

Chairman and Deputy Chairman's Report. Annual General Meeting May 2nd 1970.

The time since the last A G M has been the busiest in our history both for negotiations and engineering work. It does not detract from our progress and achievements over this period to mention that in some instances our organisation has been far from perfect, for which we must take our share of blame. We shall not deal in detail with matters already reported by other officers, but this does not imply lack of appreciation and recognition of their efforts.

We regret that although we both drew attention to the need for us to move into the Broom buildings the moment the NCB moved out, we have been unable to prevent wholesale damage to our buildings there. Great difficulty has been experienced in pinning down both the NCB and the Leeds City Corporation about our status and future prospects. Top level negotiations are in progress with the local M F, the N C B and the N U M by both of us. We are insisting on, and expect to achieve, a proper Deed of Transfer, passing all rights to operate the line to us, and a proper tenancy agreement that will safeguard our rights. We regret that the NCB removed or demolished internal fittings, water and electric supplies in the building, and we have made our feelings clear both locally and nationally to the NCB. We have done everything possible to avoid a hiatus in our status when the area is passed from the NCB to the Leeds Corporation. We have progressed in that we have the Town Clerk's assurance that we shall be consulted in advance in future even though we do not own all the line and land under it. This related to road crossings, unauthorised foot crossings, action by the Leeds Works Dept., and other matters. Our best work is the tunnel plan to carry the Motorway over us, and the relaid diversion line, and facilities for fencing off all parts not fenced by the City, and elimination of unauthorised level crossings. Also we have arranged better curves and gradients on all relaid parts, and have to report excellent progress in collaboration with the B.R. District Engineer's Dept. The status of our Trust on the Tramway Crossing is being dealt with, and the matter of possibly crippling Rates Demands on the complete project is being looked into, with Town Clerk's sympathy. Replacement of the Moor Road l.c. by a standard ex B R type with locking and signalling is now assured after negotiations lasting well over 2 years. We have the prospect of temporary covered and protected accommodation under bridges for our rolling stock to deal with the time when the Motorway work cuts our space and the Middleton sidings are not ready or accessible. The Town Clerk is considering some permanent recognition of our status and desire to own all the line and land under it. The present situation arising over many years events is unsatisfactory. We have managed to hold up any NCB threat to demolish for 6 months.

Too often we have had to deal with emergencies arising from other than our own actions. Very often Clayton's lack of collaboration is responsible, for example the unsatisfactory state of the interworks traffic, and the emergency lifting and re-laying of the Moor End line in 3 days following a threat to block it with rubble. Very strict economy has been needed in acquiring tools and machinery in view of 1969 being our lowest tonnage since we reopened. Urgent pressing negotiations with B.R. have got the traffic back to the 5000 tons a year mark against 1200 tons last year. We support our Treasurer's urgent appeal to RAISE money rather than SPEND it.

The most cheering step forward was the reopening of the line to Middleton Park in June 1969. Our 1960 decision not to run regular passenger trains until we had good track not crossing public roads was unpleasant but absolutely right. We urge the need for close collaboration between Traffic Civil and Mechanical Engineering sections to get the best results. Our membership is such that we cannot waste a single man hour. We would ask for close observance of the rules. We disapprove of members running at 15 mph over a 5 mph section, and ask for strict control of junior members who have been caught trying to move locos or cranes without authority. The coming year is a mammoth one for Civil Engineering. One 60 feet track length put in is worth 20 Resolutions passed unanimously. We appeal for every available member to support this work. We should avoid repetition of the 5 year delay before we erected the Shed in Dartmouth works. The Good Excuses Sub Committee should in fact be disbanded. With the prospect of a permanent home, we must look urgently into the acquisition of suitable locos rolling stock and equipment before it ceases to be available. The opening of Babbington's scrap traffic is likely to double our traffic income and is only held up by lack of manpower.

We regret that despite the offer of one of us to paint and supervise the overhaul of the Swansea and Mumbles coach, this was not accepted, and would draw attention to the damage to our reputation if genuinely historic relics (in this case the

last coach from an 1804 passenger line) are merely left to rot away, whatever the reasons.

We do not propose to mention names of members in detail, but would thank Mr D. Jones for carrying on his work for 4 months after tendering his resignation, despite being professionally overworked and having severe illness in his family.

The Limitation of Liability of our Trust is a technical necessity, but should not be viewed out of proportion. We do not expect this will delay recognition of our Trust as a Charity, the last meeting in person with the Charity Commission getting the reassurance that our applications of 1961 and 1963 for registration were unlikely to encounter further difficulties. The idea of a Railway run as a Charitable Trust was no longer frowned upon.

We regret that the Trustees have too often been kept in the dark about our activities and this has only recently been remedied. It must be made clear that in any normal Trust, the Trustees make the decisions of policy and principle, the Executive Committee is responsible for organisation and management of our affairs. In future the Trustees should in fact be allowed to carry out their normal function even though the events needing Trustee decisions may not be frequent. We have apologised to the Trustees for the discourtesy in keeping them in the dark for so long. Although the Chairman is a Trustee, he has refrained from using his powers as a Trustee to influence his post and duty as Chairman.

We must make it clear that too often the Chairman and Deputy Chairman have been overloaded with work. It has been not unknown for them to have run traffic under pressure from B R or Robinson and Birdsell for 5 days in succession, if no-one else is available. We feel that much of our trouble arises from our being without a Traffic Manager for some months, and the work being kept going by ordinary members. Again it is not unusual for the Chairman to be relying track urgently in one place while the Deputy Chairman (again Singlehanded) clears the ballast with a bulldozer and hauls dozens of sleepers into place. We do of course need Armchair Railwaymen, without whom administration would cease to exist. But for at least the next year a permanent Way volunteer is worth his weight in fishplates.

The occasional slip ups and bad organisation are as much due to bad work by us, as to lack of support, and the fact that we have not done as much work as we ought does not mean that the work PER MEMBER is not satisfactory. We must realise that with our small membership as compared with other preserved lines, we need more work per member to keep our end up.

We ought to mention that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman holding the fort singlehanded for some days on Heavy Civil Engineering work does affect our nerves and tempers, and hinder us from doing our own proper MRT jobs quickly smoothly and efficiently. The irascible behaviour of one of us to other MRT members is almost without exception the result of tasks of this kind.

We look forward to our 10th Anniversary celebration with pleasure. With special commemorative stamps, a Yorkshire Post exhibition, and special Steam 70 show now in the hands of Publicity Team, we can remember that however dirty we are, however unrecognised we are at times, we did pioneer 4'8½" gauge Railway Preservation, as our line pioneered all its life.

For the first time in 10 years we are certain of our future and our status is at last being recognised both in Leeds and wider afield. The prospect of a steady and substantial improvement each year must not obscure the fact that the next 12 months makes hard work on buildings, track, and locomotives essential.

Our thanks to the many members who have helped us directly or indirectly in the last year. In closing we would invite the A G M to elect a Committee of people who know how to work hard, and to remember that, whoever they elect as Chairman, he will occasionally have to have time off to sleep.

Ronald F. Youell Chairman

Joseph K Lee Deputy Chairman.