



**The Journal of the
Middleton Railway Trust
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*CORONAVIRUS - COVID-19 EDITION 4***



© Tony Cowling

The Sentinel

**nosing gently into the world for a test steam in December 2020,
following her extensive overhaul. How wonderful to see her; all being well it
won't be long before she is working again. Congratulations and thanks to all
who have worked so hard on her.**

The Old Run

No. 249

JANUARY 2021

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The Editor welcomes contributions - photographs, articles, news items and letters - relating to the interests of the Trust and the operation of our and other Railways.

Items for publication, including images, are acceptable in any format and may be sent via email, post, CD or USB stick.

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Our Chairman speaks:

First, I wish all members of the Middleton Railway Trust and other readers of 'The Old Run' as rewarding and enjoyable a 2021 as possible under the current circumstances.

When the October Issue of 'The Old Run' came out we were looking forward to something like a normal Christmas and a steady easing of the restrictions in the New Year but the Covid 19 virus has moved on. To quote Donald Trump, "It's invisible and it's hidden, but it's – it's very smart".

The new mutation of the virus has led to unprecedented demands on the health service and this has resulted in the country once again being placed in Lockdown. The Trust is continuing with some essential works during the current Lockdown: building of the Mezzanine Floor which commenced before Christmas, and maintenance and other tasks which we hope will enable the Railway to re-open on Sunday 4th April, Easter weekend, if possible. The Trust has reviewed and upgraded the measures needed to make the Moor Road Site 'Covid Secure' in the light of the increased transmissibility of the virus, and the number of members working on site during the current lockdown is being very strictly controlled to minimise risk.

Looking back, 2019 was a very successful year commercially whilst, unsurprisingly, 2020 was much more challenging. However, thanks to grant money to enable us to proceed with major projects, generous donations from members and friends and careful and prudent management, the Trust ended 2020 in reasonably sound financial health which gave us a good platform to cope with the challenges of the New Year.

Despite the problems caused by the Covid pandemic, a number of long-standing projects have been brought to the point where they should be completed by, or shortly after, the start of the 2021 running season – notably the return to service of '68153' and 'No. 6' and the completion of the restoration of the LMS Brake Van. This was the Middleton Railway's first piece of

Our Chairman speaks:

rolling stock. More details about these and other projects will be found in 'Moor Road Happenings'. Work has also started on constructing the Mezzanine Floor in the Engine House - progress to date is described in a separate article by Mark Calvert. This project is of huge significance because it will give us space to better tell the story of the development, in Leeds, of the World's first commercially successful steam locomotives, and the locomotive building industry this pioneering work begat.

Work has also continued on the new two volume history of the railway and the extended and re-vamped stock book. The hope is to have all three of these available for sale this year though, like so much, progress has been slowed by the Covid pandemic.

Much has been achieved by the volunteers who come down to the railway and by the back room work of volunteers – mostly done at home - planning activities, developing risk assessments and Covid 19 guidance, ordering materials, developing and reviewing drawings etc.. All of this work is done simply for the love of the Railway – as Steve Roberts is wont to remark we, “carry on rewardless”. Except that our reward is to see people enjoying their visit to our historic railway, riding in our coaches and travelling behind our engines.

Currently the railway is *hoping* to open on Easter Day (4th April) with steam operation on the Sunday and Monday, and thereafter running steam trains on Sundays (only) until June - assuming that we are permitted to open then. The extra demands of the Covid guidance, cleaning, ensuring distancing etc., make great demands on the shop team and mean that more volunteers are required in the shop on running days than in normal times. Given the current size of the shop team this restricts the number of days we can run. Volunteers interested in working in the shop will be warmly welcomed and would enable us to operate on more days, once trained. Working on the premise that the regulations will be relaxed by July we are hoping to resume Saturday and Sunday services for the rest of the year and the Wednesday service in August. Given all the present uncertainties, no major events are being planned, although it is hoped to have a model railway exhibition in July, and to reprise the very successful Star Rails event in September. The one other thing we would like to hold is an event to mark the return to service of '68153' – hopefully running with our other 'main line' engine, '1310'.

What we will eventually be able to do is dependent on factors outside our control, but we work on the basis that if we do not plan to do something, we will do nothing. For details of when and what service we will be running please keep in touch via our website:

www.middletonrailway.org.uk

There has been one piece of exceptional news since October: our Vice President, Ian Smith, has been awarded the 'Railway Magazine Lifetime Achievement Award'. This award has been given in recognition of Ian's 50 (plus!) years of service and dedication to the Heritage Railway movement and to the Middleton Railway in particular, and is richly deserved. More about this singular distinction will be found in later pages.

Finally, I hope that you are all keeping well and that any readers who have caught this wretched virus have made or are making a complete recovery. Also that you all observe government and other guidance, keep safe, and look out for neighbours and friends who may not be in as fortunate a position as yourselves.

Charles W Milner, Chairman

What an Honour!

To Ian Smith

*From the Editor of **Railway Magazine**:*

“ I am delighted to be able to advise you that you have been chosen as winner of the
”Railway Magazine Lifetime Achievement Award”
for services to preservation.”

This is an award made each year to an individual who, in the opinion of the Editor and staff of *The **Railway Magazine***, has made a significant contribution to the railway preservation movement. Your award is for the outstanding work and personal dedication given to the Middleton Railway for 50 years.

The citation will read: *“For more than 50 years dedicated service as a volunteer at the Middleton Railway, helping to shape the railway for future generations, creating a community asset in a city environment and for recognising the importance of preserving industrial locomotives built in Leeds.”*

The actual award is expected to be presented to Ian some time in the spring of this year.

The Middleton Railway is well known, by some in the railway world, for the longevity of its members. Several of those to be found working away most weekends (and some midweeks, and some evenings at meetings etc.). living and breathing coal, oil and general muck, in order to continue to keep our wonderful array of locomotives in as near tip top condition as possible, are well into the second half of their centuries. They love what they do, whether it is slaving in the workshop with a hot spanner or a damp paint brush or over a cross computer writing letters to organise borrowing something or asking for a Grant so we can develop something else.



A youthful
Ian Smith with
Fred Youell
inside the cab of
John Blenkinsop
on the very last
trip into
Dartmouth Yard,
in 1983.

© Keith Hartley

One of these “old-timers” (a phrase I use in the most respectful way) is IAN SMITH.

What an Honour continued

There are few people in the whole UK railway world (and probably further afield as well) who don't know Ian. One reason is because of the excellent job he makes of publicising our railway and everything going on in it.

Over the many years of our existence, he has been pivotal in acquiring a number of locomotives. Currently these are MARY; MIRVALE; MSC 67; P5003; SIR Berkeley, and the three NCB exhibits, 4wD HE7274, Rack Loco HE 8505 and The "Pony" road vehicle on loan from the National Coal Mining Museum at Caphouse Colliery. Without Ian's help, these locos would not be at our railway. If you want the details, get him in a corner one day and ask.

Other locomotives have benefited in less obvious ways; the Sentinel received new ventilation grilles in the 1980s, and replacement Cylinders in the current overhaul. Sweet Pea also received a new engine bearing in the 1980s, and Ian negotiated the NRM cosmetic overhaul of Conway.

Ian was Chairman of the railway between 1992 and 1998, and led an exciting period in the railway's history. He assisted with the Engine House project, in the first instance by gaining what was then known as Museum Registration. He then did some work towards the Lottery Grant, though the railway should be eternally grateful to Steve Roberts for his work on that project. Ian's main role was to arrange an emergency meeting at the NRM when the Lottery people kicked the first bid out. Fortunately our second bid was successful thanks to Steve's hard work.

Ian then worked with David Monckton, the then Chairman and Architect of the new Engine House, and Sheila Bye, our Historian and Archivist, on the layout and other aspects of the displays.

Over the years Ian has organised several very successful events, the most recent being the "Last Coals to Leeds", which included the award of a £13,000 grant with which to pay for it.

These days Ian is heavily involved in liaising with Leeds local Councillors, keeping them informed and updated on the railway's progress. He also prepares most of the publicity material for the railway, other than Social Media. Recently, we have had many articles published about the railway and its 60th anniversary which, owing to the Coronavirus, we were unable to celebrate as we had wished.

Outside our own railway, Ian has been heavily involved in other railway activities. He is a Life Member of the Tramway Museum Society at Crich and volunteers for them as a Museum Guide. He was a Director at HRA for many years, being active with them since 1990. He ran their Publications Competition, and later Chaired the Awards committee for them. He co-wrote the very first "Young Volunteers" guidelines, with Handel Kardas and John Poyntz. Known as the "Red Book", it was sponsored by Railway Magazine. To top it all, Ian has been a Trustee of the Vintage Carriages Trust for over ten years.

After all that, all one can say is, "Keep up the good work Ian, thanks for all you've done so far, and keep safe."

Editor

Judith Blake DBE

Another Honour for one of our Leeds friends, is that Judith Blake, hitherto Leader of Leeds City Council, has been selected to be a Labour Party Peer in the House of Lords.

Councillor Blake has served as Leader of Leeds City Council since 2015 and before that was Deputy Leader since 2010, as well as being a ward councillor in Leeds for 24 years. The Middleton Railway is delighted for Dame Judith, who has been a good friend to us for a number of years. Unfortunately, however, she will have to step down as Leader of the Council, and for this we are sorry!

Dame Judith's response on receiving the news was as follows:- *"I am honoured to be selected to join the House of Lords at this hugely important time. It has been a great privilege to serve as Leader of my home city of Leeds for the last five and a half years.*

Joining the House of Lords will allow me to continue to represent the interests of our city in Westminster. It has never been more important to have regional voices with experience of local government represented at a national level."

Councillor Blake will start discussions in the New Year to ensure a smooth transition for when she steps down as Leader of Leeds City Council, once it is clear when her new role will commence.'

We hope Dame Judith will remember us, and that she will continue to visit us whenever she has the opportunity.



Above:

Judith Blake waves from the cab of MD&HB No. 45 on the occasion of the opening of our new Running Shed on 21st July 2018, at which she officiated, backed by other Councillors.

On the right:

Judith, on 21st September 2018, unveiling the Memorial Stone dedicated to those miners who sadly lost their lives in the Collieries described in our Chairman's book, **"Colliery Community Railway"**

(still available to purchase at £10.50. If you do not yet have your copy, please email me at:

oldrun@middletonrailway.org.uk

and I'll make the necessary arrangements.)



© Tony Cowling

LMS 10000 PROJECT

Ian Dobson writes:

I was interested to read the letter from Martin Holtby (p30 of the October 2020 edition) regarding the proposal to build a replica of LMS 10000. The Middleton Railway has - indirectly - played a significant role in this project. As a trustee of the EM2 Locomotive Society, owners of EM2 27000 'Electra' and Olive the Drewry Car, I was involved in early 1990 when the Society was offered a spare pair of EM2 locomotive bogies from the Netherlands Railways (NS) - where the EM2s operated from 1970 to 1986. We were looking for a home for these bogies in the UK and we approached the Middleton Railway. Fortunately the answer was "yes" and as a result of this the bogies arrived at the railway in June 1990 from Tilburg, Holland. This was the last through working via the BR connection at Balm Road and after craning off the wagon in the car park they were shunted to the top of the yard onto a couple of panels of track - which EM2 Locomotive Society volunteers had helped to lay - where they stayed until January 2005 when they moved to Swanwick (Midland Railway - Butterley). The EM2LS had been paying an annual siding rent so both parties were happy!

The EM2LS became aware of the LMS 10000 project early on and as the EM2 bogies are more or less identical to those under the original LMS 10000, negotiation ensued and eventually in December 2018 the bogies were sold to the project. They will shortly be moved from Wirksworth to prepare them for use under the new LMS 10000. We were delighted to help as we have no need of the spare bogies for 27000 now. They were originally used under 27004 'Juno' and have had a long career between Manchester and Sheffield on the Woodhead route (1953 to 1969) and then Holland (1970 to 1986) before spending time in Leeds, Swanwick and Wirksworth in retirement!

I am also a proud member of the Ivatt Diesel Recreation Society (a former chairman and trustee in fact) and will follow the new build with interest. It is particularly satisfying to think that had the Middleton Railway not said "yes" in 1990 the bogies for this project may not have survived to help it along.

The photographs below (all taken by me) show the bogies on arrival at Balm Road in June 1990. Also the 7 1/4" model of LMS 10000. Firstly in Derby Cathedral (Photo: Derek Payne) to celebrate 175 years of railways in Derby in 2014 and then in operation at Ruddington (Nottingham) in 2015 with a familiar looking guest driver (© Gill Dobson).

Ian



LMS 10000 PROJECT continued



SEARCHING FOR FOWLERS - PART 2

CHANGA MANGA

Changa Manga is an area of man-made forest some 70Km south-east of Lahore in the Punjab in present-day Pakistan. The timber was required both for domestic use as firewood as well as for railway purposes such as sleepers and so on. Planting commenced in 1866. As the timber matured, so the need for transport increased and a light Decauville-type railway was laid down in 1884 using animal power. As more forest matured this light railway was found to be inadequate and a locomotive operated 2'-0" gauge railway was proposed. World War 1 intervened and it was not until 1919 that construction began. Eventually around 53km of track was laid serving an area of about 4900 hectares of forest. A tourist operation was set up as early as 1963 and was still operating when I visited the line on Friday 20th November 1981. I was in Pakistan on a business promotion visit (and we did get some orders!) but Friday is, of course, a free day in Pakistan. I was staying in a hotel in Lahore and decided to visit Changa Manga knowing that our local agent would be attending Friday prayers and that I would be free for the day. I hired a taxi and the driver happily drove me there and waited throughout my visit and it cost me about £20 for the privilege. Please note that I did NOT charge this to company expenses! The journey took about an hour.

On arrival I found that a reasonable crowd had gathered to take advantage of the Fridays-only service. There was no train in sight so I made my way to the small depot to examine the stock, finding the following present although 21496 was not initially present and came in later on the train:

1077	0-4-0T Hunslet	1077/11	Dismantled
1763	0-4-0T Andrew Barclay	1763/23	Spare loco
17208	0-6-0T John Fowler	17208/27	Wash out
21496	0-6-0T John Fowler	21496/36	In steam and working
	4wD Ageve	894/81	Newly arrived
	4wD Ageve	895/81	Newly arrived
	4wD Brookville		Not in use

As mentioned in Part 1, John Fowler locos were a target of mine so this visit gave me an opportunity of seeing two more of their products, which was a definite bonus! The newly-arrived 4-wheel diesel locos from Ageve (AB Ageve Vagnverkstad, Gavle, Sweden) could not be used because "the keys had been lost in the post"! The steam locos carried the same running numbers as the works numbers and these were applied as brass figures on the cab sides. Locals told me that the system had 80km of track and dated from 1921 but both these statements disagree with the established history. They also told me that three steam locos were used on working days and that the diesels would reduce steam loco usage but not eliminate it.

At about 10.30 the train arrived with 21496 running tender first. It was promptly flooded with passengers with many occupying the roofs. There was, of course, a ladies only carriage with close mesh wire windows so as to maintain the privacy of the lady passengers. There was no room for me and the loco crew, recognising my dilemma, unfolded a small hinged seat which cantilevered out from the cab side. On this I sat, feeling rather insecure with my feet dangling over the ballast but enjoying the fresh breezes on this warm day. The train made a triangular journey firstly pushing out, then reversing and running loco first down to an ornamental lake and a canal. There was a tea house here and the driver, Mr Rahmat Ali who spoke no English, insisted on buying me a cup of tea and a

CHANGA MANGA continued

currant bun. The tea was most welcome but as my hand approached the currant bun all the currants flew away; but I suffered no harm from its consumption. From this point 21496 pushed us back to Changa Manga where we arrived at about 12.15. I noted that it had been fired with wood and had been driven entirely without the use of brakes, stopping being accomplished by dexterous use of the reversing system. In fact, none of the locos had any brake gear anyway!

The return journey to Lahore was taken at breakneck speed for it transpired that my taxi driver had to get to his mosque for Friday prayers by 1.00. This was achieved but at some damage to my nervous system as we sped though villages scattering chickens and children in all directions. Nevertheless I enjoyed my day out at this little-visited railway.

Today it is believed that 26km of railway still operates but the forested area has been reduced by around 60%, much of this being due to illegal de-forestation. I have seen no reports of recent visits so cannot update readers on the motive power situation but maybe, just maybe, the John Fowler locos are still used, even if occasionally! JF 21496 was the last steam loco to be built at the Steam Plough Works although two further JF locos were built, one by Kitsons and one more by Hudswell. It would be nice to think that it still exists. Perhaps the tourist train still runs but diesel hauled, but who knows?

Text and photos: © Jim Ballantyne. To be continued.



JF 21496 arriving on the stock of the tourist train.

CHANGA MANGA continued



JF 21496. Note the roof riders and the seat where the author perched.



JF 17208 being washed out.

Obituary of Dame Margaret Weston

MARGARET WESTON DBE

7th March 1926 – 9th January 2021

It is with great sadness that I have to inform members of the death of Dame Margaret Weston, patron of the Heritage Railway Association, on 9th January at the age of 94.

Dame Margaret took an engineering degree and her first job after the Second World War was as an engineer working for a Clydesdale Shipyard. As one of three women working with 5,000 men she was determined to show that she was as good as any man, if not better; she certainly succeeded in that.

She became the first Director of the Science Museum Group (1973-1986) and in 1975 created the National Railway Museum. It was not long afterwards that the Founding Chairman of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (ARPS), Captain Peter Manisty, RN invited her to become President. She readily accepted, but only after making it abundantly clear that she would be “very much hands on”. She was – very much to the advantage of both ARPS and its successor, HRA.

HRA Deputy President, David Morgan, tells a story which typified Margaret’s approach. *“Dame Margaret attended a lot of HRA meetings and on occasion chaired them. She took an active part in our discussions and also contributed to our Annual Reports, actively expressing her views. She was, in my view, delightfully “politically incorrect”. I remember her being addressed by one of our members, “Chair”, he said, on the point of raising some issue, when she interrupted “I am not a chair. Chairs are for sitting on. No one ever sits on me.” And no one did, as anyone who attempted to interrupt one of her famous monologues will testify! She was a formidable lady: we were lucky to have her.”*

Dame Margaret was very insistent that member railways should maintain high standards of safety, reliability and professionalism. She also championed the idea of “Preservation by operation” which was vital to a Heritage Railway, but not always liked by the museum community. Margaret also introduced railways to the “Museum Registration” scheme which Middleton joined in 2003 and which later became “Museum Accreditation” and again, MRT is still a member of that scheme.

On 14th April, 2007, the Middleton Railway “Engine House” was opened, performed by Sir William McAlpine, Bt, but also attended by Margaret. Her main contribution was to repeat the presentation for us of the HRA “Small Groups” award, which she did with her usual aplomb. She was then presented with a bouquet by three year old Polly Dobson.

Margaret dropped down on one knee and chatted to Polly, engaging with the little girl – something at which Margaret excelled!

Dame Margaret was a good friend to railway preservation and she was one of those largely unsung people who work “behind the scenes” for much of their time. She will be missed both professionally and by all those who knew her.

Ian Smith,

**Vice President, Middleton Railway,
with some information from**

**David Morgan,
Vice President, HRA**



THE THWAITE GATE BRIDGE

By Sheila Bye

I was very interested to see the fragment of John Roberts' painting of the Thwaite Gate railway turn-bridge in the recent Old Run, as one of my earliest memories is of crossing that wonderful bridge.

In 1939, as the 2nd World War began, the city of Leeds decided to evacuate as many schoolchildren as possible, to get them away from the obvious dangers of living in an industrial city which definitely would be a prime target for bombing. At that time, Leeds had two main stations near the city centre - City Station (still in use of course), and the rather oddly-named Central Station, which was out along Wellington Street, and really not all that 'central'. However, as well as these, almost every Leeds suburb which had a railway running through it, had a station on that railway. Hunslet had one immediately NW of the Beza Street bridge, and Holbeck, only a hop, skip and jump away from both Central and City stations, actually had two stations, serving routes on two different levels.

In only a couple of days or so, thousands of schoolchildren were taken from their local station down to Leeds City Station, and from there were sent by train to Lincolnshire. Why Lincolnshire? I guess Leeds City Council must have made some sort of prior arrangement with that county, despite the fact that Lincolnshire was fairly flat, close to the North Sea, with plenty of countryside: extremely suitable for hosting thousands of RAF planes, which soon would be attacking Germany, and other countries the Germans might later occupy! So, it was not unlikely that the Germans would come and bomb Lincolnshire!

Once the schoolchildren had been dealt with, someone obviously remembered that there were lots of Leeds children who were *under* school age, and so parents were hurriedly asked to decide whether or not mothers with young children also wished to move to safety in Lincolnshire. My parents decided this might be a good idea, as did Mr. and Mrs. Rose, a few doors up the street from us. So, one morning my Mum and I, together with Mrs. Rose and her year old baby, also called Sheila (a very popular name in the 1930s!), made our way to the Great Northern Goods Yard on the north-east side of the river. I have no memory of how we got there, but presumably we used a series of trams, eventually ending up somewhere near the GNR yard. (There were actually two of these yards, side by side, with the GNR one close to the river and the NER one a bit further from it; but by this time they were both operated by the LNER.) Here we were put on a train: I am assuming that they had some raised platforms already in use, for dealing with side-loading vans, as I don't remember any difficulty getting on to the passenger coach.

Whatever, there we were, on a train, Mum and I sitting at the left hand side of the coach, facing forward, with Mrs. Rose and baby Sheila sitting opposite us, and after some time, the train set off. Within a couple of minutes, I remember hearing a loud clanging, reverberating noise ahead of us, and a moment later the train was completely surrounded by this wonderful network of criss-crossed metal beams. I looked out at it, totally entranced, but in a few seconds it disappeared. (The train must then have crossed over the Middleton Railway at Parkside, but I knew nothing about that then.)

Arriving at Brigg in Lincolnshire, we were taken by bus to various other places, and we and the Roses were lodged in adjoining council houses on the edge of the village of Waddingham. Mum and Mrs. Rose had to help their 'hosts' of course, but when their chores were done, they would push us around the neighbourhood in our pushchairs, and they quickly discovered that the surrounding fields mostly had searchlight installations, and some had RAF planes parked in them, too. Was this really a safe place? They decided

THE AIRE & CALDER NAVIGATION

it wasn't, and the following Saturday afternoon, Mr. Rose borrowed a van from work, and came to collect us.

As my Dad was a railwayman, we frequently travelled by train, and for some years afterwards, every time we left or arrived at Leeds by train I watched out for the wonderful bridge we'd crossed on our way to Lincolnshire, but it was around 30 years before I saw it again. By then I'd become interested in industrial history, attended evening classes about this, and joined both the MRT and what eventually became the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Industrial History Section.

Each summer, we had a Canal Weekend, with lectures on the Saturday by John Goodchild and/or Bill Slatcher, followed on the Sunday by a trip on the British Waterways passenger barge 'Fair Maiden', travelling along whichever canal we'd studied. One year, we explored the Leeds end of the Aire & Calder Navigation, and suddenly, as we cruised through Hunslet, there ahead of us was my beautiful long lost bridge. No wonder I'd not seen it again until that day: we were told it only ever carried goods traffic. I was so amazed to see it again, that I can't remember whether or not I told anyone else on the boat that I'd actually ridden over it on a passenger train. At least I had the wit to take the attached photo of it. Just as well, because it was demolished not many years later, though there are quite a number of photos of it now appearing on-line.

As well as the tower which once housed the turning mechanism, two huge slabs of stone wall (which once supported the stationary section of the bridge) also survive: one of these is on the south bank of the river, and the other stands north of that, in the middle of the river. The north bank of the river has a substantial stone wall too. Google Satellite View and Google Street View between them give a good overall look at the remains of the bridge supports, as well as of the surviving railway tracks north of the river. However, Thwaite Lane seemingly has become an 'in' place for various sport, commerce, and living accommodation, and it looks increasingly more difficult to gain access from Thwaite Lane to the banks of the canal or river, to see the actual remains.

The bridge itself had quite a strange history. In the early 1890s, when it was planned to build a line linking the GNR goodsyd to the main line at Beeston, the Aire & Calder Navigation Company objected to the plans. They demanded that there should be some way in which the bridge could be moved if they needed to bring sailing barges up to Leeds. So, the GNR spent a great deal of money having a movable bridge designed and built, and it hardly, if ever, was required to do so, as the Navigation company never again had sailing barges come so far upriver! The track to Beeston, of course, crossed our own Railway at the Parkside bend, and there once was a short track just north of the bend, via which colliery trains could access the GNR.



'THE GANG' AS IN SHEILA'S YOUTH

Finally, but way back at the beginnings of our own railway, Charles Brandling's first attempt to transport his coal by rail sent it via Woodhouse Hill, on his 1755 waggonway to Thwaite Gate, where he had a staithe on the river bank there.



Some photographs from Sheila Bye's younger days of "the gang" (as she describes them), recovering ballast for use on our track.

Taken on an old Box Brownie, but you may just be able to recognise some of the folk who are still working here with us. No prizes for correct guesses!

All photographs by Sheila Bye.



No. 6 - a look back at its earlier days



No 6 shunting at Swanscombe in the late 1960s, perhaps 1970. © Ernie Brack.



No 6 on a passenger train heading towards Middleton Park - the slag heaps are somewhat different from today's view. © G T Heavyside.

No. 6 - a look back at its earlier days



No. 6 in Dartmouth Yard getting ready to be named "Percy" by the Rev Awdry, 16th of June 1973. © MRT Collection



No 6 at the old Moor Road station © MRT Collection

The Building of the Mezzanine Floor

The idea of the mezzanine floor had been around for a few years but the funds could not be found. The significant change came in 2020 when the opportunity came to acquire all the steel needed to build a mezzanine floor from Anglo American, who were keen to see the surplus steel put to good use. This steel was to be free of charge! We had struck the jackpot!

The next piece of good luck was that the Government launched a culture recovery grant aimed at assisting organisations such as ours to continue to develop their plans instead of going to the wall from lack of income. With nothing to lose, we set about sending in a grant application with plans to build our Mezzanine floor and upgrade the Conference Room.

A few tense weeks later, and we were successful in the grant. Steel on-site, check! Money in the bank, check! Time to do this.

The first working group meeting was held on 3rd October, and in no time at all the day had come to start the installation in the Engine House. Our council had decided that we really could not run Santa Specials, in view of the Covid regulations, and therefore we were at liberty to progress with the work in the display hall. We had to cut 33 sections to fit our design, and we did this outside, come rain or shine. 342 holes to drill, the display hall rang out to the sound of mag drills cutting through high-grade steel. The replica Kitson Arch was duly taken down and the museum exhibits cleared.

The 28th December to the 1st January had been decided as the week to install the steelwork. A daily team of six volunteers was assembled, ready to go.

The basic structure of the Mezzanine floor itself is quite simple; ten columns in three bays supporting three longitudinal beams, with 12 cross beams to support the floor. The week's plan was to get the steel up, which involved drilling 40 holes into the reinforced concrete floor slab. We generally did things quicker than I had anticipated.

Day 1: All foundation holes drilled, all columns installed. East and West longitudinal beams installed.

Day 2: Central beam installed, 13 cross beams installed

Day 3: All remaining cross beams installed, steel structure levelled

Day 4: We were two days ahead of schedule! We could now start installing the floor, 38mm tongue and groove. Glued and screwed to the steelwork. By the end of the day, 40% of the floor was complete.

Day 5: New Years Day. The remainder of the floor was up. An excellent weeks work and cups of tea all round.

There were some steep learning curves, including lifting the steel inside the display hall with a small handheld crane. This equipment was invaluable but not something we will look to keep for the long term.

The team of volunteers was terrific; most had not worked in steel erection before and took very well to the task. The week was not without its challenges. At times, our voices were raised, but most importantly, we did it safely and efficiently. The team all excelled themselves during the week and can be duly proud of what they achieved. It's a nice reminder that we can do significant projects in-house.

The Building of the Mezzanine Floor

The team (spread over the five days), was Rose Mehmet, John Holmes, David Hebden, David Harpham, Mike Cox, Kris Ward, Jack Auckland, Charles Milner, Simon Calvert, and Philip Calvert.

What has surprised many of us is how big the floor is. There is a wonderful opportunity to expand the museum. The museum committee is working very hard to develop the museum space and fill the floor with an exciting and interactive area that will tell the compelling stories we wish to share with the world.

2020, despite all its sorrow and loss was, for the Middleton Railway, an unique year, and 2021 brings further opportunities. We hope to be able to make the most of them.

Mark Calvert
Civil Engineer

All photos © Mark Calvert



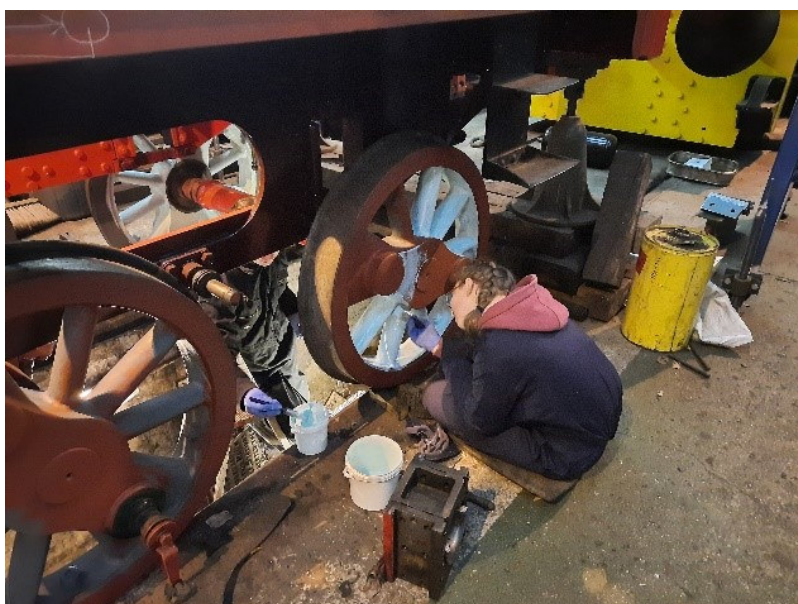
Well done folks. A very good five day's work. What a shame the Coronavirus had to put a stop to it for a while, But I'm sure you'll catch up as much as possible when you can return to it.

Ed.

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

I am shocked that it is a year to the day since I last supplied our esteemed editor with an update on the activities of the Youth Team and while on the one hand this time seems to have flown, on the other the pandemic has really slowed down progress in so many areas and frustrated my attempts to build the team as I would like. Nonetheless there is much of credit which has been achieved and I will attempt to remain positive throughout this report.

Firstly, I would like to open by thanking the increasing number of other volunteers who have offered to support me with the Youth Team, either setting tasks, supervising directly or offering training opportunities. The progress of the programme would not be possible without the support of others and going forwards, I would continue to welcome such offers. In the next Old Run I hope to have printed articles by some of the team



Painting the wheels of "Sir Berkeley"



Preparing part of "Sir Berkeley's" cab for painting

themselves, explaining a bit more about what they get out of the whole experience (apart from becoming utterly filthy!) and hopefully encouraging others to get actively involved. As more members join us, I will also be publishing a more regular bulletin with 'pen portraits' and photos of our new members to assist with safeguarding and identifying who is who on site.

Onto activities: this year has obviously been significantly disrupted by COVID but not as much as other railways perhaps.

Many heritage railways simply do not have a youth team; some of the larger ones with thousands of volunteers do have very successful teams, however we sit somewhere in between. I am told by a source in the HRA that we may be one of only about eleven railways in the country with active youth programmes. Bearing in mind the likes of Severn Valley, North Yorkshire Moors and North Norfolk have teams I am quite humbled by this fact. I have been keen to get the group engaged in a variety of projects. Painting is a never-ending task at the railway and in the last 12 months we have been focused on aspects of cleaning

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

and painting *Sir Berkeley*, mainly focused on the frames and wheels, both of which were absolutely filthy and took a lot of work to get to where they are now. We also began work on the cab sides.



Removing old paint from the pipe wagon



The partly painted pipe wagon

One project which is nearing completion is the overhaul of the pipe wagon (soon to be flat wagon) which will be used by the Civil Engineering department. Luckily this wagon was in much better condition than previous restoration jobs and is even fitted with more modern OLEO type buffers. Work has included removal of the ends, overhaul of the axleboxes and cleaning/painting inside and out of the frames. A deck is yet to be fitted but the livery selected is somewhat based on Eastern Region engineering colours of Oxford Blue and black. Progress has continued throughout the winter

months as we managed to negotiate the wagon being moved inside, however this has led to further challenges with social distancing.

As restrictions eased and we decided to run a commemorative train for the 60th anniversary the team pulled out all the stops to turn out both LMS 7051 (complete with John Alcock nameplates) and MW1601 'Matthew Murray' in fantastic condition. Preparing for our customers' return we re-painted the platform shelter, benches and tidied up the adjacent areas, which was appreciated by all. Also, once services did resume, several of the team took the opportunity to carry out TTI duties and cleaning turns to ensure the new COVID measures were manageable for the whole team.

Luckily, we also had the opportunity to arrange some footplate training for the Youth Team and several members took up this opportunity. This is something that is always eagerly anticipated and the feeling of making it to the top of the 'bank' on the shovel

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING UPDATE



Preparing a platform shelter bench for painting



Trackwork in progress

certainly resulted in some broad grins from those involved (I couldn't grin, I can't fire for toffee!). We also carried out shunting practice and I delivered some MICs via Zoom when we were forced to 'work from home' in Lockdown.

Finally, the obligatory trackwork, which has tested many an adult volunteer's endurance, was enjoyed by several of our members (I was there grimacing) and despite the rather warm summer weather we got the job done with only one broken chair, no broken backs and unbroken spirit!

Overall, I think we have made the most of 2020, a year some would rather forget but certainly one I will remember for the right reasons. We continued to build our membership to a regular body of six with at least four more awaiting inductions and on some Sundays the Youth Team provided half the workforce at the railway. We learnt new skills, took on more projects and gained greater confidence. I also like to think that we continued to build the respect and trust of adult volunteers who now see what we do as valuable to the future of the railway rather than just a 'minor annoyance' on a Saturday afternoon! 2021 is a very important year for the railway in terms of the Youth Team. Several of our members will 'come of age' and be able to pass out for operational duties (with good luck) and thus I envisage a day in the not too distant future when we will be able to operate trains for the whole day with members of the team who have learnt so much from us in the last three and a half years.

We may have had to miss the 60th anniversary celebration that we would have liked to hold, but the World's Oldest Working Railway might just have some of the youngest volunteers in the country. I hope Fred would be proud.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

As everyone living in the UK will only too well know, life has not been easy over the last three months. Our plans to continue operating through October, November and December soon had to be shelved, initially due to falling passenger numbers, but more importantly due to restrictions imposed by legislation. However, one fundamental difference between now and the spring lockdown was that people and businesses were encouraged to carry on working wherever possible. Your Council took the decision that it was important for the business to continue volunteer activities but to restrict them to work that was considered essential for the future of the business. As to what is considered essential is perhaps subjective, but the Railway needs to be able to operate once it is allowed to, and anything that is necessary for this to happen is considered to be essential. This isn't just a question of considering short term requirements but also the long term. Locomotive boiler tickets continue to 'tick' and we have to have replacements ready for when others come out of traffic, even if we are talking a few years into the future. A fundamental consideration in this respect is workshop space where we do not have the luxury of spare capacity. Work cannot start on overhauling a locomotive that will be needed until space is available for it, so projects that might not be considered to be essential in isolation have had to continue so that they can vacate the space they are currently occupying.

One distinct advantage of not operating trains during December has been the fact that work installing the mezzanine floor could start earlier than planned and much volunteer effort has been directed this way in the last three months.

LOCO NOTES

1601 MATTHEW MURRAY

Available for traffic if needed, subject to a successful steam test following its period out of use. Contrary to information given in the last Old Run, the current boiler certificate permits its use until October 2021.

No. 6

The remaining lagging sheets which cover the firebox were fitted during September. This then enabled the cab and tank to be fitted to the loco. We have no drawings of the loco and, as the overhaul has progressed, a lot of time has been spent in measuring things up and creating various drawings on CAD. When the tank was measured up and placed on the main drawing something was not right as, in theory, it would not fit. Initially it was thought to be a simple measuring error but a careful re-check of all the relevant dimensions confirmed the fact that theoretically the tank would foul the cab by about ½". There was no real logic to this as the whole had originally fitted together and we had not made any alterations that might affect things. The boiler and cab were original and, although we were having a new tank, the old one was still there to measure. We couldn't try things to physically check as the boiler was away and, in the end it was decided to make the new tank some ¾" shorter than the original. It is a good job that we did as when the tank was finally fitted, it only just squeezed into the space available for it.

Having fitted the tank it was not long before we were removing it. A dimensional error had crept in with the new tank with regard to the holes in the tank for the balance pipe and it was discovered that the pipe could not be fitted as intended as it interfered with the sandboxes. Various options for overcoming the problem were considered but the only practical one was to remove the tank, invert it and move the holes slightly to their required position. A couple of days of cutting and welding soon sorted the problem and the tank was back on once more and finally bolted down. The chimney and dome cover have also been placed in position but the chimney still needs to be aligned to the blast pipe before it can be bolted down.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

Another anomaly that has been found is with regard to the ashpan dampers. The ashpan and the dampers are also original and, apart from cleaning and painting, have received no attention. New operating linkages were considered to be necessary and when these were made and finally fitted it was discovered that the front damper fouls on the eccentric straps when opened and this fact prevents the damper from being opened more than about a third of the way. As it is fairly critical that the dampers and eccentric straps don't come into contact when the loco is moving we have had to make and fit a stop to prevent this happening.

Fitting of the cab and tank enabled a start to be made on fitting the various valves and pipework. The injectors and steam brake, blower and sanding valves were easily fitted with no problems. However, this was not the case with the whistle valve, which on this loco screwed directly into the boiler. The screw threads on both the boiler stubbing and the valve were found to be in poor condition and not acceptable. In the end, we have made a special oversize tap to re-cut the stubbing and made a suitable fitting to screw into it. We have also provided a shut off valve, as having valves and pipework that can't be isolated is not good practice. The original whistle has gone missing at some point and we have fitted a similar bell whistle that we had in stock. We have been able to use one of the original injector water pipes but, unfortunately the left hand one had suffered frost damage at some time and was in poor condition. A new pipe has been made and fitted. New pipes have also been made for the steam brake as the original ones could not be found. The Roscoe lubricators (which provide oil for the cylinders) have been fitted to the new smokebox. Although we had the pipes for these they were in poor condition and new ones have been made.

The locomotive never had vacuum brakes but these are necessary for it to operate passenger trains. Some of the pipework was made a while ago but completion of the work had to await fitting of the boiler. The exhaust pipe from the vacuum ejector now has been made and fitted, running underneath the tank and exhausting through the smokebox and up the chimney. Also for the ejector the copper pipe for the steam supply has been made and fitted. In the smokebox, the blastpipe and breeches pipes have been fitted, as have the main steam pipes after annealing. These were too big to anneal with the oxy-propane torch and we had a bonfire in which to heat them up.

The locomotive is, unusually, fitted with Lamberts wet sanding apparatus whereby water from the boiler is introduced into the sandbox and trickles down the sandpipe, taking particles of sand with it. This requires pipes from the sanding valve to each of the sandboxes. The old pipework was available but was generally found to be in poor condition and some of it will have to be renewed.

It had been hoped to steam the loco in 2020 but time has defeated us. Besides painting, work still outstanding includes making and fitting of a floor in the smokebox and making and fitting of a lubrication pot and a drain valve for the steam brake. The missing sanding pipes are also still needed although not necessary before the loco is first steamed. It is, however, confidently expected that this will have happened by the time you read this.

1210 SIR BERKELEY

Little noticeable work has been done on Sir Berkeley but it hasn't sat gathering dust. The axleboxes have again been measured to try and establish the true position with the rear axle. It would appear that our initial measurements were correct and the rear axle has not

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

been parallel with the other two. This error must go back a fairly long time as no work was done on them at the loco's last overhaul as they were within tolerance in terms of fit in the hornguides. This will now be corrected. A start has been made on re-shimming the axleboxes to eliminate play between the axlebox and the hornguide. The paint for the locomotive is now to hand and work has started on bringing the wheels up to a final finish although the present cold weather has put this on hold. Once the axleboxes are finished progress will become much more obvious.

Because of the impact of Covid, agreement has been reached with the loco's owners (The Vintage Carriages Trust) to extend the overhaul period to the end of 2021. We are most grateful for this concession.

No.11

Still nothing to report.

No.1310 (NER H)

1310 has had all the washout plugs and mudholes removed and the boiler washed out in preparation for examination by the Boiler Inspector. Amazingly, it is now ten years since the overhauled boiler was first put into steam. However, its condition is considered to be good and we are hopeful of at least a twelve month extension to its 'ticket'.

1544 SLOUGH ESTATES No.3

Although drained of all water and with the firebars removed and the firebox and smokebox cleaned out, the locomotive remains available for use, if required. Its existing boiler 'ticket' expires on the 18th April, after which a full re-tube and hydraulic test will be required. In reality, the loco will be subject to a full overhaul and it is expected that this will commence once Sir Berkeley is finished and workshop space becomes available.

SENTINEL No.54

Surprisingly (or so it seems) it is now twelve months since the loco was first put into steam and its first annual boiler inspection became due during December. The Boiler Inspector duly came and examined the boiler which, not unexpectedly, was given a clean bill of health. Following this, the loco ventured out of Moor Road yard and up to Middleton Park, its first such trip for some 20 years. This trip highlighted a number of things that still require attention, mainly concerned with eliminating steam leaks. The steam brake was one source of leaks, both at the application valve and at the cylinder. Another significant one was the left hand piston gland. All these leaks are more noticeable because virtually everything is housed within the cab. Indeed, this is an ideal loco for those who like saunas. More leaks were found with the water pump and associated valves. After further attention and another steam test we seem to have cured the majority of these. However, our Sentinel is still not being cooperative. This time the problems were with the regulator valve, which had started to pass steam quite significantly and a leak in the pipe from the heat exchanger to the boiler. The regulator valve has now been stripped down and the valve itself machined and ground in. Investigation of the leak with the pipe showed that it was an old repair and a new length of pipe has been obtained to replace it. This work still needs to be done at the time of writing. We have also had a concern about the oil supply to the cylinders, and to check whether sufficient oil was being delivered to properly lubricate them, one of the cylinder head covers was removed. This showed that it was not getting sufficient oil and this will have to be investigated further. However, on replacing the cylinder cover one of the securing studs broke and has had to be replaced.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

HE 2387 BROOKES No.1

Currently in the workshops. It still requires attention to the injectors and to a leaking boiler plug in the smokebox. The lack of need for the loco and available manpower to carry out the work have been the main reasons for little progress.

Fowler 42200033 HARRY

No progress with the repairs to the various gauges and the loco is currently outside in the compound whilst work progresses on the mezzanine floor.

Peckett 5003 AUSTIN'S No.1

Has been kept in working order and used as required.

D2999

Has been kept in working order and used as required.

D577 MARY

On display in the Engine House in working order.

HE 6981

Work has progressed as manpower has permitted. New flexible pipes have been provided for the engine cooling water and the cooling water circuit is now effectively complete. A new take-off has been provided for the cab heaters. Work on modifying the air brake system to incorporate the vacuum-air proportional valve is continuing. Both this and cleaning and painting progress as time and manpower allow.

D631 CARROLL

The loco has been in storage in the Engine House and has not been used.

L.M.S. 7051

Awaiting workshop space, which is currently not available. This is to replace the failed cylinder head gasket. A previous Old Run reported that we had had a new nameplate cast for the loco as we only had one original and thought that the other had been stolen many years ago. However, whilst recently looking for something else, we found the missing nameplate which was well hidden and intended to be so. If only we had known.... Unfortunately, we didn't find what we were actually looking for, which were pipes for HL 3860.

D1373 MD&HB No.45

Has been kept in working order and used as required. The air receivers have been inspected by the Boiler Inspector.

All other locos are stored, either on display in the Engine House or awaiting overhaul.

CARRIAGE & WAGON NOTES

PMV 2223

Awaiting workshop space so that its rebuild can be started. The vast majority of the timber and cladding has been purchased with the aid of grant funding and is presently stored until work can start. The interconnecting gangways which will be required later have been made and stored until required.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

LMS BRAKE VAN No. 158760

Since the last Old Run various outstanding jobs have been ongoing, including fitting of the handrails and the lamp brackets within the cabin. A new guards desk has been made. There is some variation from the drawings here as they show the desk to be at what is now the north end of the van but the original desk was definitely at the south end and this is where the new one has been fitted. The windows have all been glazed using toughened glass. With the fitting of the footsteps the engineering work on this vehicle is now essentially complete. Apart from painting, the one outstanding task is the fitting of the hinged footsteps over the axleboxes on the east side of the van. As far as the painting goes, the roof has now had four coats of paint and the body has had a coat of undercoat both internally and externally; some areas having received two such coats. A start has been made on applying the top coat internally as a heater can be used to raise the air temperature to a level suitable for this work. The internal colour scheme is Aircraft grey up to 3'-6" above floor level with light stone above. This is in accordance with BR specification. The external colour is Aircraft grey. It will be lettered 'MIDDLETON RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY' on the west side, as when originally delivered to the railway, and 'M158760' on the east side, both on a black background.

PIPE WAGON No. B740883

Work has been progressing quite steadily and rapidly on this wagon, which is currently in the old workshops. It is largely being done by our younger volunteers although it is not a project exclusive to them. The whole vehicle has now been needle-gunned or wire brushed, as appropriate to the condition in that area and has had a coat of grey primer applied. Most of the solebars and headstocks have now received an initial top coat. The livery has been agreed as Oxford Blue above solebars and black below, which is akin the livery carried by LNER service vehicles. The timber for the decking is on order. However, this is not going to be a simple fix due to the design of the chassis and many of the planks will require rebating to accommodate steelwork and rivets. The axleboxes have all been dropped and the bearings checked, together with a filling of fresh oil. Although not in 'as new' condition, the existing Armstrong oiler pads are being retained.

PALVAN

This still requires a vacuum brake cylinder overhaul, which will be carried out when time permits.

PLANT AND MACHINERY

We have been on a bit of a spending spree in recent months, largely on the back of the mezzanine project. A new magnetic drill has been acquired. It is smaller than our main one and thus much more portable and easier to handle. We needed a smaller one as the footprint of the existing one was too large to allow it to drill many of the holes required in the steelwork. It is designed to be used with rotabroaches. Rotabroaches, for those who do not know, are a means of cutting holes in steel using a machining process rather than a cutting one. The cutter machines out an annular ring around the circumference of the hole and is an especially productive way of cutting large diameter holes in steel. We have also acquired a new heavy duty aluminium alloy scaffold tower. Our existing tower, whilst adequate for most work, is 1200 mm wide and is thus limited in where it can be used. The new tower is only 800mm wide so can be placed where the old tower will not fit. It is also of aluminium alloy construction so is much easier to handle which is very important when it is being assembled.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

In addition to the above, we have been very fortunate to have been given several woodworking machines through the kind generosity of Mr. Alec Sawyer. The machines include a cross cut saw, band saw, bench drill, rip saw, bobbin sander and a combined belt and disc sander plus various associated bits and pieces. With some moving around, we have been able to find space for all of these machines, which are already proving to be useful assets.

Steve Roberts, Mechanical Engineer



VESTMENTS > THE CAPPA MAGNA



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I write to vent my dismay at the misadventures of railway trains in some of the films which I found myself watching on tv over Christmas - there being less "Monopoly" and idle conversation this year. What misadventures? In "Heroes of Telemark", a steam loco and several wagons full of heavy water (for the Nazis' atomic weapons effort) went to the bottom of a deep Norwegian fiord. Spperrlash! In "Bridge over the River Kwai", a Japanese train of some six carriages steamed off the broken bridge and into the river - Kerrunch Klang Bang.. Then - I have only seen parts of this film - in "Murder on the Orient Express", a luxury train is stranded for days in deep snow in the Carpathian Mountains or somewhere equally distant from civilisation.. How well-stocked is that buffet-car? These tales had happy endings for the Good Side, Justice and Liberty, but unhappy ones for the trains. For solace, I have recorded "Emma", written in 1815 (after the appearance of steam locomotion) but not set in a coalfield, thus limiting the scope for collateral damage to rail stock.

For further good cheer, readers may wish to visit the website "Back-on-track" which is about night expresses on the continent.

your etc.

Richard Stead

Hi Jenny,

From one Olde Buffer to another, thank you Bill Hampson, I loved it!

Best wishes

Gordon Crapper

Dear Jenny,

Many thanks for sending me Old Run 248. I very much enjoyed Bill Hampson's reminiscences and as a pre-war model myself I find that I am in agreement with all he says! But - just a moment! - what happened to pounds, shillings and pence? Miles, yards, feet and inches? Pounds and ounces?, Gallons and pints? (although fortunately pints are still available in some places!). As a young engineer I was trained to use degrees Fahrenheit, British Thermal Units, pounds per square inch and, as it is a long time since I retired, are Standard Wire Gauges, swg, still used? Incidentally, if I am told that it will be, say, 20 degrees C tomorrow, I automatically convert this to Fahrenheit otherwise I have little idea whether it will be hot or cold!

All the best and keep safe and well,

Jim Ballantyne.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor, (from Robert Davey)

Re the query about coupling 7051 and the Mumbles coach together, we understand this was done with a bar, but how it was fitted is lost in the mists of time. As to the braking system, this consisted of a Guard who would apply the hand brake in the Mumbles coach when required! You wouldn't get away with all this now, but that was then!

I hope that answers your query Robert. *Ed.*

Below is an email received from Sheila Bye, our Historian, which covers some interesting points:-

Hi Jenny, (from Sheila Bye)

Firstly, when you do another Old Run please can you include a correction about the two 1960 first train photos? I've never seen them before - I didn't take them and I don't know who actually did. Perhaps they've already been in touch with you? I only have a few photos other people passed on to me later. They don't include the ones you used in The Old Run. Lovely to see them - they're really great photos, whoever took them!

Editor's reply: Sorry to disappoint all our readers - and Sheila in particular - but no-one has come forward to claim copyright of these interesting photographs.

So, I wonder if Middleton colliers' houses were likewise limewashed in the 'good old days'? The photos of Old Belle Isle on the Leodis website do not seem to show this, but lime eventually flakes off, or is washed off by heavy rain, so could well have disappeared by the time photographers were around.

Nor has anyone met the challenge with any news about the purpose of limewashed houses - although when the weather is like today's (snowing very thickly) no doubt they didn't need limewashing to find their way home - unless they couldn't see the road!

Never mind Sheila - thanks for your interesting queries.



Overheard:

“Is that a light
at the end of
the tunnel - or
the headlamp
of an
oncoming
locomotive?”

Richard Stead



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We're really sorry we couldn't come to see you last

Christmas

We'll get the reindeer in training early and hope to see you this December, when we've conquered this nasty virus. Follow the guidance and keep well.



Keep safe everyone - we hope to see you soon.