



**The Journal of the
Middleton Railway Trust
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Leeds City Councillors Judith Blake (Leader) and Kim Groves waving off the first Santa Train of our season on 1st December 2018.



**Crew: Michael Cox and Kris Ward. Photographer: Ian Smith
Santa ? Well, Santa, of course!**

Introduction

The Old Run No. 241 January 2019

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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 CD, post or email.

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Chairman's Welcome

First, I wish all members of the Middleton Railway Trust and other readers of 'The Old Run' a very happy and rewarding 2019.

The year 2018 ended on a high note for the Middleton Railway Trust with our most successful season of Santa Specials ever. These Santa Specials would not have been possible without the efforts of the active volunteers of the Trust – the commercial team, the train crews, the engineering team who kept the trains running and of course Santa and his Elves. A special word of thanks goes to our Civil Engineer and his team who sorted out the failure of the main drain from the engine house in the abysmal weather of late November so that all was ready for the Santa Specials.

The other significant event in the last quarter was 'Star Rails' – something new for the railway. It was well received by our visitors and garnered some very favourable reviews on Social media. Again thanks are due to all involved. This is an event which we hope to run again in 2019.

The reward for all of this hard work? A 'high five' from a young boy to the engine driver, happy smiling faces of children and their parents, excited children running about the engine house. There is a special reward in being able to do something which brightens the lives of others and is an important part of the reason why so many people devote so many hours to the Middleton Railway. To those readers who have not yet tried volunteering; come and join us. There is a lot more to working on a heritage railway than simply working on historic locomotives and rolling stock.

2019 is now with us and will bring with it new challenges and will see some important changes and new events.

Chairman's Welcome

We are the subject of on-going complaints from a few of our neighbours about excessive smoke and it is important that we do all that we reasonably can to minimise smoke. Not making smoke was always the sign of a good fireman and an MIC is planned for the first quarter to share best techniques. We should always endeavour to be good and considerate neighbours

We have also seen a return of the intruder problem. Fortunately without causing any serious harm, but we will be spending more of our limited resources on trying to make it still harder for intruders to access our site and possibly harm our historic assets. There are few things more damaging to the volunteer spirit than seeing a carefully restored item of rolling stock subject to mindless destructive vandalism; the damage done to 'Harry' has put it out of service for more than a year, the fire damage to the Pal van will cost about £15,000 to repair of which only part will be covered by insurance.

On the positive side, in 2019 the long awaited carriage shed will be ready for use by Easter and will greatly help extend the life of our coaches between major overhauls. A completely rebuilt coach should be in service during the first half of the year giving us three passenger coaches once again and hopefully we might see '54' back in steam before the end of the season. Thanks to a very generous gift from Richard Stead solar panels will be fitted to the roof of the Engine House in the first quarter which will help reduce our dependence on electricity generated from fossil fuels.

This year, for the first time we are

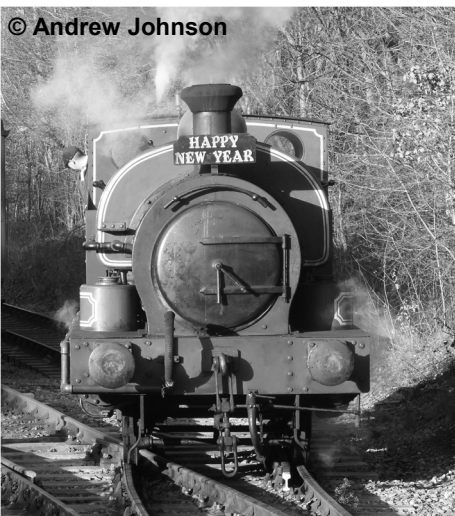
running a theatrical event on the Railway: 'Murder on the Middleton Express' by Front Room Productions. A brand new murder mystery set in the 1950s, part show, part interactive mystery, part musical. Will you discover the murderer before he strikes again? These are planned to be staged on evenings from Wednesday 22nd May to Sunday 2nd June.

Finally, plans for extending the Museum to display more of our small exhibits should be finalised this year with the aim of completing the work in 2020.

This brings us to the last big task for 2019 – planning our Diamond Jubilee Celebrations for 2020: a very important milestone in our history.

We hope that as many of you as possible will come down to Middleton and enjoy all that has been achieved in the last few years, and all that, with your help, we will accomplish this year.

Charles Milner, Chairman



Visit Yorkshire White Rose Award

A Prestigious Award for Middleton

The Middleton Railway has been a member of "Visit Yorkshire" for some time now and MRT member Robert Taggart had the idea of entering us into the prestigious "White Rose Awards".

Initially, the idea was not received enthusiastically, but gentle persuasion soon had the backing of the then Chairman, Malcolm Johnson, and work began on preparing an entry.

A video was produced and Robert began writing up the entry form. This involved several people at the railway, and eventually we sent it off and awaited events.

Imagine our surprise in June 2018 to be told that we were a finalist in the "Small business" category! This is a great achievement for the railway; just becoming a finalist isn't easy. And then disaster struck – the terrible fire at Jewsons adjacent to Moor Road, which did quite a bit of damage to us.

However, Visit Yorkshire were very sympathetic to the railway, allowing us some time to clear up the damage – they postponed the anonymous judging until we were able to say things were back to normal. We also received a very nice letter from Visit Yorkshire CEO Sir Gary Verity which also offered assistance.

A number of members attended the Awards Night itself in Harrogate Conference Centre on 12th November and we were delighted when it was announced we had won a "Highly Commended" certificate in the "Small Business" category, which is effectively

a "Runner up" prize and not always awarded.

Here follows a brief summary of the Judges' comments.

"Any more detail / thoughts about the website? What was your web enquiry / response?"

This website is full of information and photos ideal for the budding train enthusiast. It has up to date news regarding events and experiences on offer. It contains timetables giving information about when the service runs, and when I enquired about the length of the train ride experience I received a prompt reply giving details of journey time but also adding that you can get off the train and spend some time at Middleton Park before your return train journey.

"Now your visit..."

This attraction is easily found from the main motorway routes. The car park is alongside trains and carriages which are undergoing restoration work. The building in which the Trust is housed is modern, light and welcoming, ideally suited for its purpose. We were greeted by a very friendly volunteer who explained all that was on offer and ensured we knew when the next train departures would be. This building houses display areas, a small café and shop and leads you in to static displays of restored full sized trains. The shop has a good selection of rail-related toys at a very reasonable pocket-money price. All of the volunteers we encountered were enthusiastic about their attraction. There was plenty of opportunity for younger visitors to interact such as brass rubbings of

White Rose Award - Well done everyone

engine plates, train jigsaws and visual interpretations. Some of the lovingly restored engines were available to climb onto and overall there were a surprising number of trains in a relatively small space. Moving outside you find yourself on a small re-creation of a Victorian platform where a train awaits to take you on a ride. On Sundays this is a steam locomotive which would be even more impressive. This platform has lots of well-maintained floral decorations adding to the overall ambience. The conductor and driver of the train were friendly towards the children on the train and we were made aware that the train is available for private hire for parties. This would

be a really interesting party venue. Santa specials also run.

We were made to feel very much at ease at this attraction and clearly younger guests loved it. The enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers deserves some form of recognition."



The 'pink' photo (unusual lighting) shows the MRT party at their table, while the 'normal' photo shows them with Sir Gary Verity. We were pleased and honoured to represent our railway that November evening.

Ian Smith

*Well done all
those who
worked so hard .
Ed.*



MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS - LOCO NOTES

It seems quite a while since I last sat down to type notes for the Old Run, due largely to the change of publication date. It also means that these notes are being typed on New Year's Eve with both the main running season and the Santa season being things of the past. From an engineering point of view, I think that the year has been relatively uneventful, with no major headaches other than a hot axlebox on MW 1601 and the leak from HC 1544's boiler, which was easily solved once we had stripped off sufficient bits to get at it.

1601 MATTHEW MURRAY

The last time I reported on this loco it was in the process of being re-painted into a green livery in preparation for the 'Last coals to Leeds' event. It should have been a relatively simple job but it turned out to be a bit of a mess. We had three goes at applying the top coat but each one resulted in a poor finish. In the end, time was against us and we had to settle for a less than acceptable paint finish. At least we could argue that it was typical of a quick paint job that would be carried out at a colliery so, perhaps, more prototypical than the high quality finish that we usually aim for! If time and manpower permit, we will have another go at rubbing down and re-painting before the start of next season, together with some lining out. Although the loco will be entering its last year of its boiler ticket in the coming months it still needs to look respectable as it will no doubt go on display in the Engine House.

No. 6

Things have continued to progress with this loco. The mechanical parts of the chassis are now all but complete and it was deemed that it no

longer needed to be over the pit in the workshops. A grand shunt was organised at the beginning of November to move the various locomotives around and the frames were shunted outside for the first time in several years. It was pleasing to see how well the frames rolled during this shunt, with no apparent stiffness or other problems being noted. However, No.6's time outside in the sunshine was brief and it was back in the workshops within a couple of hours, albeit in a different place.

Attention has now turned to the fitting of the vacuum braking system. This has been a relatively slow job as there is no urgency to complete it, but good progress has been made so far. The pipework from the front buffer beam to the cab has been completed and a start made on continuing it to the rear. Still to do is the provision of the driver's brake valve and the fitting of the new Penberthy vacuum ejector (the component which actually creates the vacuum.) This will then be as much work as we can do on the vacuum system until the boiler and tank are in place, which is still a good way off in time.

It is usual to leave overhaul of the boiler until the mechanical work is nearing completion as the clock effectively starts ticking once a repaired boiler has its formal steam test and it is not good practice to have an overhauled boiler sitting waiting for mechanical work on the chassis to be completed. Thus it was only recently that we sent out invitations to tender for the repair of the boiler. In accordance with accepted practice, we invited three firms to tender for the work. One firm has declined to tender and the quotes from the remaining two

were very close in terms of cost. There was, however, a significant difference in the timescale to effect the repairs, with one firm offering completion before the other firm was prepared to start the repairs. A final decision to place the contract awaits the next Trust Council meeting but it is likely that the boiler will go away at the end of January and be back by the end of 2019, which fits our timescale.

With the work on the chassis essentially complete and the boiler ready to go away for repair the remaining major task is going to be the overhaul of the water tank. This is known to not be in the best condition but exactly how bad has yet to be ascertained. Presently it resides on top of one of our storage containers and will require lifting down with the crane before work can begin. It is hoped that this will have happened by the time that you read these notes.

1210 SIR BERKELEY

With the completion of the work on the chassis of No.6, as mentioned above, it was possible to step up the work on this loco. The first thing that needed to happen, though, was the removal of the boiler. This is always a bit of a challenge because these things are always rather solidly attached to the frames. It is made even more complicated with this locomotive as the reversing quadrant is attached to the boiler. Not only that but the front spring hangers are also bolted through the smokebox so the first job was removal of all these things. Once all the obvious bits had been removed the boiler was jacked up slightly to prove that it would actually lift off the frames. This is a

precaution taken more because our Smiths 5 ton crane is not the most controllable of machines and delicate lifts are not the easiest thing to carry out. Getting the boiler out of the frames is not simply a question of a straight vertical lift. The boiler needs to be lifted slightly at the front first, sufficiently high for the smokebox and tubeplate to clear the cylinder block, but no further to avoid getting jammed at the firebox end. It then has to be lifted slightly and moved forward sufficiently to clear the rear mounting brackets but avoid fouling the middle spring hanger bracket. Once this has happened it can be finally lifted clear of the frames. The Manning Wardle designers certainly didn't make dismantling an easy job!

Once the boiler was removed, the frames were shunted into the workshops ready for their overhaul to begin. The first bits to be removed were the brake gear components, followed by the coupling rods, connecting rods and eccentric rods. All these bits and their associated components were carefully marked and labelled so that the eventual task of assembly would be made easier. Finally the axlebox lubrication pipes were disconnected and the hornstays removed. Once all that had been achieved, which didn't take too long, it was possible to jack the frames up off the wheels. We now have some frame stands which originally came from Hudswell Clarke's Works and were kindly donated by a member and it was intended that the frames would sit on these. However, it soon became obvious that their use on Sir Berkeley was not practical due to the design of the frames and we had to resort to the more traditional method of timber packing.

Loco Notes continued

resort to the more traditional method of timber packing.

The initial dismantling has shown that there are several things that will need attention as part of the overhaul. All six brake hanger pins are bent and will require replacement. The existing pins have been welded into the housings, which is not the best way to fit them. They are probably replacements made at some time in the past, possibly whilst the loco was at Cranford Quarry. The brake hanger brackets will also need attention as many of the fixing holes are worn. These should be truly round and a close tolerance fit for the bolts that hold them. The same applies to the mating holes in the frames.

No.11

Nothing to report yet again.

No.1310 (NER H)

As soon as the main running season was over the loco was taken out of traffic. The boiler was stripped of all the washout plugs and mudholes and then washed out. The ashpan bottom was removed and the tubes, smokebox and firebox thoroughly cleaned as a prelude to the annual boiler examination.

As prophesied in the last Old Run, the rear buffers have now been removed for repair. Once they were dismantled, this provided a surprise. We had expected to find broken springs in them but there were no conventional springs. Instead, the buffers had each been fitted with three Spencer Moulton rubber disc springs. Obviously this was a modification carried out at some time and, as the rubber mouldings were dated 1956, it looks as though it was a modification carried out by the National Coal Board

at about that time. However, in order to carry out the modification, the tail rods had been cut off with oxy-acetylene. This meant that the buffers themselves had no effective support and was why they drooped. This drooping also meant that the remains of the tail rods were catching on the rubber springs, which was damaging them. It seems apparent that the tail rods were originally designed to protrude out of the rear of the buffer and go through an appropriate hole in the buffer beam, a hole that was non-existent! Was this the reason why they were cut off? We shall probably never know. The buffers are only seventeen inches long when fully extended, compared with the more normal 20-21" This means that the coupling can never be tightened and, for this reason, it was intended to fit some 3" thick hardwood timber to pack them out. As the full compression of the buffers was only 3" it was apparent that we could re-instate the tail rods and simply provide the necessary holes in the timber packing without having to drill much larger holes in the buffer beam. This has made for a simple solution to the problem. The buffers have now been overhauled and re-fitted. Whether this work will cure the problem of the train starting to bounce against the loco will have to await April and the return of our passenger services.

1544 SLOUGH ESTATES No.3

In use as required. It is planned to use the loco on New Year's Day after which it will be winterised and prepared for the boiler inspector. 2019 should be the last year of the locos '10 year' ticket in accordance with the Written Scheme of maintenance although we are hopeful that our Boiler Inspector might agree

to a slight extension. The only other planned work for the winter is the overhaul of the steam brake valve, which occasionally does not release the brake when in the off position.

SENTINEL No.54

A bit of progress has been possible over the last few months. The exhaust pipework from the cylinders to the pre-heater and on to the blastpipe has now been manufactured and, apart from the short section to the blastpipe, has been finally fitted. This latter piece needs some slight re-bending to ensure a trouble free fit. The pipework runs for the steam brake have been made and fitted. A new pressure regulating valve has been obtained for the vacuum ejector, along with the associated shut off valve. The safety valves have also been fitted, this being the last of the outstanding fittings. The following list gives the outstanding work:

blower pipework,
one of the injector feed pipes,
the pipework to the whistle,
fitting of the various gauges and associated pipework,
safety valve discharge pipes,
gauge glass drain pipes,
vacuum ejector and associated pipework,
sealing of the boiler top plate,
fitting of the remaining floor sections,
fitting of the regulator control pedal,
some windows.

Plus a final check round of all the various glands, joints and fittings prior to a first steaming.

HE 2387 BROOKES No.1

Brookes has been in regular use during this last period and worked several of the Santa services. More work on the fireman's side injector made it steam and water tight for the start of these services but that situation didn't last long and, by the time of its last day in service, it was once more leaking quite badly. At least, this is not critical as the injector works reliably even with all the leakage.

One problem that has arisen since Brookes returned to service is water in the vacuum system. This is attributable to the way the vacuum ejector had been plumbed in and dated from its time at Buxton. Up to now the slight amount of water had not given any problem with the brakes but, on the last day of the summer season we suffered from dragging brakes on one of the coaches and it was decided to re-pipe the vacuum ejector to eliminate the problem. A drain pipe has also been fitted to the ejector exhaust to drain away any water that does collect in the exhaust, which also eliminates it being ejected out to the chimney when the ejector is turned on.

Following its last rostered turn on the Santa services, the loco was withdrawn and the boiler washed out in preparation for its annual boiler inspection.

Continued

Loco Notes are continued on page 20.

I regret having to split the piece, but unless I do we cannot have any colour pictures in the second half of the magazine, and not many in the first half. Ed.

When the events to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the closure of Middleton Broom Pit were first planned it was not known if there would be the funds necessary to bring in a genuine ex National Coal Board Locomotive. Thought was therefore given at an early stage to the use of members of the Middleton Railway Trust's fleet of working steam engines to represent typical examples of locomotives which worked in the Yorkshire Coalfield.

Re-marking Hudswell Clarke & Co 15 inch six coupled outside cylinder saddle tank 'Slough Estates No. 3' to represent HC 1871 'Nineteen Fifty Three Blenkinsop', the last new locomotive supplied to Broom Pit was a 'no brainer'. Mechanically the two locomotives were almost identical apart from minor details such as the shape of the front sandboxes, and 'Slough Estates No. 3' was painted in a green colour reminiscent of that carried by HC 1871 in its latter days. Of almost equal importance was the fact that no less than 18 examples of this design of locomotive worked in the Yorkshire Coalfield. This made it almost as common a locomotive as the Hunslet Engine Co. 16 inch and 15 inch saddle tanks, which became such a feature of the Coalfield (respectively 21 and 13 locomotives supplied).

As a second engine, Hunslet Engine Co. 14 inch inside cylinder saddle tank 'Brookes No. 1' was a contender. The first built of the class, HE 1482 'Edith', worked for a long time at Broom Pit and may have been the last engine to be steamed at the colliery. Unfortunately it had reduced height boiler fittings and a non-standard rounded cab which meant that it was

not practical to make 'Brookes No. 1' resemble 'Edith'. A similar reason prevented 'Brookes No. 1' from masquerading as HE 1672 'Frickley No. 4' which worked at Frickley and New Monckton Collieries. This locomotive, which was ex Haifa Harbour Works contract, also had a non-standard cab. The final Hunslet Engine Co. 14 inch saddle tank to work in the Yorkshire Coalfield was HE 1499 'Cecil Levita': the second built of the class. This was acquired by Old Silkstone Collieries in 1934 and was employed at their Dodworth Colliery until scrapped in 1961. However, since 'Brookes No. 1' was newly painted and lined out there was no desire to repaint it in the dark green and black lined livery adopted by coal mines in the Barnsley Area.

North Eastern Railway H Class '1310' is a genuine ex NCB locomotive though of a type which was not employed in the Yorkshire Coalfield. It was acquired by Pelaw Main Collieries in 1931 from Robert Frazer and Sons, dealers, along with two other members of the same class. It spent most of its time at Ouston E Colliery until it moved to Watergate Colliery in 1959 from where it was sold for preservation in 1965. However, when operated by the NCB, '1310' looked quite different from its current appearance. It had a short chimney and extended cab as shown in Fig. 1 opposite, which was taken not long after '1310' arrived on the Middleton Railway. There was no appetite to return the locomotive to its NCB condition so that ruled out another option.

This left Manning Wardle built 12 inch six coupled inside cylindered L class saddle tank 'Matthew Murray' as the

Part One of the 'Forward' story continued

last contender for conversion to an NCB locomotive. Very few small Manning Wardles survived into NCB ownership because they were not powerful enough to cope with the work at a modern colliery. Excluding a small number of locomotives employed by contracting companies working for the Open Cast Executive, just five small six coupled Manning Wardles survived to work for the NCB in Yorkshire. Remarkably, one of these was an L class locomotive identical to 'Matthew Murray'.

Fig. 1. '1310' just after arrival on the Middleton Railway.. Middleton Railway Trust Collection.



This locomotive was Manning Wardle 1690 'Forward'. It was built in 1906, three years after 'Matthew Murray' to the order of the Stavely Coal and Iron Company and was delivered to Stavely New Site. The records show that it worked at the Devonshire Iron Works until it was transferred to Yorkshire Main Colliery, Edlington, in September 1909. The colliery was built by the Stavely Coal & Iron Co. to replace declining reserves at their Derbyshire Collieries and was always intended to be a high production pit.

At the time of transfer the first shaft was being sunk at Yorkshire Main Colliery, then named Edlington Main, and 'Forward' was presumably sent

there to help with construction. The second shaft was sunk in 1910 and by 1911 the colliery was in production. Initially the Barnsley seam which was reached at a depth of 829 metres, was worked but working of the Dunsil seam started in the 1950s and in the 1970s the Swallow Wood seam was also worked. The colliery first raised a million tons of coal in a year in 1923 and peak production of 1,138,512 tons of coal was achieved in 1933. At its peak 3,500 men were employed at Yorkshire Main Colliery.

In 1937 the Stavely Iron and Coal Company's Yorkshire coal mines were merged with those of other Yorkshire Coal owners to form Doncaster Amalgamated Collieries. This company operated Brodsworth Main, Hickleton Main, Markham Main, Yorkshire Main, Bullcroft and Thurcroft collieries until 1st January 1947 when the coal industry was nationalised. Yorkshire Main Colliery became part of the NCB North East Division, Area No. 2 and in March 1967 it became a part of the NCB's then newly formed Doncaster Area. Closure came in October 1985 following the 1984/85 miners strike. At the time of closure about 1400 men worked at the pit.

From 1909 onwards 'Forward' quietly worked away at the colliery. It was joined by a Manning Wardle K Class saddle tank, 'Chesterfield' and later by a large Avonside saddle tank, 'Arthur' and then by a Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn's built Austerity saddle tank, 'No. 35'. This locomotive was eventually to find a home on the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway.

Charles Milner

To be continued in the April issue

I have to admit that my knowledge of railways is very limited and partial. Indeed, last week young Kenny was describing to me engines that he knew and quoted all the names and numbers and where they are located. I had to tell him that I was sorry that I could not share his enthusiasm for such detail. He asked me, why then did I come down to the railway? It's a very good question and made me think a bit. The answer is that railways have always been there and form part of my life. Like a lot of children of my generation (I am in my 70s) I wanted to be an engine driver when I grew up. There of course is the first reason I come down to the railway. I have never grown up! Although I am not a driver and have no inclination to be one, just seeing, smelling, and hearing a train is enough to bring a sort of thrill that started all those years ago when I would go train spotting with my Ian Allen book and pencil. Incidentally I was the type that ruled across the number rather than below it. Apparently, and I do not recall the occasions but my brother who is older than me tells me, that when we lived on Dartmoor we would taunt and tease the loco crew so much that they began to throw coal at us. This, of course, was the whole idea and we would have to collect the coal and take it home. Like a lot of stories it might be a little apocryphal.

For my formative years I grew up in Lancaster. I remember still, watching the engines on the turntable at Green Ayre or being at Lancaster Castle station hoping to be allowed to stand in the cab of the waiting train.

I do have two claims to fame regarding railways. When I was about thirteen I went on a school trip by train to Chamonix in the French Alps. I remember being told to watch out for when we went through the long Simplon tunnel. Sadly it was at night when we arrived at it. On our return journey for

some reason we missed our connection in Dover. To help us get home they put us on the Golden Arrow to London. Again for reasons unknown to me we missed our connection for the train from London to Lancaster. Not to let us down it was arranged that the Caledonian Express would make a stop at Lancaster. This had never happened before. When we arrived at Lancaster, word had got round and not only were our families there to greet us but the local paper and enthusiasts as well. The Station Master turned out and was wearing his tails and top hat. A grand occasion indeed.

My second claim to fame is to do with my work with the BBC as a sound recordist. I worked on a programme called 'Jim'll fix it'. We don't mention such things any more of course. Nevertheless, a young lad had asked to ride in the cab of the new and exciting 125 train. With permission granted, we set off from London hoping to get to the magic speed on the speedometer. We had to wait until we got to a stretch between York and Durham when we were able to show a speed of 125 MPH.

I only have one more claim to fame, well sort of fame. I was working on a programme called 'Tomorrows World' for the BBC. Our job was to film a rack railway being built and operated underground at the now gone Big K, the Kellingley Pit. From a sound recordist aspect it was interesting because we were not allowed to take batteries down the pit. The BBC though had the answer because they had a clockwork camera and a clockwork tape recorder that could be synchronised together. Anyhow, the claim to fame was that after all these many years I discovered that the engineer who took us down and guided us through the shoot was a Mr. S Roberts! The rack railway, or at least one like it, is now on display in our Engine House.

Vic Johnson

More tales from our intrepid explorer, David Cook

There are the remnants of an old logging railway beginning in Livingstone, a few miles from Victoria Falls. In the early 1900s there was a great demand for hardwood from the Mapanda Forest. The desired tree was the Mukusi, known by several names including African Teak. It is particularly resistant to termites and the timber was needed locally and abroad for pit props in the mines of South Africa and the Northern Rhodesia Copper Belt and for railway sleepers. In 1916 Zambesi Sawmills was formed to extract this resource and, a year later, machinery was bought and installed in the forest. To get the timber away, oxen dragged it to the river to be loaded on to barges. Unfortunately there was a considerable loss in the river rapids and a 2 foot gauge wooden tram line was built to Livingstone where the timber could be transferred to the main line railway.

To satisfy the growing demand for Mukusi, railway operations had to be extended to other forest reserves and the company constructed a 3' 6" (Cape Gauge) wrought iron railway line using second hand rail from South Africa. It eventually stretched for 163 km from the town of Livingstone to the town of Mulobezi and then another 120 km further to Kataba. With branch lines it was the longest private railway in the world.

The Sawmills closed in 1973 and the line and repair sheds in Livingstone were abandoned. In 1976 the site was taken over by the National Monuments Commission and restoration work began. The Livingstone old station site was re-opened as a Railway Museum by President Kenneth Kaunda in 1987. The rest of the line was run under Government concession with an infrequent service taking two days to Mulobezi. There are plans to return the line to the Government and rehabilitate

the line as the distance to Mulobezi by train is half the road distance but the state of the track at the moment limits the speeds to 20km/h.

Locomotives are littered around the Livingstone Museum site. The locos are in poor condition but there is nothing to prevent you climbing on them. A team of ladies with hoes keeps the area clear from scrub. Considering the purpose of the line it is surprising that the sleepers on the museum site are metal. The loco information boards are handwritten. There is a first class carriage that took the bosses to the distant forest, and a second class carriage for the workmen.

15km of the old line is used for heritage steam train trips into the bush, running a couple of evenings a week in the season. This is the Royal Livingstone Express although anything less like an express would be hard to find. There are two locos, the pride of which is the Princess of Mulobezi built in Glasgow for Rhodesian Railways. The Princess, and the second loco, also from Glasgow, were built in 1924 and lovingly restored by Ben Costa, a passionate Zimbabwean railway engineer. Before being restored they occupied pride of place in the Railway Museum. The attendant wooden carriages are polished until they gleam and were recovered from South Africa and restored by Rohan Vos. There is comfortable seating in a lounge coach and a luxurious dining car. After three-quarters of an hour or so the train stops for a five-course dinner prepared by the Royal Livingstone Hotel chefs on board. An alternative trip goes the other way to Victoria Falls Bridge. It is a memorable evening but not cheap. On the other hand the museum is cheap and there is a chance that you will be the only visitor that day.

David Cook



Our Christmas Cracker in 2018, also wearing a wreath in memory of Paul Baxter, who will be sorely missed. See page 18 for an Obituary.

For the last few years our Santa Specials have carried a 'Christmas Cracker' headboard – seen here on 'Matthew Murray' last December. I wonder how many members are aware of its source and just how well travelled it was before it arrived at Moor Road?

From memory the headboard arrived at Middleton around the mid/late 1990s when a chap called Phil Durrell was volunteering with us – including some stints as Santa if I remember rightly. Phil is a keen fan of Class 40 diesel locos and was very involved with the Class 40 Preservation Society (CFPS) in the 1980s. During this time the CFPS ran a series of railtours at Christmas all called 'The Christmas Cracker' and our headboard featured on the first three of these – as did Phil, possibly in Santa costume on at least one of them!

When the Deltics finished on BR in January 1982 I transferred my allegiance to the Class 40s and this is why I also travelled on all three of the

tours on which our headboard featured.

The first was on 18th December 1982 and featured 40035 from Leeds to Dundee and back to Mossend Yard, from where 40015 took over for the run back to Leeds.

'Christmas Cracker 2' ran a year later on 17th December 1983 and took 40028 from Leeds to Cardiff Central and back to Birmingham New Street from where 40034 took the tour back to Leeds. My notes state that we were banked up the Lickey incline by a very uninspiring 45146 – rather than the more usual pair of Class 37s!

Our headboard's last trip was on the 'Christmas Cracker 3' on 15th December 1984 when 40118 took a trip from Huddersfield to Bristol Temple Meads and back. While the 40 was fuelled at Bristol 37177 took the train round the Avonmouth loop before 40118 returned us to Huddersfield. With the remaining Class 40s withdrawn in January 1985 – apart from D200/40122 which carried on as a celebrity loco until 1988 – that was the end of the headboard's career on the main line. The CFPS have run several Christmas Crackers since, both with 40122 and their own preserved 40145, but they featured a different headboard.

The 'Christmas Crackers' were great tours and invariably featured a Santa on the train and usually a photo stop or



break on the way back where the CFPS sometimes booked a local Salvation Army band to come along and lead a carol singing session! The headboard is really steeped in the Christmas spirit and it's good to see its continued use following its travels across England, Scotland and Wales!

Phil Durrell brought the headboard to our railway one Christmas, whilst volunteering, and it has been with us ever since. He knows where it is and has shown no inclination to retrieve it. We are grateful!

Ian Dobson (text and photos) and thanks to Phil Durrell for information.

Ian Dobson

and he travels extensively, so we can expect a wide selection of pictures from around the country and perhaps a few from Europe as well.

2nd April IAN DOBSON; A selection of slides looking at railways in general.

4th June TBA

6th August TBA

1st October TBA

3rd December Christmas Quiz from "Team Smith".

MRT SOCIAL EVENINGS

Following Ian Dobson's decision to step down from arranging the Tuesday Social Evenings, the decision has been taken to attempt to continue them on a bi-monthly basis, on the FIRST Tuesday of each month.

Vice President Ian Smith and David Russell, a railway supporter who lives in Harrogate, will arrange a series of talks for 2019 and will then review at the end of the year to see if they are working.

A major issue has been that these events do take some organising, but attendances are not exactly encouraging! However, let us see what 2019 brings!

Meeting dates this year are as follows:

5th February DAVID RUSSELL "Modern History 2004-2008", looking back at railway subjects from that era which can no longer be seen.

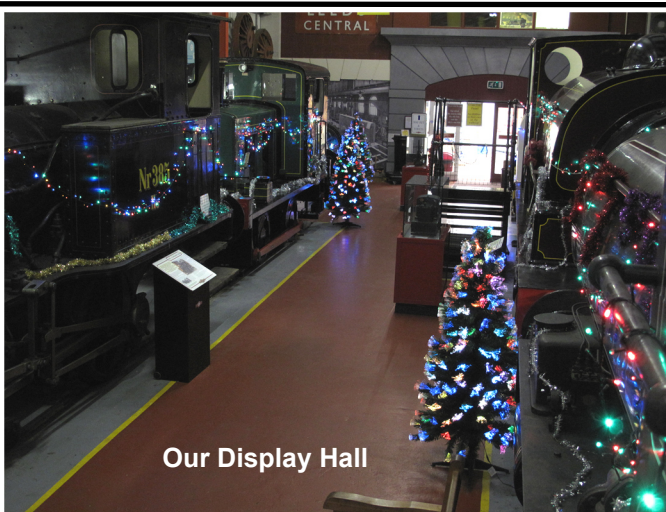
A resident of Harrogate, David has been interested in railways all his life

You will notice there are a few gaps – always willing to consider new speakers!!

Ian Smith

**David Russell
Ian's Partner in Crime'**





Our Display Hall



Santa's Workshop



Neq Year's Day Mince Pie Special
© Ian Smith



Matthew Murr



**The Elves'
Storehouse**



**Children boarding on the first
School Day and the train crew
(Daniel Baxter and Michael Cox)
posing with Santa.**



Brookes No. 1

Reindeer have their feet up, glad of a day off!

(c) Tony Cowling

Paul Baxter - an Obituary.



Paul Baxter

Paul was born on the 4th January 1951, he was the third child of Ronnie and Dorothy and the only boy of five children. He attended Bentley Lane Primary School and then Leeds Modern (now Lawnswood High). He then went on to attend Leeds Polytechnic to do Buisness Studies.

In his teens he was in two bands called the Rubber Band and Purple Haze; he played the bass guitar and provided vocals. He was also a keen member of a Drama group and played the lead role in many productions. He developed a love of walking in the dales, fishing, cycling, and not forgetting the drinking.

Paul worked initially for the inland Revenue, then worked with his dad in local quarries driving excavators, then had a few jobs over the years, mainly working for Dennis Fishers, Kays (catalogue/mailorder), then finally Leeds city council.

Paul married Hilary on the 11th April 1981, and 3 children, Hannah, Daniel and Holly soon followed. Paul was a great supporter of all 3

Rest in peace, Paul.

children, following them in their endeavours and often taxi driving full teams of children to horse shows, rugby matches and swimming competitions all over the country.

It was because of following his son's love of trains that they ended up becoming volunteers at the Middleton Railway. Initially Paul only volunteered to supervise Daniel but then developed a love and an enjoyment (as he did anything to do with engineering and fixing things- the phrase "If Dad can't fix it, it's broke!" being made for him) of being there twice a week.

After Paul retired, Wednesdays became Middleton days and everything, including hospital appointments, had to be re-arranged. The days in between Middleton were full of stories about what jobs needed doing and exactly how he was going to do them.

On the 9th of December Paul lost his private 6 year battle with prostate cancer. He passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his children.



**Daniel
Baxter**

Fowler 42200033 HARRY

The two rear windows have now been fitted and work continues on the two front ones. The damaged gauges have all been removed for repair or replacement. The larger (4") gauges, speedo and rev counter will all be repaired but it is likely to be more cost effective to replace the smaller 2" gauges with new.

Peckett 5003 AUSTIN'S No.1

This diesel has remained in service over the last few months so it has not been possible to remove the fuel pump for overhaul.

Hunslet 1684

A loco that has rarely had a mention in the Old Run and one that is largely forgotten about, which in many ways is a pity as it would be entirely suited to our operations and is unique in being the only surviving Hunslet four coupled side tank. As far as it can be ascertained, it has spent the last fifty years in open storage. It was certainly the case when the writer saw it in 1971 and its subsequent travels have never given it a home under cover, leading to significant deterioration. However, this open storage has now come to an end with the need to clear the dead end siding where it has been stored since its arrival at Middleton necessitating it being moved. The Picton shelter was built with the intention of putting this and the Greenbat under cover and this has now been achieved.

For those that are not aware of the circumstances behind this loco, it ended its working days at Norton Hill colliery in 1965 before being acquired by the Yieldingtree Railway Museum Trust, who still own it. It was displayed at Bleadon & Uphill station before

moving to Peak Rail at Buxton, then Swanage and the GCR at Quorn, then Ruddington, before coming to Middleton in June 2004 on a 25 year loan, principally because it is Leeds built and unique. However, although ostensibly complete, much of the cab and bunker platework is beyond redemption. It also needs a new boiler and new wheel tyres. Beyond that, it should be straightforward!

D2999

Available for traffic and used as required. It suffered with flat batteries during October, the cause of which has not been established.

D577 MARY

The loco is available for traffic and sees occasional use.

HE 6981

Work on this loco has been stepped up considerably in recent times. Many hours have been spent in needle-gunning and priming the whole of the loco from the cab roof down. The four doors giving access to the rear casing were all found to be badly corroded and it was deemed simpler to replace them rather than patch repair. This has now been done and the doors have been re-fitted using the old hinges and locks.

A vacuum exhaustor that we had in stock has been positioned on the loco to ascertain the best position in which to fit it. Essentially, we had a choice of fitting it to either the left or right hand side of the running plate at the front, neither of which are ideal. The left hand side option required more pipework and cooling pipework modifications, whilst the right hand side option required the re-routing of electrical conduits, and would also

have made any work on the fuel pump very difficult. Neither location would allow the exhauster to be fitted within the engine casing and a separate enclosure will have to be provided for it. In the end, it has been decided to fit it on the left hand side. Providing a belt drive from the crankshaft is not without its problems. A new pulley will be required as there are no spare grooves available to power the exhauster. This also entails moving the radiator fan slightly forward which has necessitated the manufacture of a suitable spacer. We can afford to move the fan forward by $1\frac{3}{4}$ ", which will just allow a suitable pulley to be fitted to the crankshaft. The actual route of the vacuum pipework has still to be finalised. There is a preference for not taking the easy option and having the pipework external and in full view. For this reason it is likely that it will be accommodated behind the side valances. The main run of the pipework will have to be down the right hand side as the air brake emergency cylinder effectively blocks off any simple route down the left hand side. Although the loco was never vacuum fitted, for some reason, some of the necessary holes in the control desk were already there, making life a bit easier.

The loco arrived at Middleton with a broken front right spring. Fortunately, it also came with a spare. The spring has now been changed, not without a lot of cursing. When the loco was designed, it is obvious that little attention was given to doing such things. It is not impossible to do (we've just done it) but requires a lot of brute strength and effort to do so. Getting the old one out is not too bad as gravity is on your side but lifting

the new one up is an entirely different matter.

The right hand cab side sheet has become corroded through in the area around the cab floor. It was decided that the easiest thing to do was to fit a large new single plate rather than a few small patch repairs. The old plate has now been cut out and a replacement piece made although, at the time of writing, it still needs fitting. As part of this work, a new floor support angle is required as the original is in poor condition. Gaining access to do all this has meant the removal of the battery boxes. As the locomotive was built as a flameproof one for use at a refinery, these battery boxes are explosion proof and made of thick steel. We no longer require it to be flameproof so these have been removed. Well one has, the other is still fighting against it!

Another item of flameproof equipment was the exhaust gas conditioner system. This system caused the exhaust to pass through a conditioner box, which was full of water. The water both removed some of the impurities in the exhaust and cooled it and eliminated any sparks that might be ejected. The actual system had fallen into disuse when the loco was no longer required to work in the refinery but was still fitted to the loco. The conditioner box and associated header tank have been removed to both increase working space and simplify the loco.

D631 CARROLL

Available if required but generally on display in the Engine House.

L.M.S. 7051

Available if required but generally on display in the Engine House.

Loco Notes continued

OLIVE

Work has been continuing on the repairs to this vehicle at the Vintage Carriages Trust. However, much still remains to be done before it can be made operable again.

D1373 MD&HB No.45

Available for traffic and in use as required.

Greenbat 420452

Little has been done in recent months

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

CARRIAGE & WAGON NOTES

Coaches

Coaches 1074 and 2084 have been in regular use throughout the season. Ongoing problems with the coach electrical connectors led to new ones of a different type being fitted to all the stock presently needing them.

Coach 1074 suffered from dragging brakes on the last day of the summer services. The brakes were working properly in that they were applying and releasing, as required, but the piston was only moving for two thirds of the travel when being released. The offending brake cylinder was removed from the vehicle at the first opportunity and subsequently dismantled. We do have a spare cylinder but accessing this is not easy and it was deemed a quicker solution to strip the existing cylinder to ascertain the problem. Once stripped, the reasons for the problem were fairly obviously due to water ingress into the cylinder. This, as reported above, was coming from HE 2387 Brookes No.1. The cylinder was thoroughly cleaned and new

rolling rings and seals fitted. Fortunately, these were held in stock so it was a quick job. The cylinder was soon replaced and proved to work satisfactorily. Following on from this incident it was deemed sensible to remove the brake cylinder from coach 2084 and check this over.

This again was subsequently dismantled but, in this case, there was no trace of water or corrosion.

New rolling rings and seals were again fitted and the cylinder put back on and tested. The brakes on 1074 have been adjusted to take up wear in the brake blocks. Quite a few of the brake blocks on both the coaches in service are reaching the end of their life and will have to be replaced in the coming months. We do have spare blocks but these are gradually being used up and we will have to be thinking about purchasing another batch. The last lot came from BR Horwich Foundry so it is a good few years since we bought them!

The rebuild of coach 1867 continues to make good progress. All the external panelling has now been fitted, along with the not inconsiderable amount of beading which covers all the screws. Likewise, the internal panelling has all been cut and fitted with the exception of the strips at the cantrail and given the first coats of varnish. The ceiling has also been fitted and given two coats of varnish. A third coat will be applied once the Sapele beading is fitted to cover the screws that secure the ceiling in place. A start has been made on applying the first coats of paint externally. Work on the doors has been progressing but this has slowed in recent weeks due to staff being involved in the Santa operations.

Apart from the doors, the major outstanding tasks are the fitting of the glass and the assembly of the seating. The first three of twenty four panes of glass have been fitted and others will follow shortly. With regard to the seats, this is largely an assembly job as virtually all the parts have been cut and prepared for fitting.

It is hoped that coach 1867 will be finished in time to enter service at the beginning of April. However, there is still a lot to do! In parallel with this work, coach 2084 will be the subject of a clean down and repaint, both internally and externally. It is a few years since this was last done so we are expecting to find a few unwanted surprises when we start the process in a few days' time.

LMS Brake Van No.158760

Work has recently been concentrated on the roof of the vehicle. Most, if not all, of the old roof planks have proved to be re-usable. Much time has been spent on removing old screws and nails from the planks, a necessary prelude to fitting any roof covering. In recent times there has been a dedicated team of three people working on this on most Wednesdays. However, one of the team has moved away from the area so we have a substantially depleted workforce. The overhaul is slowly reaching a conclusion but still has some way to go to get there. If you would like to help speed it up, please come down and offer your services on any Wednesday.

Palvan

The Trust Council has agreed to the restoration of this vehicle by a contractor. Following the receipt of estimates for its repair it has been

agreed that it will go to Stanegate Restorations in Haltwhistle for this to be done. They expect to finish another rail vehicle towards the end of January and this will create the necessary space there for them to start work on the vehicle.

Ballast Brake Van

This vehicle becomes the mobile command centre during our Santa season with all the necessary presents being conveyed in it. It also provides a refuge for Santa's helpers. For the last couple of years the roof has suffered from leaks when it rains, which doesn't do the carefully wrapped presents any good. We have tried to cure the problem, but without success, principally because we don't know the exact cause of it. In order to permanently sort the problem it is intended to strip the existing metal roof covering and fit a canvas roof during the coming season, once coach 1867 is finished and undercover space can be found. We will also look at replacing the heater, which has also failed. It needs time, money and manpower but it is fundamental to our successful Santa season.

Steve Roberts Mechanical Engineer

It was Christmas Eve at the North Pole and little Nuff the fairy was helping Santa load his sleigh. You've heard of Fairy Nuff. Santa was getting fed up with telling Nuff where to put items. It came to a head when Nuff brought in a large Christmas tree and asked Santa where shall she put it. Which is why you will find a fairy at the top of a Christmas tree.

With apologies from Cedric!

Severn Valley Railway - Drivers and Firemens visit

A notice appeared in the mess room which caught my eye - a trip to the Severn Valley for a driver experience day. After talking to Jack Auckland, I decided to go along with Jack and Janet and also Chris Campbell.

The day duly came along with Jack driving us all down to Bridgnorth with the instruction that we had to be there for 1pm where, on arrival, we would meet up with the rest of the party, and also Barry who was in charge. I later found out that Barry had been organising these trips for 17 years and was well respected at the railway. He was also an ex railway man working at Sowerby Bridge MPD, Healy Mills, and ending his career in Manchester as a Traction Inspector.

Barry had arranged a depot visit which we then saw. In the boiler shop they were making new boilers for the Isle of Man railway and repairing several others, and in the workshop there were several locos in various states of rebuild. This was all very interesting. Then we made our way back to the station to join a train to Kidderminster and return. It transpired at this point that the train for the driver experience had been hired for three days, making three return trips per day so that 12 sets of men per day got on the footplate, I should also add that it was the Mirfield Railway Enthusiasts Society annual driving experience trip.

So we joined the train to Kidderminster for the round trip, with a free buffet lunch included I may add. On arrival at Kidderminster, I was asked if I would like a footplate ride just to get a feel of the loco, that being 7802 Bradley Manor. So on arrival at Highley Barry got me onto the footplate for a short trip up to the next station at Hampton Loade. I was offered the fireman's seat and settled in for the ride which was a bit strange running tender first and also

trying to take the western locos controls. We duly arrived at Bridgnorth and went to check into the B & B for two nights with instructions to be at the station for 8.30 in the morning for our trip on the loco. So after checking in it was up the hill into Bridgnorth town to Wetherspoons for dinner.

Next morning we were all up bright and early and at the station for 8.30 with the loco 7802 and six Gresley teak coaches for our train. We had to get into pairs and draw lots for which part of the three round trips we would each drive. I paired with Chris and Jack with another guy he knew. So I drew second trip of the day from Bridgnorth to Kidderminster and Jack unfortunately drew Kidderminster to Bridgnorth on the last trip of the day tender first ! So we joined the train for the round trip down to Kidderminster and back.

On arrival back at Bridgnorth, Chris and I got on the footplate and it was decided that I would drive the first half of the trip while Chris fired. After a few instructions from the driver about the peculiarities of the Great Western loco, it was time for the off. Unfortunately for me there had just been a spot of rain and on opening the regulator the loco picked up its feet, quickly closing it again. I managed to get the train on the move after three or four attempts, it was then plain sailing notching back and settling in until the first station passing point with a few problems mastering the GWR vacuum brake. After getting the nod from the fireman away we went again and I was beginning to enjoy myself when the driver tapped me on the shoulder and I had to hand over to Chris for his turn at driving and my bit of firing. Firing I found a bit strange with the coal being so far back in the tender and the fire box so long, so I had quite a bit prompting from the fireman when to fire and when to put the injector on and keeping an eye on the signals which are all on the

Charles Alan Shrives, 1919 to 2019, an Obituary

fireman's side and before long we were arriving in Kidderminster and the end of our footplate trip. After returning once again to Kidderminster it was Jack's turn on the footplate, this time he elected to fire to the half way point, then drive up to Bridgnorth, we got away only to be stopped at Bewdley for 30 minutes waiting for Taw Valley and its train to clear the section. When Jack took over the regulator the speed began to rise to quite a bit over the 25mph limit and all too soon it was all over.

On the whole it was a great experience and I am looking forward to going again next year. We have been promised the standard 4, 75069 so I cannot wait.

Michael Cox.

affected his attitude to quality workmanship. He left Hunslets in 1938 to move with his family to Yate. He worked at Parnells aircraft, Newman engineering and Dowty's during the war, designing items such as aircraft undercarriages.

He met his future wife in the area, marrying in 1946, producing a daughter and a son who are both involved with the rail industry. Always very left wing and involved in union activity this "dangerous, unemployable socialist" moved around various engineering firms, ending up at Spencer Melksham.

After a spell as Clerk of Works and head of the experimental shop he was promoted to Chief of Sub-contract inspection. This involved much traveling around the UK allowing him to visit many places including the Middleton Railway.

After retiring in 1981 and the subsequent death of his wife he renewed his interest in Esperanto and travelled the world.

By 2010 his health precluded much travelling unless his daughter accompanied him, so it was with real pleasure that he attended the Hunslet 150 Gala and staff reunion, providing some of the narration for the gala DVD which has been played several times for his carers as he still lived at home. He passed away on 8th January 2019, a few months short of his 100th birthday, in Ysbyty, Gwynedd, after a short illness. Despite spending his later years only a few yards from the Ffestiniog Railway, he was always a proud Yorkshireman, often promoting the Middleton Railway to all and sundry.

David Charlton, his son-in-law and



Charles Alan Shrives was born in Hunslet in 1919 but was very proud of the fact that he moved to the large housing development in Middleton, attending Middleton School where, on one occasion, he took over a lesson on steam locomotives when the teacher realised he knew more than him!

He started his apprenticeship at Hunslets at the age of 14, being given the position when no jobs were being offered, on the strength of his Father's craftsmanship. Working there deeply

Changes to Websites

While we are a heritage railway, we can not afford to be using heritage IT systems, because the world's IT infrastructure is changing all the time. We were reminded of this (not that we needed any reminder!) at the end of August, when Apple made some changes to the software for iPhones. As a result, we suddenly started getting calls from people trying to book tickets for our Santa Specials, who were worried because their iPhones were displaying messages that warned them that the website for booking these tickets was not secure. Actually these warnings were not correct, and within a few hours of being alerted to the problem we were able to change things so that they stopped appearing, but this just indicates why a lot of work is constantly having to be done behind the scenes to keep the railway's IT systems up to date.

This applies particularly to our web-based systems, because hackers are for ever trying to break into such systems, and so the technology used to build the systems is constantly being updated to fix the kinds of security loopholes that hackers try to exploit. One particular technology that is key to many of these systems is a programming language called PHP, and the updates to this have reached a point where the major previous version of it (PHP 5) is no longer being maintained. Consequently, systems that have been built using this language need to be upgraded to the current version (PHP 7.3). This has affected all of the railway's web-based systems: our main website, our intranet site and the system that we use for rostering train crews.

Because we had rebuilt our main website at the beginning of 2018, using the latest version of the content management system that runs it (called Joomla), we know that upgrading this to the latest version of PHP will be straightforward. By contrast, our intranet site had been built originally using a different content management system (called Wordpress), and this was now seriously out of date. We have therefore rebuilt this website completely, using the latest version of Joomla, which will also make the site a lot easier to maintain in the future. Working members will have received more information about this change via Turnout. Along with this, our roster system has also had to be rebuilt, to use the latest version of the software (known as the Fuel PHP framework) that runs it internally. This rebuild has not changed at all the facilities that the system provides, or its appearance, but as with the intranet site the new version does have a different web address (or URL). Again, working members will have received more information about this change via Turnout.

As well as rebuilding these systems to use the latest version of this programming language, we have also been changing the way in which users communicate with them. When web sites were first being created the designers of the internet did not see much need to worry about security, and so made various design decisions that have been creating problems ever since! One of these decisions was that information being sent to or from a web site could simply be sent as ordinary text, but it was not long before people began to realise that this made it very easy for others to see what information

was being sent. This was not a problem if the information was already public (like the information about the railway that is on our website), but it could be a very big problem if the information was actually private, such as a customer's payment card details.

To fix this problem, the designers of the internet soon created a facility to use secure communications, so that all the information is sent in an encrypted form. The use of this facility is indicated by the web addresses (URLs) starting with "https://" rather than just "http://" (where the additional "s" denotes that secure communication is used). As internet security has become more important, so web sites are increasingly using secure communications, and (as with iPhones after the change at the end of August), devices are starting to display warnings if secure communications are not being used.

To keep up with these developments, at some time during January we will be starting to use secure communications for our main website, and this will mean that its web address will change, so as to start with "https://". To help test things out we have a development version of the website, and we have already made this change there, and so we will just have to repeat the same steps with the live site. When we do the old address will still work, but it will automatically be redirected to the new one (and therefore will automatically use secure communications).

While this change may not be strictly necessary, since the whole point of us having a website is to make

information about the railway publicly available, it is becoming clear that users are reluctant to access websites if they see warnings that the sites are not secure. The last thing that we will want in the run-up to the next operating season is that users might be deterred from accessing our web site, and so these changes will avoid this happening.

Tony Cowling

CARRIAGE SHED

A contract has now been placed for the erection of the new carriage shed. This will be sited at the south end of Moor Road over what has previously been referred to as the 'dead end' siding. The shed will be 42 metres long by 5.4 metres wide (138 feet by 17½ feet in old money), sufficient to hold our three coaches plus the ballast brake van. The building contractors are expected to be on site towards the end of February but we have much work to do before then to make the site suitable for them to access. The track was lifted over the Christmas break as a first step in the jigsaw puzzle. The next task will be to clear the trees and shrubs along the fence line as there isn't room to leave them in place. Once this is done the plan is to bring in contractors with a road-rail excavator and other equipment to excavate the large amount of spoil that has to be removed from the site.

It would have been good to have made the shed bigger but the reality is that we haven't got the space to do so. It has also been suggested by some that we could build over the headshunt but there is insufficient room to give the required clearance from the running line, even if the siding was slewed over slightly.

Steve Roberts

Spotting

As a child I grew up on the Sutton Estate which is situated on a plateau between York Road and the Leeds to York railway. From the age of about five or six I was allowed to play out on the estate. In the first years of the 1950s there were very few motor vehicles on the estate so playing out was safe. As far as I can remember the only vehicles that came onto the estate were the gully emptier with its elephant style hose which was let down into the grates at the side of the street and my father coming home on occasions for lunch in the lorry which he drove. The latter was good as I could sit in the cab and pretend to drive while he had his mug of tea and a sandwich.

The Sutton Estate had been built by the Sutton Trust in the 1920s. The ethos of the Trust was to provide good housing for poor families at reasonable rents. Gran must have fitted their criteria being a war widow with three children. Granddad had died in France during the First World War. After her marriage my mother had continued to live with grandma. Our terrace house was about two hundred yards from the shop which had been constructed at the same time as the houses. I can remember being sent to buy odd groceries and asking if I could have an empty OXO tin in which small toys and odds and ends could be kept.

Just to the left of the shop was a bridge which spanned the Leeds to York railway line. One of the things that my friends and I liked to do was to stand on the bridge when a steam train was passing underneath. (All trains were steam at that time.) The bridge was constructed so that there was a gap between the edge of the carriageway and the vertical steel sides. We could not, of course, see over the parapet as we were not tall enough. However the

steam and smoke from the passing train would rise up the gaps on either side of the bridge. We thought it great fun to inhale the rising clouds.



Just to the left of the bridge was a wooden gate which led down a pathway (was there also a flight of steps?) to a signal box. We knew that we were not allowed down the path or even to open the gate. The signalman had a ferocious reputation and would have our guts for garters! But we could look through the slats and spot the trains. We had no idea what he did all day. Could he have been stationed there to chase away inquisitive children? There were, however, two places over the bridge where we could spot the trains.

Firstly there was the pit hill which was to the right after crossing the bridge. It was, to us five and six year olds, high and steep. There were three or four friends with whom I played. It was necessary for us to scramble up the slope on all fours. Possibly by design the girls went first. To us boys this was good as we could then spot what colour knickers they were wearing. By the way, all girls at that time wore skirts or dresses. Once on top of the pit hill we had a good view of the line to Leeds and York and could spot the trains approaching. Unlike today there were four sets of rail, two in each direction. When we were bored we would crouch

Unwanted Visitors - aka VANDALS!

on our haunches and slide down the pit hill.

Once safely down we would go to our second spotting area. To the right of the bridge was a wooden three bar fence along the top of the railway cutting. This was no deterrent to us as we were all small enough to slide through the gap between the bottom and middle rails. After the roughness of the pit hill a lovely grassy bank was on offer for us to sit and spot the trains. However we had to be careful. We needed to stay close to the fence where we were hidden from view from the signal box by the bridge. We were all terrified that the signalman would see us. Settled on the embankment we awaited the trains which all seemed to sound their whistles. Why, we did not know. Perhaps it was some secret code! However one of the boys who was older (maybe six or seven) claimed to know the different whistles fitted to trains. 'It's a streak.' He would call out. Then a passenger train would pass by on one of the inner tracks. To our young minds perhaps all passenger trains were hauled by a streak. So we would spend hours spotting the trains. Or was it just a few minutes before we got bored and went to play elsewhere?

A few years ago I returned to my old playground. The shop had been bricked up and was some sort of office for the estate. The bridge is still there. Two of the tracks have gone as has the signal box. The pit hills have all been levelled and the whole area landscaped. The bridge is still the same but has some ornamental ironwork and a sign above it announcing that the area is now 'Primrose Valley'. There were no young children playing and possibly spotting trains. And, of course, no signalman to shoo them away.

Malcolm Johnson

UNWANTED VISITORS

Earlier this year we spent a considerable amount of money on replacing the palisade fencing that surrounds the Moor road site. The old fencing had become quite corroded and it didn't take much effort to remove a few palings to gain access. The new fencing appeared to have done its job as we had found no evidence of unwanted visitors. However, during December it was noted that the door on one of our containers was not properly shut. The immediate thought was that it had been left open by a volunteer. It was only when the lock could not be traced and a search nearby found it that it became obvious that it had been cut. A review of the CCTV showed that two youths had entered the site and forced open the container. They weren't in there a long time and we don't think anything has gone missing. After all, there is little of interest to steal. However, as is often the case, you don't realise anything is missing until you come to want it. The CCTV also showed them 'casing' other parts of the site, including the PW container but failing to gain access. They had cut off one of the bolts holding a paling in position and squeezed through the gap.

A couple of weeks later we had another visit from two youths, possibly the same two. This time they gained entry at the south end of the site. The exact method is not known. They made a direct line to the Running shed and proceeded to force off one of the wall sheeting panels before gaining entry into the building. Again, we don't think anything has gone missing but the same maxim applies that you often don't know it is missing until you want it. The same people also tried to gain entry into the Picton shelter but failed to do so. Our security is, on the whole, very good. It has to be; but it is a fact that such things as palisade fencing really only keep honest people out.

Steve Roberts

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am riting on behalf of the reindeer team. Our English not so good an typing she rubbish due to aving hooves. Anyroad, we all have lovely time at your little railway in December. Making many return journey to bring Santa down for weekend then home again till follow weekend. Is hard work but nice grazing in Miggleton Wood make up for it.

Also we have message must pass on from Elves. They say can you please fix leaking roof in guard van is flipping nuisance make wet presents for girls and boys is always same one year after another please to get sorted as often rain in Miggleton also Unslet and most place in between.

SO me and team we wish you Happy New Year and hope meet you next December.

Yours truely,

Rudolf

Dasher

Dancer

Prancer

Vixen

Comet

Cupid

Donner

Blitzen and Olive the other reindeer.

Ho! Ho! Ho!



Thank you so much Rudolph, for your kind words. It is always a tremendous pleasure to see you at our railway, particularly as you are carrying the REAL Santa, not some jumped up clown like the other railways have.

We have asked our work force to repair all the leaks in good time for December 2019. We understand one of your team (was it Olive?) actually wrote on the roof of the coach, in an exquisite script considering she had to reach so high with her hoof, exactly where the rain (and melted snow from the journey) was coming in, so they'll know just where the leaks are. We hope you have a good summer, building up your strength ready to fly over here many times this next Christmas.

Happy New Year to you all, not forgetting Santa and the Elves. Ed.



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The Very Last Xmas Eve Train Arriving Back At Moor Road



Picture © Ross Needham

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