

April, 1966

We hadn't anticipated being able to produce a newsletter this month but thanks to unforeseen circumstances we are, in fact, able to bring you up to date with events on the line. There is news of progress on the locomotives, a traffic report and an advance notice of our next Open Day.

On the Line

1697, 'John Alcock'. In the past few weeks our Diesel Engineer has been trying to remedy the lack of maintenance enforced by the constant use of the locomotive. The engine itself is in good order and is now being prepared for the final visit of the Petters Engineer who overhauled it. The compressor un-loader valve has been adjusted so as to give a higher working pressure thus providing improved braking and more positive operation of the band brake which, up till now, has been slow in operation.

A new grease gun has been purchased and overdue greasing of the braking system and main driving shaft bearings have been completed.

54, 'Sentinel'. More painting has been carried out recently and the application of the undercoat is very nearly complete. The boiler has passed its visual inspection but we are still waiting for the new boiler studs before it can be re-assembled and prepared for the hydraulic test. Meanwhile various boiler fittings have been overhauled and cleaned.

1310. Because the owners of this locomotive live so far from Leeds, not much work has been done on it recently. Apart from the new chimney (ex-J.72) which it has sported for some time the tanks have been given a thorough cleaning inside and one of the spectacle glasses has been cleaned up and replaced. An attempt has been made to straighten a bent spring hanger which is the cause of its very noticeable lean - but this was unsuccessful.

53, 'Windle'. Restoration work has at last started on the engine. The firebars had to be removed to enable the firebox to be inspected. This, according to our firebox expert Ben Wade, is in very good order. One of the first jobs to be tackled was the lubrication of the axleboxes and cylinders. These are supplied by a 'Wakefield' lubricator which is in good order apart from the ratchet wheel which is rather worn and may need replacement. The lubrication pipes were blocked so the lubricator was filled with diesel oil and after much turning of the lubricator handle, oil began to ooze out of the other ends of the pipes. After two years, the locomotive was at last moved on 26th March. All the lubricators are now working satisfactorily and the locomotive runs very smoothly.

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Bagnall 2702. The locomotive is continuing to give excellent results in service and is quite adequate for three heavily loaded plate wagons - it will take four on a dry day. It has on one occasion successfully completed the mammoth task of hauling eleven wagons clear of the bottom loop points. It has been found, however, that the firebars are in urgent need of renewal and a new set has been ordered.

Avonside 1569. Because of the uncertain future of this locomotive comparatively little work has been done on it. The left hand side of the engine has, however, been reassembled. The safety valve cover was at last replaced with the aid of the steam crane. The locomotive was given its first run in its newly assembled state and gave no trouble.

The Whickam trolley. As the engine has, on two occasions, seized, it was decided to remove it for a complete overhaul. This was begun on the night of 19th March - it is now residing in the tool van.

C. & W. Dept. On 20th March the tool van and brake van were oiled up and the bearings checked. The scrap wagon, which has been out of use for some time, had the bottom of the axleboxes dropped and thoroughly inspected. This revealed nothing serious and it is hoped to inspect the remaining wagons in due course.

P.W. & General Notes. Several sleepers have been replaced on the Headshunt (where they had rotted away) by Jim Lodge and his sturdy gang of helpers. ~~Three 13-ton wagons of ballast were~~ unloaded by the Moor End points. At the same time, the old scrap rails were moved to a central point to await disposal. The steam crane was steamed on 26th March and was used to move the tram jacks and old tram parts that had been cluttering up the back road for some time. At the same time the ashes that had accumulated in the back road were shovelled into a 16-ton mineral wagon for use as ballast down the line. A stranger on the line on the same day was Lyndon Shearman who was, until he bought a steam roller, the 'Swansea' engineer. He was seen yielding a shovel with the rest of the regulars despite the inclement weather. A party of 40 boys from Apperley Bridge have also visited the line and were given a brake van trip over the line in two parties. They all seemed very impressed despite the fact that the 'special' was diesel hauled! The new sand-drying hut is progressing rapidly under our "chief sand-drying engineer" 'Midge'; one wall and the roof so far have been completed and it is hoped to have the building ready shortly.

Rail-Mobile. On 16th March the 'Rail-Mobile' was tested on the line by Clayton's. This is a Land Rover fitted with both rail and road wheels. Paul Hubble, who happened to be there at the time, said that it worked an out train of one plate wagon and just managed to haul a loaded (and lightly at that) bogie bolster up the line at the same time using all its large supply of sand and emitting much blue smoke and sparks from the wheels! It would appear from this report that the trials were not very successful and that J.A.'s is in no danger of being declared redundant.

Open Day.

Following the success of the Open Day last September, it has been decided to hold another. The exact date has yet to be fixed but it will probably be on 23rd July. It is hoped that it will take the form of a 'steam day', with the steam crane, Bagnall, 1310 and possibly the Sentinel representing Middleton, with some traction engines and rollers to augment them. The scheme is, however, still in its early stages and further details will be announced later.

Traffic Report

Traffic in the last few weeks has been very erratic. At the end of February there were over 25 wagons waiting in the cutting on British Railways for Clayton's - yet by mid-March there were only two Clayton's wagons in the whole week. Our other source of traffic (R. & B.'s) has, however, been quite steady.

A new University Operating Assistant has been appointed. He is Don Ayres, a first year student from Lowestoft (ANOTHER Great - East-ernite!)

Miscellanea.

Civil Engineer Jim Lodge has traced the probable track of a tramway or wagonway to Beeston Colliery, dating from long before the Great Northern goods branch was built, the G.N. having a Beeston Colliery branch as well.

Beeston Junction signal box is now closed and the signals removed. All G.N. line traffic therefore runs from Middleton Colliery to Hunslet East.

Our Chairman has been walking about for some weeks after one side of his car was removed by a lorry. This happened between Buntingford and West Mill G.E.R. stations. Was our Chairman looking at the Railway instead of where he was going???

At the last A.G.M. of the Leeds University Union Railway Society it was found that despite this Society having founded and started the Middleton project, there was no documentary evidence of this, and no mention in their constitution which could have caused some awkward questions. The A.G.M. passed a proposal applauding the Society's action in 1959 in starting the Middleton project, deeming it proper for LUURS members to take part in all Middleton Railway work, and endorsing their corporate membership of the Trust.

Finally, another plea! More helpers on Saturdays and Sundays down on the line will be welcomed: please report to the Officer in Charge on the site.

This edition of the newsletter has been edited by Stephen Roberts.