



NEWSLETTER 101 : Sep 2021

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Editorial

This month, my editorial contribution will bear a distinct similarity with the Junior School essay, "What I did on my Holidays" for which I apologise, but in my defence, there was a railway connection. A few days were spent on the Isle of Wight, where I had hoped to experience the Class 484 trains in action. Sadly, they are still not running, being delayed from March to May (because of Covid) and subsequently to "summer" because of a software issue, but Island Echo has just announced that they are now expected to start passenger service on 27th October (but I'm not holding my breath). I'm returning to the Island next July, so that should give South Western Trains enough opportunity to finally get their act together.

This makes a dramatic contrast to 1966, when not only did England win the World Cup, but it was also possible to close the line in January, electrify the route (with third rail and the necessary electrical infrastructure) and restart passenger services with London Underground 'standard' stock in time for Easter. The only trains running this August were on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, where the outgoing 483007 'Jess Harper' is now on proud display (and looks smarter and shinier than it ever was in service).

483004 is not in such good condition, having not run since 2019 and being subsequently cannibalised as a source of spare parts, but it has been sited at "House of Chili" where the intention is to restore it (static only) to use as a cafe. They already have a yellow double-decker which is in use as a cafe and in demand for children's parties. When we visited, they were part way through spraying the body with grey primer - using aerosol cans - but the "Big Yellow Bus" looked good and I have no doubt that the "Big Red Train" (the colour according to rumours) will also look quite striking in its setting.



Top Left - 007 and a spare bogie in "Train Story" at the IOW steam railway.
Top Right - 007 is the only class 483 to carry a name. Also a Ryde Pier tram.
Bottom Left - A "driver's eye" view is shown on the television.
Bottom Right - 004 being repainted at "House of Chili"

Our return journey from the Isle of Wight involved a stop at Telford, where we had hoped to visit the Telford Steam Railway, which is a small line (but with big ambitions) currently open on Sundays only. Our visit coincided with

their first "Gronk and Growler Day" so perhaps it should be renamed the Telford Diesel Railway?



Left - 37267 and 144013

Right - not a model! Class 108 photographed from the road bridge.

37267 was on the front of the train, with 08757 on the rear. The line runs a mile from Horsehay and Dawley station to the end of the line and then back to adjoining sidings, giving passengers a 4 mile return journey in total. The line is planning to extend to Ironbridge, which is hoped to attract more tourists, and to this end they have obtained two "Pacer" units to supplement the steam hauled services.

Sadly 37267 failed - due to a circuit breaker controlling the cooling system - shortly after noon on the Sunday, although it had behaved faultlessly on the Saturday (an extra opening day due to the special event) and also behaved without problem a few weeks previously, although this was by invitation only and not a public event. The weekend was the Class 37's first public run after restoration, and a Class 108 DMU completed the day's rides. We had ridden on the 1200 service so "enjoyed" the full breakdown service and consequently a much longer (in time if not miles) ride. Normal Sunday operations are carried out by a steam loco (most commonly a 0-4-0 saddle tank) pushing and pulling one passenger coach and a brake van. Prior to Covid, it was possible to ride on the brake van, which provided what I considered the best experience, especially when enveloped in smoke in the short tunnel.

Chairman's Report

Ian Shulver

Although the pandemic is not over by any means, most restrictions have now been removed. However, I suspect there is still the legacy of almost 15 months of having our "freedom" significantly curtailed now affecting how we interact with the world at large. Although the clubrooms have been fully open for over a month with our regular Tuesday evening and Thursday morning meetings being held, there has been a dearth of members turning up. I appreciate that with the ending of lockdown, many of you will have been keen to visit family and go on holiday. However it would be great to see a fuller complement of members at our meetings. We are doing our best to create a safe environment (ventilation, hand cleansing facilities and so on).

At the present time, there has been some activity in doing some scenic work on HS16.5 – there has been a slight realignment of the track so that a couple of platforms could be installed (now in place, and a number of scenic items (low relief buildings, people, water cranes etc) have been sourced from items already in the Club's possession. This work needs to be progressed and is an ideal opportunity for you to hone your skills in scenic modelling. As for HS9, I think we are almost ready to start tracklaying. I believe there is sufficient width to have four N gauge circuits as well as a 12mm circuit, but before pinning any track down we need to check clearances. To this end we need to know the maximum width of 009 and 3mm rolling stock (can Mike and John let me have these as soon as possible – better still, loan me the two bits of rolling stock. Again an ideal opportunity for you out there who are more interested in the permanent way rather than scenery.

Over the course of the last 18 months we have had a number of enquiries from prospective members but have been unable to show them around the club. To that end we are proposing to hold an open day on Saturday 2nd October to showcase our club to the public – put this date in your diaries please because help will be needed throughout the day. It will be a great opportunity to meet up with members you have not seen for some time.

I understand that early in September a significant number of our members will be sampling the delights of rail travel in Scotland – a sleeper trip as well

as independent travel. I am sure that Andrew will be looking forward to a plethora of articles for inclusion in future newsletters.

Secretary's Report

Jim Ford

Comrades. Not a lot to say this month as like most of the members I have been grabbing some holiday or days away. Last week I took a trip to Chester (using my Merseytravel pass) to see the Pete Waterman layout in Chester Cathedral. 40 bus, Northern Line to Moorfields, then Wirral Line to Chester. Circular 5 bus across the road from the station, get off at Eastgate or at the bus station and walk about 300 yards. The driver didn't know where the cathedral was but fortunately Google maps did! It was the same coming back and I didn't need to wait more than 10 minutes anywhere. Took about two hours which was not much longer than driving after allowing for parking, and a lot cheaper with the opportunity to read on the trains. Almost felt like I was in London – public transport at its best. Sad about Manchester and sadder still about getting to Preston!

The layout occupies a large stretch of the nave of the cathedral and it is an accurate rendition of stretches of the West Coast Main Line built by Thomas Brassey to whose memory the exhibition is dedicated. Brassey built one third of UK railways and one twentieth of those in the world and he lived in Chester. There is a Chapel containing a marble bust of him which was restored in his honour by his estate.

I was a little disappointed by the layout itself as it is just a four track mainline with some rendition of high speed junctions and is really just a very large tailchaser with no stations. The rolling stock is out of the box stuff which can't be faulted but is rather characterless, with all the right lights etc. and probably driven by DCC. Nothing stops or starts. There is a model shop and the exhibition continues until 1600 on 3rd September so if you want to go, you need to be quick!

I carried on to have a leisurely tour of the cathedral with a guide book and a brief stroll in the streets before rain sent me looking for the no 5 bus. The streets were thronged with people despite the pedestrianisation. In our town the motorist lobby claims that pedestrianisation kills trade but that doesn't seem to be the case with Chester. I don't know where they all park, but they certainly make the city very busy and successful (with a population of 90k,

roughly equal to Southport) – and the railway station is over a mile away unlike ours which is right in the centre of town.

As Ian has mentioned, we are planning on holding an Open Day for prospective new members on Saturday 2nd October so please put that in your diary – we need as many as possible to attend to demonstrate our club activities.

I have also been sounding out our friends regarding our annual pre-Christmas Exhibition, which Covid permitting we hope to hold on Saturday 13th November, which is another date for your diary. As has been the pattern in recent years it will largely be a display of our own and our close friends' work, including what we have done during lockdown. We haven't yet got the resources to return to big show presentations yet and after Covid 19 it is difficult to be sure that these will return. Although our pre-Christmas event could be described as a mere pot-boiler, it is a friendly event, keeps us visible to the public and especially the younger visitors, and hopefully doesn't put any of us in hospital. If anybody feels that they have the energy and resources to organise and to stage anything grander, please get in touch.....

Where's Andrew?



Tony Kuivala correctly identified my location as Statfold Barn Railway, where the "cordless" tram is the result of the local council refusing planning permission for overhead electrics.

This month I am at a preserved railway where the main terminus has this distinctive riverside location, but where?

009 Trams - Hong Kong

Mike Sharples

So our next foray into the world of trams is the Hong Kong system. It is a 3 ft 6 in (1,067 mm) narrow-gauge tram system in Hong Kong. Owned and operated by RATP Dev Transdev Asia, the tramway runs on Hong Kong Island between Kennedy Town and Shau Kei Wan, with a branch circular, which began operating in 1902 and was electrified in 1904 and two are preserved at Birkenhead as numbers 69 and 70 so it could be plausible to have a regauged 2ft version of a H.K tram as the Birkenhead ones are standard gauge.

There are many different versions of models of H.K tram models the most popular is Peak Horse which do a lot of all over advertising versions and Atlas editions who do a range of tram models from across the world they do a 6th generation tram built in the 1980's here are some different versions.

Picture 1 - Llanroc T.M.D is an Atlas edition 6th generation H.K tram mounted on a Kato 11-109 chassis the dates are fictitious when the depot was built and it's a bit smaller than the Peak Horse version as can be seen later.

Picture 2 - Diana (party tram) is a generic version of a H.K tram. I am not sure of the maker but I suspect it's a kids toy. I bought it from eBay, it too is mounted on a Kato 11-109 chassis.





Picture 3 - Bigfoot is a Peak Horse model in the all-over livery of Double Happiness which I believe is a cigarette brand in Hong Kong. Maybe cigarettes make you happy or maybe their contents do? Anyway it's mounted on a Kato 11-109 chassis.

Picture 4 - I have also included a Bachmann Birkenhead tram 69 in Birkenhead blue which was never carried on the trams. It's actually a bus livery and Bachmann also did number 70 in maroon and cream.

Annual Sleeper Trip (s) 2021 Part 1 - Cornwall Tony Kuivala

After the many frustrations of 2020 and 2021 our dedicated band of five – Jim & Fiona, Frank & June supported by your humble scribe ventured forth on Tuesday 29th June. Even before we set foot on a train we met Ian & Heather on the concourse at Southport. They too were headed off to Cornwall to meet with family. Their route was through Liverpool South Parkway, Birmingham and Bristol. Ours was Avanti West Coast to London to sample some brief delights of Metropolis before embarking on Night Riviera Sleeper to Redruth

I should have checked more carefully. First Class lounge at Lime Street was closed. Salvation lay very close at hand in Wetherspoons. Just as well it was close by as we only made it onto the train with 2 minutes to spare. Our coach was poorly patronised as was expected. The "lunch menu" was varied and pleasant. The white wine was excellent. A quiet word with the staff meant we could enjoy both the BBQ Chicken Roll and pate platter. This sustenance was adequate to get us to the Doric Arch establishment at

Euston. The second spoiler of the day was that England were playing Germany at Wembley that afternoon. Whilst there were many rebooked tables we were directed to a very pleasant comfortable seating adjacent to the picture window overlooking east bound bus stops and far enough removed from TVs to avoid large screen football. Except of course for the replays each time England scored. We did not eat, merely partook of liquid refreshments for nearly four hours. Our fundamental decision of the day after profound reflection was that as everyone was on holiday we would no longer take decisions. Consensus would rule.

Then a phone call from Great Western Railways underlined the validity of consensus. Night Riviera would be starting from Reading, not Paddington. Arrival timings next morning would be unaltered. Bus 205 west bound from Euston would take us free and scenically overground to Paddington on a hot early evening. It took 15 minutes to find eastbound bus stops on the other side of Euston Road. We booked a table at The Mad Bishop on Paddington concourse for an evening of feasting. This revived memories of the 2016 expedition, except that Football was on in the background. Sweden and Ukraine were competing to be the loser against England at Wembley in a few days' time.

The First Class Lounge on Platform 1 was open and available to us. After a coffee or two we were bored so took a train to Reading to join Night Riviera. Us ignorant Northerners blithely assumed that it would be waiting on the platform for passengers to board from usual 2245. We were not alone. For a major 15 platform station there were no refreshment facilities available. At 0030 we were all still waiting on an empty platform. Usually GWR has two mainline locos available. One draws in the empty stock and provides ETH (for those not aware of the abbreviations that are thrown around to confuse the gullible - Electric Train Heating usually at 415 volts - also the air conditioning, lighting, wifi etc these days). The other loco drops onto the front to take us to Cornwall. The released loco hangs round at Paddington to take away the incoming Sleepers the next morning. Usually this works very well. But only one loco so the train loco would run round stock at Reading. Not so well organised in practice. ECS (empty carriage stock) arrived from the east (less than 3 miles away) at 0030. 57603 Tintagel castle detached, took 15 minutes to run round and another 10 minutes to recouple on. Then we slowly boarded over 20 minutes. Only three Sleepers, other 4 were day coaches which filled very well. For anyone requiring their bunk early there

had been a 150 minute delay. Lack of communication at Reading was magnificent. Only the guy in charge of the engineering activity was prepared to face the angry passengers. Full marks there. Also full marks to unknown person/persons in GWR who ran the special 800 series train from Paddington which arrived on an adjacent platform with it's electronic indicators announcing that it was The Night Riviera. We set off at 0122. All these delays were avoidable. Fortunately it was a warm evening. Berths were comfortable. Refreshments were now available. The on train staff were great. So here ended the first day.....

An angry letter has been sent. Acknowledgement received within an hour. The eventual response merely acknowledged our points which were being passed along the internal chain. We are still awaiting any other response which will not arrive.



Left - Happy party at Redruth.

Right - Truro, looking westwards.

Day Two saw us into Redruth bang on time into a beautiful but rather busy period. Two trains eastwards in quick succession with three trains west to Penzance. I was surprised how many 6 car refurbished HST (High Speed Train - introduced late 1970's) were around. Six cars might sound impressive but only centre four carries the passengers. We enjoyed a calm two and half hours on Station with satisfying breakfast sandwiches in a privately run Buffet cunning named "Fuel" then Jim Fiona set off to collect the hire car. This has been a saga in itself which is not recorded here. Party then split up. Main group set off for Knappa Valley as Launceston Steam Railway was not open at this time. I led the breakout team of one to Falmouth on 0952 Cross Country to Newcastle as far as Truro and changed

into 150234 for 1015 to Falmouth Docks. Wonderful array of renovated GWR semaphore signals control Truro.



Left - Jim at Lappa Valley Steam Railway. Centre - East Pool Mine. Right - Bodmin and Wenford railway car park, we thought of Derek in his absence.

As Tony made his way to the delights of Falmouth and its environs, Fiona, June, Jim and I went to experience the adventures to be found along the Lappa Valley Railway. Lappa Valley Steam Railway runs on one of the oldest track beds in Cornwall, opening in 1849 to carry minerals between Newquay and East Wheal Rose mine. In 1974 just over 10 years after the railway closed (1963), Eric Booth bought a section of the old railway line and the story of the Lappa Valley Steam Railway began. Eric built the new railway to realise his vision of a place where children and adults could enjoy the steam train experience. As can be seen the young at heart members of our party took full advantage of the amusements available. Then over to East Pool Mine, owned by National Trust and forming part of Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. Mining of copper and later tin commenced in the early 18th Century. Water ingress was always a major issue justifying a 90inch pumping engine (Harvey's Engine) to operate seven separate lifts of smaller pumps. This is preserved on site having survived the Mine's closure in 1945. At the peak of activity in the early 1900's more than 500 people were employed.

Falmouth was not as busy as anticipated. The beaches on the west side looked magnificent as also the view southwards to Pendennis Castle on the promontory. Unfortunately time was remiss as I missed an afternoon cruise across Penryn and Percuil Rivers to St Mawes. Any later ones would not have been useful in our party reconvening at Tricky's Hotel. This was very similar to Crossroads Motel (now who remembers that) but with no Benny. Tricky's

was built in 1998 and opened by Jethro (another blast from the past). Facilities were excellent, food exceptional and beer was local real ales. We all took an early night after an exceptional day.



Left - White Rose of welcome at Bodmin and Wenford railway. Centre - a sample of delicious local Oggies. Right - our locomotive of the morning.

Day Three's programme was centred on Bodmin. An early arrival at Bodmin & Wenford Railway allowed refreshments and shopping time. As Northerners were pleased to be welcomed by the White Rose parked adjacent to the car park. Pity it was not Red Rose – we cannot have everything. The chaos developed in the car park was not connected with Frank's image of Derek's car. Our rail trip was in two parts. First was to Boscarne Junction and return which slowed consumption of more refreshments and oggies whilst our engine ran round the stock.

Part two was to Bodmin Parkway and return. Then we set off for the highlight of the day – to Wadebridge for Nick Wood's 45mm Garden Railway modelled on the London & South Western's Bodmin and Wenford line. This is set in his largely compact garden environment with birds singing in surrounding shrubbery. We record the grateful thanks of visitors from Liverpool Division London Midland Region to Wadebridge District southern Region to commend the successful operation of the Narrow Gauge line. The high class afternoon tea and (non) saffron buns were most excellent. We shall return.



Images of Southern Regions 45mm narrow gauge Bodmin & Wenford line.



That night the monster meal at Tricky's defeated our best eater. Doggie boxes were called for.

Can you guess whose small meal this was to finish off a good day?

Day Four was a leisurely start. The hire car was returned. Our selected trains to Swindon took us mid morning straight through to Bristol. There is a lovely private Cafe on Redruth station which we frequented regularly. Our 4 coach "Castle" HST set acted as bus service stopping at virtually every town including Honorary call at Saltash. As we crossed River Tamar into Devon the sky turned cloudy and dull. A lovely nonstop run along through Dawlish. Tide was in and the sea was beautifully calm. Nowhere seemed busy. Day was warm. No refreshments on the train. Guard was giving away bottled water. Four hours from Redruth we arrived in Bristol. Our change of trains took us across the entire width of the station. Seemed rather strange that

the London services arrived and departed from platforms far removed from the main entrance. On short leg to Swindon the refreshment trolley came through twice.

Central Swindon Travelodge is an interesting building. Fallen away from its original role as Government Offices in 1970's heydays. It was rather a shock when our taxi dropped us off at the rear (there was no drop off area at front) at Salvation Army Hostel. One wing (front) was Travelodge, side wing was Salvation Army. This is the nearest we have been so far to Salvation Army customers. Two additional floors have been built on top of Travelodge as rather swish private apartments. The only parking was for these and the Salvation Army. Quite high security levels were apparent. We learned that the hostel is used for rather damaged homeless clients. After a reconnaissance which was quite short as the town centre is smaller than expected we booked The Khyber Lodge Indian Restaurant for dinner. Less than 10 mins walk away. The food and service were excellent as was the level of pricing. Awarded 10 out of 10. It was apparent that Swindon had been a one Employer town suffering recession as Railway Works declined then closed.

Day Five reinforced our previous evening's conclusions. During a quiet good quality breakfast we organised due process to leave our bags for collection later. All bags are not unexpectedly taboo at STEAM. Our stroll took us through downtown Swindon and ex Railway Works staff village to the old Works Site, poorly signposted for casual visitors who have not arrived by car. We eventually found a long underpass beneath the main line tracks into the Works site. Very similar to but upmarket from the Exchange Station underpass from Pall Mall to Bixteth Street. The Works site has been sympathetically converted to a mixture of offices, residential blocks, car parking, Archives and STEAM Museum run by Swindon Council. Not as large as I was expecting. Content and presentation is very interesting. Aura is well achieved.

Unfortunately there was next to nothing available for lunch so we adjourned to Costa Coffee at the mainline station for suitable sustenance whilst our luggage was reclaimed and delivered. Our party then divided for separate returns to Southport. Jim & Fiona set off for Oxford family visit. We returned through beautiful Cotswolds via Golden Valley and Stroud to Gloucester and Cheltenham where we changed onto Cross Country service from Cardiff to

Nottingham as far as Birmingham. For a two coach unit the range of refreshments on the trolley was excellent. Our unit took the Lickey Incline as though it did not exist.

Uneventful interchange at Birmingham into eight coach Class 350 units for Liverpool South Parkway then onto Southport. Very smooth, uncrowded journeys with minimal ticket checks to round off a most enjoyable few days away.

We are now looking forward to Part 2 – Scotland (London, Sleeper to Fort William, Jacobite, Colonsay and Oban) in early September.

Chiltern Model Railway Association

Ian Shulver

Some of you may be aware from a careful inspection of the Club's accounts that we are members of the Chiltern Model Railway Association and have perhaps wondered why, when as the name suggests it seems to have its origins in the south-east. Before answering this, I should say many years ago we did belong to a similar organisation based up here in the north-west (NWMRCA - North West Model Railway Clubs Association).

Unfortunately this organisation for various reasons became moribund, although I believe it still technically exists. At that time the CMRA was slowly expanding its catchment area from the north of London towards Kent, the West Country, into the midlands and also northwards and now includes dozens and dozens of clubs all over the country (Scotland included).

CMRA is actually a limited company managed by a board of directors, with its main role to represent the interests of the model railway fraternity, and more particularly its members clubs as well as providing other benefits, although we initially joined for self interest (members get a substantial discount on insurance which more than offsets our annual subscription).

But what are the other benefits? Perhaps the most visible one is the organisation of a large exhibition (although not recently for good reason) in the Welwyn Garden City area (the northern end of the Chilterns - hence the name). They also run modellers workshops in the same area. In support of club exhibitions, they maintain some storage facilities whereby exhibition managers can borrow the likes of barriers and electrics. I understand there are three of these stores with the closest one to us being located at Stafford. Currently the use of this equipment is free - you only have to collect and

return. We have never used this benefit because we had our own barriers and electrics, but we do not know what the future holds. There is of course a directory of model railway clubs and their contacts, a layout register as well as a newsletter.

Apart from the insurance discount, we have made use of advice that is disseminated from time to time on various topics - most recently regarding the impact of COVID restrictions and so on with respect to exhibitions and re-opening up clubs safely after a prolonged period of closure. It may not seem that we get many benefits for our membership fee, but the directors have a wealth of knowledge that they can draw on if ever we have cause to need it.

And Finally...

Observed on the Seaton Tramway, but it looked more like the makings of a public information film on rail safety!

Before...



After...

