

OLD RUN NEWS

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Newsletter of the Middleton Railway Trust.

Number 48 January 1970.

TRANSIT OF VENUS. We don't know whether our new Hudswell diesel CARROLL is related to the author of Alice in Wonderland, but the transit was quite a comedy. We are at Middleton the sort of old-fashioned railway that likes to cart locomotives about on railway lines! Bluebell have at least some excuse for using lorries as they have no connection with British Railways, but other lines haven't such a cast-iron excuse. The North Eastern Gas Board, having made a very fair deal indeed with Joe Lee as our representative, had unfortunately gone over to lorries for delivering the vast weekly tonnages of coal to their Gas Works near Laisterdyke G.N.R. to which their sidings connected. Unfortunately a gas main blocked the exit to B.R. and without shutting off all the High Speed Gas in Bradford, we just couldn't go by rail. As a second best, we asked a British Transport firm (Pickfords) to provide a suitable lorry. A gang of our engineers turned up to load and unload. Carroll though disused, could be moved under her own power. The level section at Tramway Crossing was chosen as best for unloading. Unfortunately the Pickford's men thought fishplates were not necessary to connect the rails on the lorry to the closure rails down the slope to the permanent way; a "sickening Thud" resulted as Carroll's wheels hit the floor of the lorry. With our Chief Civil Engineer on the spot to show how it should be done, some jacking and heaving got Carroll back on the straight and narrow, and down to the Headshunt track. Tim Leech reports that she only needs minor repairs and replacements and she was running on trial very quickly. With Westinghouse Brakes and compressed air snadders she seems to be a great asset. Money is being raised by the University Civil Engineering team towards the purchase of Carroll, the idea being to ease the strain on the 22 h.p. of John Courage from the heavier goods traffic.

USEFUL BITS AND PIECES. Thanks go to Charlie Milner for tracking down a locomotive and spare parts suitable for Henry de Lacy II and Chairman, Linby Colliery, Nottingham. The only difficulty is in fixing a price with the N C B that is within our means.

SPREADING THE GOSPEL. We now have a London Area Group representative, Mr. P. Warner at 65 Ravensbourne Gardens, Fulwell, Ilford, Essex, who also runs Imperial College Railway Society, and lives near Anthony Cowling. Dunstan Harrington, at 9 Hill Crest Road, Great Crosby, Liverpool 23, has now started our North Western Depot. Both these members have all current publications, leaflets and membership details, so that Middleton can be made known to a wider public. Will members in these areas please back them up in every way.

RECORD LOAD. Spread over December and January was what Sherlock Holmes might have called The Case of the Curious Load. The full story must be told later, but in brief British Railways Doncaster Works sent a heavy load of steel to Clayton's Dartmouth Works for processing. It arrived in 3 bogie wagons, the longest over 70 feet long. The load was of the order of 40 tons per wagon, some of the steel plates being 10 tons each, and there was nearly 80 tons total weight on 2 bogies, almost a 20 ton axle load. After centuries of 4 wheel coal wagons as our normal traffic, this almost certainly marks a record single load for the line. We are happy to record also that the slump in scrap traffic for 6 months in 1969 has given way to a boom with heavy loads and almost daily traffic.

JOHN ALCOCK - on wheels and on legs. The Yorkshire Post recently produced a special article on the diesel locomotive pioneer, now head of Hunslet Engine Company, enthusiastic supporter of Middleton Railway Trust, and designer of our oldest diesel locomotive which bears his name. The strength of Hunslet Engine Works in the present day locomotive world is largely due to his wise guidance and pioneering, remembering how many locomotive manufacturers have ended up with that ominous term "In Voluntary Liquidation". Mr. John is far from being the only Alcock in the business, it runs in the family. This article was a well deserved tribute indeed. Both Alcocks, irrespective of whether they use haemoglobin/air or diesel oil/air as their source of power, appeared on the photograph, and both are in excellent health.

RADIATING SYMPATHY. We regret to report the retirement due to serious illness of our neighbour, Mr. Hardy, head and founder of Hardy's Motor Radiators Limited, remembered by our engineers for providing storage space in his works for permanent way material, and a place to warm ourselves up on a cold afternoon. Having run the firm for many years, he has now relinquished it to Marston Radiators for whom he worked many years ago.

MAKE HASTE SLOWLY. Our Traffic Manager asks all members to stick to the rule that unbolted facing points must be approached cautiously, especially when carrying a brake van full of visitors. Always, he says, leave yourselves plenty of room to pull up. Being unable to start a train is not serious; being unable to stop it most certainly can be serious. Joe Lee points out that although we are all volunteers we should do our jobs for MRT with keenness and efficiency. One volunteer is worth ten pressed men, and we deplore the attitude of a member who announced to all and sundry that "Anyone who works in cold weather is a fool". Thanks to three fools, then, who spent 4 hours in freezing snow getting trains of scrap out and the empties on the move to their destination during the December freeze-up. It is our ability to stick at it, in the worst possible weather and shifting traffic that is not easy on steeply graded snowy rails, that has given us a good reputation with both British Railways and our customers, and makes our work more rewarding than if we simply carted visitors around between April and September.

PERMANENT WAY WORK. After a very urgent plea from our negotiating team, the N C B has agreed to allow relaying to be carried out from the Fireclay Works level crossing to the weighbridge, even though dismantling and demolition of unwanted equipment is in progress. It is obvious that the track be laid in as soon as possible, both for our own use up to the new depot, and for the new customer wanting to send off scrap iron traffic by rail as soon as the line is in. Patrick McAskie is coming back from the Christmas vacation a week before term starts to supervise relaying if weather permits. Please contact him at 254 Cardigan Road, Leeds 6. His vacation Civil Engineering has been concerned with helping Chateau McAskie move en bloc from Rochdale to Exmouth. Look out for live rails sticking out of his pockets! We hope Exmouth branch of the S.R. is less alarming than the Basingstoke and Alton area!

CRIME DOES NOT PAY. Following the incident described in the November News-letter, John Michael Osbourne was sent to prison for 6 months for stealing part of our track, and his 15 year old accomplice was fined £15 in the Juvenile Court, and conditionally discharged for 2 years. Sincere thanks to Leeds City Police for catching them chair-handed. We didn't even need to appear as witnesses!