to open this load".

Offers for Book Clubs and Offers for Discs,
Chances for Profits and Not to be Missed,
Pensions and PEPs, and a call that you must
Invest all your savings in our Unit Trust!

Trolleys are laden with cartons and sacks,
Loaded from platforms and pulled along tracks
Coaches and vans all laden with BRUTES,
Dash through the night along viable routes.

Heading for profit, the prices rise -
The figures are against her, so Privatise!
Keep those wheels spinning along the rail -
The really fast stuff goes by e-mail.

Sell to the Managers! Buy for a pound!
Des. Res. is a part of the Money-Go-Round.....
The station is here! With a final loud clunk,
the train hits the buffers; it's loaded with junk.