



FRIENDS OF DARLINGTON RAILWAY CENTRE AND MUSEUM

Newsletter

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The current Friends' Newsletter editor writes: Vic Branfoot, the Newsletter Editor before me, kept his files and kindly sent them to me to add to the on-line back numbers. This is one and, if you are a member and have a printed copy, you may notice some differences- apart from this introduction of course.

I produce each issue of the Newsletter as a single document which is converted to PDF for printing. The PDFs are uploaded to the website as the online version untouched unless corrections are needed. Vic's approach was quite different- he produced each Newsletter item as a separate file and collated the print outs. I make no claim that his method was any worse (or better) than mine but it has necessitated some basic editing before his Newsletters can be presented here as single files. In the process I have assumed that these will probably be read on screen so I have ensured a fairly large minimum font size- should you wish to print this it could probably be read comfortably as an A5 sized booklet if your printer driver supports that. I have not included pages that have dated such as lists of "forthcoming" events now long past (I *could* do the same for my issues incidentally but those pages take up little actual file space and I already have the PDFs to print from so basically I can't be bothered to re-edit them). Finally Vic uses Microsoft® Word where I use Open Office and the process of importing the files can go awry.

Really finally the website and contact details above have been updated reflecting the current make-up of the Committee.

Timothy Ruffle

Membership Cards – a Messy Explanation and Request

Vic Branfoot is no longer Membership Secretary, indeed part of his editorial about 2010 memberships has been dropped from this document for posting on-line, but some of the concerns he voices below do still apply so this much remains. T.R.

A rather tedious but perhaps important set of matters has arisen in respect of our Membership Cards. Please may I ask you to bear with me in respect of the following? This is relevant to quite a number of our members.

Our computer file of Membership Cards has, year by year, gradually become rather disorganised. This has been caused by new members being enrolled, erstwhile members no longer being members and existing members changing their membership categories. Changes in categories are caused, for example, by movement from Individual to Senior. A few years ago, two of our Individual Members married and became “Partners”! I will have more to say about our “Partners” membership classification later.

Although the format of our Membership Cards will remain unchanged, whilst reorganising the file I have taken advantage of things being in a state of flux to implement a couple of changes. As I shall explain, our erstwhile organisation of Membership Cards has embraced one or two problems. These problems have not been earth-shattering but it has, I think, been worthwhile trying to improve things. Alas, in bringing about these improvements to our 2010 Membership Cards, a couple of new, but probably lesser, problems have arisen. Overall, I think the improvements outweigh the new problems... but I am seeking the help of relevant members, please, to nip these new problems in the bud. If part of the following applies to you, and if you are kindly willing to help, then our file of Membership Cards for 2011 and beyond ought to become just about perfect. To explain...

On several occasions during recent years, some couples who hold Partners Memberships have asked me if they may have second cards in order that, when they visit North Road, they may each present a Membership Card at Reception in order to obtain free admittance to the Museum. This is a perfectly reasonable request and I have decided now to give Partners two Membership Cards regardless of whether or not they have asked for two.

Minor problem: in some cases, I do not know the initial(s) of some of our lady members. If, for example, I have a Partners Membership on file as “Mr & Mrs F. Bloggs”, I have, under the above new system, printed two cards in the names of “Mr F. Bloggs” and “Mrs F. Bloggs”. If any lady member would like the name on her Membership Card changing next year to reflect HER name – to, for example, “Mrs M. Bloggs” – please let me know.

A similar situation to the above has arisen in respect of Family Memberships. But if I am going to provide Membership Cards for every member of a family, I need to know how many cards to print and the names of the family... especially the children. In order to expedite progress, for 2010 I have printed FOUR cards in respect of most Family Memberships, for example in the names of “Mr F. Bloggs”, “Mrs M. Bloggs”, “Bloggs Junior” and “Bloggs Junior”. Clearly this is not entirely satisfactory, and I can image most of our Family Members would like me to be more accurate than this. If so, please let me have the ‘proper’ names as you would like them printed on your 2011 Membership Cards.

May I now make the catch-all request that, if ANY member would prefer the name on his/her/their 2010 Membership Card changing for 2011, please let me know your wishes?

There has been one further change to the wording of some of our 2010 Membership Cards. For some time, I have felt uneasy about the use of the word “Partners” as one of our membership classifications. The meaning of the word is obvious enough and it may be said to be ‘politically correct’. However, I know I am not the only one who feels that some married couples might not like the word. The Chairman has, in an *ex-cathedra* decision, given me permission to change the word of this classification to “Joint”. To do this brings a further advantage, trivial though it may be. If, as explained above, I am going to issue separate Membership Cards to each individual Joint Member, as things stood we would have a mixture of singular and plural on each such card, e.g. “Mr F. Bloggs” and “Partners”. Is it not the case that “Mr F. Bloggs” and “Joint” are better in respect of grammar?

Phew! I feel better now! Thank you for bearing with me.

Thursday 3 September 2009

The Stockton & Darlington Route

Presented by Ray Goad

Report by Gillian Wetherell

Ray, who is a retired BR engineer and a long-standing member of The Friends, presented a series of slides which had been taken by the late Geoff Jackson and left to The Friends. Ray had painstakingly gone through boxes of Mr Jackson's slides and he had kindly organised some of them to illustrate the various routes which were operated by The Stockton & Darlington Railway. The S&DR railway operated all over the area, even coal trains as far as Cockermouth.

Each line or property owned by The S&DR had an identity tag with a letter although these do not appear to be in any particular order. 'E' was the letter used in the Darlington area. Ceramic plaques were fixed to buildings along the lines and many of them remain *in situ* to this day.

The first slide to be shown was of *The George and Dragon* at Yarm where the promoters' meeting of The S&DR took place in 1820. Nearby, the line ran through the grounds of Preston Park and past Eaglescliffe North signal box. Some excellent slides of the Saltburn line were shown and the line through Houghton with the road underneath the line on the railway bridge beside *The Havelock* pub.

The letter 'G' was used in the Heighington area on the line to Shildon including the old grading sidings and the site of what is now *Locomotion*. G9 is Timothy Hackworth's cottage.

The slides took us on a very well researched journey around relevant parts of the region and the audience was fascinated to see views which they recalled from years gone by. Many contributed their observations as successive slides were shown. Ray had clearly done his homework and was able to discuss most of the slides which he showed. However, he was pleased on occasion to receive additional suggestions and memories from the 'locals' in the audience.

Even those members of the audience who had not lived all their lives in the area revelled in the wonderful old views of such as The Lime Cells, the old North Road station (where the presentation was taking place!), the coal drops at Westbrooke Villas, the goods station with its impressive clock tower and the shed where Tornado had recently been completed. Particularly impressive were the shots of Whessoe in 1951, the High Row and the local repair shop in North Road.

Ray showed us Robert Stephenson's Hawthorn Works at Springfield, the winding house at Etherley (H5) and the branch to Barnard Castle which had been financed by The S&DR where, at Bromielaw, there was a private line for the Bowes Lyon family. They were the Lords of the Manor and the private line took them into the main railway system in order that they may reach their important meetings.

We also went back in time to Redcar, the Stanley Incline engine winding house, the goods master's house (K8) at Waskerley and to Crawleyside where we could see the boundary stones of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

I am not a native of the area covered by Ray's talk but was completely fascinated by this record of times past and its details. Perhaps Ray might consider creating some sort of permanent written record of this most interesting talk.

Thursday 2 July 2009

North by Northeast

Presented by Bill Ferguson

Report by Don Whitfield

The intriguing title of Bill's presentation was a take-off of the 1958 Alfred Hitchcock spy-film *North by Northwest* set in New York. Bill's slide presentation, however, was based on his visit to two railway museums, one north of Chicago and the other further to the northeast. The two museums were, firstly, the Illinois Railway Museum (IRM), which claimed to be the largest railway museum in the United States, followed by the National Railroad Museum (NRM) in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The IRM has an internal track system which enables visitors to tour the various departments of the Museum as efficiently as possible. The IRM covered more than railway history and some of Bill's slides showed carriages and trams through the ages, inter-urban rapid transport cars and trolley buses.

Amongst the many railway exhibits which Bill showed was a row of signal posts which looked strange so close together; the Cannon Ball Express of Casey Jones fame; the Green Hornet streetcar; a Shay loco of 1929 which was a geared loco for slowly negotiating tight bends whilst hauling loads of heavy timber; and various diesel, diesel-electric and electric locos.

We also saw a caboose coach which we would call a brake van or a guard's van. Bill also showed us the most powerful internal combustion loco in the United States, a Union Pacific X18 which was a gas turbine engine built in 1960 but which had poor fuel usage; a 1906 coach which was used as a home but has now been restored; a sleeper coach named *Loch Sloy*; and a 1908 Chicago streetcar.

Moving onto the NRM, Bill showed us a model of the futuristic but ill-fated streamlined Aerotrain which was withdrawn in 1966 after only ten years of service because of it being underpowered. However, the *piece de resistance* at the NRM which Bill showed us was the *Big Boy* loco. This 6,000hp Union Pacific articulated loco got its name by way of one of the construction crew having chalked the name on the smokebox door. The loco's job was to move 3,500 tons of freight over the mountains of Wyoming and Utah in the 1940s and 1950s. It was a great asset during World War 2.

As well as other powerful locos on display at the NRM, we saw a 1930 dynamometer car; a large 1903 wrecking crane – a breakdown crane to us – nicknamed *The Big Hook* with an 80-ton lifting capacity; a 1918 covered hopper car which was unloaded by using compressed air; and a Jordan Spreader which was used to maintain rail ballast, clear snow and maintain trackside ditches. An interesting exhibit was a 2-8-0 World War 1 U.S. Army loco of which 150 were built and sent to France... and never seen again! The exhibit survived because it didn't go to France; instead, it went to Korea.

Bill's final slide made the audience feel closer to home. Also at the NRM, was the British streamlined A4 Pacific - LNER 4496 *Golden Shuttle*, later BR 60008 - in green livery together with two coaches. It had been built in 1937 and the loco and train were used by General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, and his staff in Britain during World

War 2. The loco was subsequently renamed *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and later shipped to the United States in 1964.

Bill's audience very much appreciated the time and effort which he had obviously devoted to preparing such a well-organised and interesting presentation and they readily demonstrated their thanks in the usual manner.

Life on the Railways in the North-Easter Region: 1939-1984

*Manager at Walkergate – and the only DMU driver. **Derek Reeves** continues his fascinating professional autobiography*

Towards the end of 1955, the Works Manager job at Walkergate was advertised, and, of course, I applied for it. I was interviewed along with several other applicants and was very pleased to be appointed to the post. On 27 February 1956, I became the Works Manager at Walkergate Carriage and Wagon (C&W) Works near Newcastle upon Tyne with my first four-figure annual salary of £1,100.

This works was part of the Northern Area Carriage and Wagon Engineers' Department, which covered the whole of the old LNER from north of Doncaster to Berwick upon Tweed. Mr Farrington was the Northern Area Carriage and Wagon Engineer and he was located in the Stoopdale Offices in Darlington. Here he sat at Mr Raven's desk in Raven's old office. As the next senior post in the organisation was the Works Manager at Walkergate, I became his deputy and covered his holidays, etc..

The works undertook heavy repairs to carriages and wagons and was also responsible for heavy repairs to the bodies of the Newcastle electric trains. Traction and electrical equipment was dealt with at South Gosforth Car Sheds. The works employed some 450 men and even had a works canteen. My office had its own door opening straight out onto the Walkergate platform on the electrified line to Tynemouth! There was no pressure on me to live on Tyneside, so I decided to travel from Darlington each day on the 07:35 train. This enabled me to arrive at the office before 09:00.

In April of that year, I was sent on a ten-week course at The Grove, Watford, to learn about work study and how to use it to increase productivity. This entailed staying at The Grove during the week from Sunday night until Friday lunchtime. The course was very interesting with a lot of practical experience including how to present the results to the customer. However, with hindsight, it was not the right course for a Works Manager. All he really needed was a short, two-week, course to give him a feel for Work Study and what it could achieve, and not a ten-week operator's course.

Mr Farrington lived at Tynemouth and every Wednesday he arrived at the works at 12:00 whereupon the canteen lady gave us lunch set in my office. I really enjoyed these lunches because he was an 'Old Railwayman' and had come up through the ranks. He really knew everything about carriages and wagons, and their good and bad points. I learned an awful lot from him. If there were any freshly cooked rolls left after lunch, he always took them home with him!

Mr Farrington also held a monthly meeting of the eight district foremen, which I also had to attend, so that all the problems that had arisen since the previous meeting could be discussed and plans of action could be arranged. It was interesting to see how the foremen reacted differently. Within ten minutes, the same two tried to bluff their replies and always got severely dealt with. Four others gave reasonable replies, and the remaining two were clearly streets ahead of the others. Nobody could get away with bluffing Mr Farrington!

Early in 1957, the Newcastle Area was scheduled to receive some of the early aluminium railcars from Derby. Mr Farrington picked me out to attend the Diesel Course at Derby because, although the Locomotive Department was to be responsible for the traction equipment, the C&W Department would be responsible for the bodies and heaters, etc.. The

course was for four weeks and also included some work on locomotives. The highlight was on the last day: each student drove a DMU from Duffield up to Warkworth in Derbyshire and back!

When these railcars arrived, they were based at the Electric Depot at Gosforth, although we were responsible for the heaters and C&W matters such as brakeblocks and internal fittings. At that time, they were dealt with by C&W staff under the Newcastle District Foreman. It was several years before this arrangement was altered, when the Division Maintenance Engineer's organisation was set up.

Within a short time of receiving the railcars, we had a rather severe problem. One Saturday, there was a local derby between Newcastle United and Sunderland football teams. After the game everyone wanted to travel and, of course, the coaches were completely full to the extent that not one more person could get on. On arrival at Sunderland, with the extra weight in the vehicles, not one of the passenger doors could be opened. The lightweight aluminium solebars had bent sufficiently to jam the doors solid. The only door that could be opened was the driver's door, and so the whole train had to be evacuated through this door! When the weight was removed, the body straightened sufficiently for the doors to be opened. Subsequently, each vehicle had to go back to Derby to have the solebars strengthened with steel plates riveted on.

The Smith heaters were oil-fired and gave considerable trouble on the railcars, and we set up a repair section at Gosforth which meant we did not have to send them to the Main Works for repair.

Later, when more railcars were delivered to the Newcastle District and we started to get them in for body repairs, etc., it was a good job the Works Manager had been on the Diesel Course because he was the only one in the whole works who knew how to drive them!

Late in 1956, a decision had been made that all modern wagons had to be fitted with vacuum brakes and several of the recent new builds would be retrofitted. We had to set up a line in the wagon repair shop to fit selected wagons, and we were given a target of fifteen per week. I had an apprentice who had just finished his training and I was able to appoint him as a draughtsman to check each wagon and provide the necessary drawings for the wagon foreman.

In 1959, it was decided that the works required a new overhead crane in the carriage repair shop, and an order was placed with the Outdoor Machinery Section at Gateshead. It was to be erected during the works holiday fortnight in August. I was taking my holiday at the same time, and Wilf Rafftory, the Assistant Works Manager, was left in charge along with the draughtsman. The job was to be carried out by the Outdoor Staff supervised by the Outdoor Machinery Engineer from Gateshead.

When I returned from my fortnight's holiday, the first thing I saw was the old crane still up and the new one on the floor. The draughtsman came into the office in tears and said that the reason the crane had not been erected was because the crane travelling wheel gauge was 2½ inches (62.5 mm) different from the gantry rails. The reason for this was that the actual distance between the rails on the gantry was 2½ inches different from the distance shown on the drawing of the gantry supplied by the civil engineer. The draughtsman felt it was his fault because he should have checked it.

After calming him down, I went out with him to see whether there was a way around the problem. Eventually, I realised that the running wheels had a 2½ inch boss, and if one side were turned round on the axle we could get the correct gauge for the gantry. To do this would need an extra 2½ inch collar on the driving axle. As Mr Farrington was on holiday, I went to see Mr Bramworth, the C&W engineer in York, in order to obtain the necessary authority to have the collars made. I suppose I should have told the draughtsman to check the gauge!!

Early in 1961, a reorganisation was proposed which meant that a North Eastern region would be formed with HQ at York. All the main works would be grouped together and run from an HQ at Derby. Many of the jobs would be advertised although some occupants would be given the jobs automatically. Mr Farrington had reached retirement age and decided to go, so his job was advertised. Of course, I applied for it, even though it had been dropped one grade, and I was fortunate enough to be appointed Outdoor Carriage and Wagon Engineer North Eastern Region on 22 May 1961. Despite the drop in one grade, I did get a small pay rise. I was now earning £1,800 per annum!

To be continued