



**Established 1968**

# WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.167

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Your contributions for future newsletters are welcome.

Items can be posted to me,

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Thanks to Andrew Tucker, Paul Fry and John Uncles  
for contributions to this issue.

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## **Obituaries**

It is my sad duty to record the deaths of two members since the beginning of the year.

**Lynden Emery** died on the 27th January, aged 68 years. A Lancastrian, Lynden was a member of the Fraternity for a comparatively short time, having moved to Castle Cary only some five or so years ago upon retirement from an academic career in the field of biological sciences. For many years he lectured at the University of Hull and then spent a time teaching at Wilberforce College, Hull.

Lynden attended Fraternity meetings regularly until only months before his death when his health deteriorated very rapidly with the relentless onslaught of Alzheimer's Disease. He was a keen modeller and, upon moving to Castle Cary, he commenced building a 'P4' scale layout 'Tytherington Junction', depicting both a standard gauge line and a narrow gauge quarry branch. As Lynden's health became poorer, our member Brian Wilkinson responded to an appeal to help him and his wife, Ann, finish the layout and it is gratifying to note that it was virtually completed before Lynden's death. 'Tytherington Junction' is to be displayed at a Scale Four Society exhibition in the early autumn and then sold. It is Ann's wish that Fraternity members should have a chance to see the layout before it leaves Castle Cary and, as mentioned elsewhere, arrangements are being made for a visit.

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Several Fraternity members attended the funeral at Yeovil Crematorium and included in the service were musical items to mark Lynden's lifelong railway enthusiasm, his love of Wales and its narrow gauge lines, and also of his love of New Zealand, a country he visited four times. We were encouraged to leave the Crematorium singing the Monty Python song 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life', thus guaranteeing that we said our 'goodbyes' with smiling faces.

Some six weeks later we were saddened to hear of the death, on the 14th March, of our well-known member, the **Revd Norman Lempriere**, after a long period of ill health. Norman was born in London in 1928 and initially pursued a career in civil engineering, having graduated in that discipline from the University of Liverpool. For a while he worked for the famous contracting firm of John Laing and was involved in the building of the M1 London - Birmingham motorway and the provision of sea defence works at Folkestone Warren. In his 20s, Norman was called to enter the Anglican Church and he was ordained in 1957. He first served as a curate in the Diocese of St Alban's but was destined eventually to become a country priest. In 1975 he became the Rector of Nymet Rowland in Devon, a large parish near Lapford Station on the L&SWR Exeter - Barnstaple line. Here, Norman, was always willing to help local farmers and, having had a passion for all types of machinery from an early age, he was often to be seen driving a tractor. He also drove the local minibus at times and was accordingly dubbed 'The Minister of Transport' in the local newspaper.

In 1981, Norman and his wife, Pam, moved to West Sussex, where he held the living of Sullington with Thakeham, another rural parish - this time in LB&SCR territory near the Horsham - Arundel - Littlehampton line. Norman retired in 1992 and moved to Wells where he was delighted to find that the number of his new home in Woodbury Avenue was already marked by a GWR-style numberplate - the previous owner having also been an enthusiast.

Norman soon joined the Fraternity and became a regular and supportive member. He was interested in the modelling side of our hobby and had a fascinating collection of stock. I recall a few years ago taking him on a visit to Terry Dumbrell's '0' gauge garden railway at Holcombe and he was delighted to have an opportunity of running a couple of his locos, including a Rivarossi model of an Italian State Railways electric express locomotive which was allowed to run at a scale 100 mph or more!

Both Norman's parents were professional musicians and apparently Norman inherited some of their talent, being an accomplished player of the accordion, trombone and euphonium. The story is told that on one occasion, Norman was playing his trombone when a less than appreciative listener exclaimed: 'Oh, Norman. Put a sock in it!' - and Norman obliged literally!

Norman's interest in railways was profound. Those of us who knew him through our hobby always found him interested in what we had to say, kind and considerate. We were truly privileged to have known him, albeit only in his retirement years.

The Fraternity was well represented at Norman's funeral in Wells Cathedral. It was a fitting tribute to him that the Quire was filled to capacity with friends and colleagues wishing to say their farewells to a true friend.

## **AGM and Members Slides (Tuesday 11 December)**

The Fraternity's Annual General Meeting took place at Wells Town Hall on the 11th December 2007 and, in addition to the formal business transacted, members were pleased to be able to vote another substantial donation to the society's 'adopted' charity - the Railway Children. After a break for coffee and mince pies, the second half of the evening took the form of an illustrated talk, by our member Chris Challis, entitled 'The Somerset & Dorset at Shepton Mallet'. Chris started by giving a brief potted history of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway and its constituent companies and then showed us a fascinating selection of photographs taken in the vicinity of Shepton Mallet, commencing with what is believed to be the earliest view of the S&D station, probably taken in about 1885. We then saw scenes which included the doubling of the line to the north of Shepton, including the duplication of Winsor Hill Tunnel, in 1885-86, through the years to the partial collapse of Charlton Road Viaduct in 1946 (with some remarkable photographs taken by a local lady resident using a box 'Brownie' camera), to the heavy snowfalls of 1955 and 1962, and concluding with the last trains in 1966. The talk was supplemented by the display of two of Chris's models, depicting a typical passenger train and a goods train of the S&D era. A vote of thanks was given by the Chairman, David Stephens.

## **David Milton Slide Show (Tuesday 8 January)**

The Fraternity commenced 2008 - its 40th anniversary year - with a meeting on the 8th January. Unfortunately, the booked speaker had succumbed to influenza but our member David Milton valiantly stepped into the breach to give us a delightful slide show entitled 'My Travels in 2006'. In addition to his railway interests, David is a regular commentator at steam and vintage vehicle rallies and so, in addition to scenes of many railway locations around the country, we were entertained with many slides of traction engines, showmen's engines, steam lorries and so on. Our photographic tour commenced with views of two 'Somerset & Dorset Weekends' staged on the West Somerset Railway with trains hauled by ex- S&D locomotives which survive in preservation and representatives of other classes which worked over the line. To help create an S&D atmosphere, several stations were renamed for the occasion, with for example Dunster becoming 'Shillingstone'. Other heritage railways visited were the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, the Swanage Railway and the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway (including some idyllic scenes of the steamers on Lake Windermere). Narrow gauge lines featured were the Lynton & Barnstaple at Woody Bay, the Brecon Mountain Railway in South Wales and the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in Cumbria. In some cases steam galas were associated with these visits but we also saw scenes at traction engine rallies at Yeovil, Banbury and in Cornwall, as well as at the Great Dorset Steam Fair. Andrew Tucker proposed a vote of thanks to David for a splendid evening's entertainment.

## **Acquisition of Land for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, by Bruce Nottrodt (Tuesday 12 February)**

The topic for the evening was somewhat out of the ordinary, the speaker being Mr Bruce Nottrodt who gave us a fascinating talk on 'Land Acquisition for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link'. Mr Nottrodt had been the Property Manager with the London & Continental Railway (a member of the Union Railways Group) and had been responsible for the purchase of all the land required for the first section of the new high speed railway line from the Channel Tunnel to London - from Folkestone through Kent to a point near Gravesend. He began his presentation by reminding the meeting that this was the first new main line railway to be built in Britain for a century. Following the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1993, the French rapidly completed the high speed line linking the Tunnel with Paris but there had been some governmental reluctance on the British side to proceed immediately with the link which would complete the high speed railway route from London to the French capital. Indeed, it appeared that the decision to proceed was only finally taken after pressure from the French Government. Much controversy raged over the alternative routes suggested and it was not until 1996 that the necessary Act of Parliament was passed and work could begin. As a result of this delay, for many years 'Eurostar' trains, which had travelled at speeds of up to 186 m.p.h. across northern France, had to crawl through Kent and the southern suburbs of London at a fraction of that speed to reach the International Station at Waterloo.

The route finally chosen for the Channel Tunnel Link ran north-westwards from Ashford, through the North Downs (involving a long tunnel), past the Medway towns, under the Thames in another tunnel and then through the East London suburbs (again mostly in tunnel) past the 2012 Olympics site to reach the remodelled and refurbished St Pancras International Station.

Mr Nottrodt stated that the basis for the compulsory acquisition of land for new railways at that time still relied on legislation dating back to the 1840s. In addition to the land required for the new line itself, it had been necessary to acquire large areas of land for construction and operational purposes, with much of this land being reinstated for farming and other uses once the project was completed. The width of the course of the line might have seemed excessive in places but he explained that, as much of the line in Kent was to run through chalk, the sides of cuttings and embankments had to be formed at very shallow angles to minimise the possibility of landslips which could be extremely dangerous with trains travelling at such high speeds.

In addition to the relocation of various light industrial and commercial premises, over 350 houses were purchased for the Kent section of the line; many were not directly affected by the works but were acquired as the owners regarded their properties as being 'blighted' by the project. In the event, it was necessary to demolish only 24 houses and the remainder were mostly sold on the open market once the line had been completed - interestingly enough often at prices only slightly less than the original valuations! One farmhouse and several barns were physically moved to new sites and, as the result of the line's construction, considerable evidence of smuggling activities came to light, resulting in 41 arrests in one area alone! The cost of property acquisition for the Stage One project amounted to about 10% of the total budget.

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Every effort was made to meet various environmental issues and Mr Nottrodt entertained us with stories of how some of the wildlife was evacuated when necessary; this involved all manner of creatures, including badgers, great-crested newts and dormice. Large numbers of the latter were entrapped using tennis balls in which a small hole had been cut! He surprised us with the fact that whilst 1.2 million new trees had been planted alongside the new line, it had only been necessary to fell 24 mature specimens.

The opportunity was taken to undertake an extensive series of archaeological excavations along the whole route and a great number of finds were recorded. These were particularly of the Anglo-Saxon period and several burial sites were discovered, including some of ceremonial horse burial.

Despite not one photograph of a train - and only one of a stretch of the new line - appearing on the screen all evening, members were spellbound by Mr Nottrodt's presentation which was sprinkled with illuminating and amusing anecdotes, and we felt privileged to have learned something of an aspect of railway history which is all too often neglected. A vote of thanks was given by Mr Derek Lampard.

## **1966 to the 66s, by John Chalcraft (Tuesday 11 March)**

At the Fraternity meeting held on the 11th March, members were delighted to welcome back local railway photographer Mr John Chalcraft as our speaker. Via the digital projector, he gave us a superb presentation entitled 'From 1966 to the 66s', a most appropriate topic, having regard to the Fraternity's 40th anniversary this year. His photographs covered the railway scene in Britain over the past four decades and, as they were shown in chronological order, we visited nearly every part of the country, from Cornwall to the far north of Scotland.

In 1966, the British Railways Modernisation Plan was well advanced and the number of steam locomotives in service was diminishing rapidly with less than two years until the end of the steam era. Scenes of both passenger and freight trains featured a wide variety of locomotive power and we were reminded that several of the early diesel locomotives built under the Plan proved to be far from satisfactory in service and were consigned to the scrapheap after extremely short working lives - but also that others from a handful of types continue to give good service even after 40 - 45 years. During the first half of the period under consideration, locomotives and coaches mainly displayed a predominantly blue colour scheme but from the mid-1980s, new much more colourful liveries started to appear, a process which accelerated rapidly a decade later with the privatisation of British Railways.

The final views featured the diesel-electric locomotives of Class 66 - hence the second half of the presentation title. These machines, built in Canada and imported in substantial numbers since 1998, are now responsible for working a very high proportion of freight and engineering trains and now dominate the locomotive scene nationwide.

A fascinating evening, which was partly nostalgic and partly a reminder of just how much the British railway scene has changed over a period well-known to most Fraternity members, was concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr Chalcraft by Mr David Milton.

## **Trip to the Docklands Light Railway – Saturday 10 May**

At the time of writing we are 4 short of the maximum number of 25 for this trip. If you would like to come but have not yet booked a place do contact Andrew Tucker straight away (tel: 01749 830695 or e-mail [andrewtucker@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:andrewtucker@ukonline.co.uk))

## **Visit to see the Late Lynden Emery's Model Railway**

Lynden's widow, Ann, is very keen that Fraternity members should see the P4 layout that Lynden has been working on over the last few years. When Lynden's health was failing Brian Wilkinson kindly helped to progress things and he has continued to work on the model. It is to be exhibited later in the year at Scaleforum in Leatherhead where it is hoped that a buyer will offer it a good home.

Ann has suggested that members visit the layout at her home in Castle Cary at 7.30pm on **Tuesday 10 June**. More details at the next meeting or telephone Brian on 01985 850024.

## **Members' Slides and Ten Minute Talks**

Our meetings for next September and December will follow the slightly different format introduced last year. On 9 September the main event is the quiz set by Brian Neil (the winner last year). Members' slides will follow after the break including Michael Green's North Wales Narrow Gauge filming on DVD, Brian Neil's slides of Railways in Argentina following his visit this year and Andrew Tucker's coverage of the Fraternity Trips in 2008.

The December meeting will start with the A.G.M. to be followed by Members Ten Minute Talks. The idea here is that you don't necessarily need to have photographs. A railway artefact could be brought in and described, or you could talk for around ten minutes about a railway related memory. Items from the earlier days of the Fraternity would be particularly welcome for this 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. If you would like to do something along these lines please contact Andrew (tel: 01749 830695 e-mail [andrewtucker@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:andrewtucker@ukonline.co.uk))

## **Vote of Thanks**

At the end of our meetings a member says a few words of appreciation about the presentation that evening and invites a round of applause for the speaker. Usually it is a last minute rush to find a 'volunteer' to do this. It would be nice to have the arrangements in place a little in advance. If any of the subjects or speakers in our programme particularly appeal to you then do let our Speaker Secretary, Andrew Tucker know. He will be very pleased to give you the opportunity to say a few words.

## Information Requested on Railway Films

Paul Fry has received the following email, and asks if any member of the Fraternity knows of the whereabouts of Mr William Biggs. He believes some of the Radstock area members might know what happened to him and possibly the Jack Hobbs' films.

Hello, Paul.

I have been working with Mike Arlett & others recently sifting through Bill Gates' film collection. Doing so reminded me of the correspondence we had in December 1999 about the spools of Jack Hobbs' 16mm films S&D in the 50s etc. I have the correspondence here. You had had a telephone call from Mr William Biggs (then 01761 432644) in Radstock about Jack's films. We spoke. I wrote to Mr Biggs, but never had a reply. Do you remember whether we established what happened to the films eventually? Where are they now I wonder?

Dr Peter Cattermole,

Archivist for the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust <http://www.sdrt.org>

## Fraternity Website

The Fraternity is getting into the 21st century as our Committee member Peter Bowen is setting up our own website, which should prove extremely useful particularly with regard to the Railwells exhibition as time goes by.

The website address is [www.railwells.com](http://www.railwells.com) and, although it is still early days, it already contains some information about the Fraternity and some photographs.

If there is anything that you think ought to be included, please contact Peter on 01749-671448; e-mail: [art@peterbowen.net](mailto:art@peterbowen.net). He will be pleased to hear from you.

## 2008 Programme

## *40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year !*

All meetings are on Tuesday evenings, at 7.15 for 7.30, in Wells Town Hall.

|                    |                                                                                                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>8 April</b>     | Pendon Museum – Then and Now – by Chris Webber                                                         |
| <b>13 May</b>      | Great Western Miscellany – by Brian Arman                                                              |
| <b>9 September</b> | Members Slides and Annual Quiz                                                                         |
| <b>14 October</b>  | Formal Presentation of “City of Wells” Painting, and<br>Lecture on Bulleid Pacifics – by Colin Boocock |
| <b>11 November</b> | Barry Scrapyard – speaker to be confirmed                                                              |
| <b>9 December</b>  | AGM and Members Short Talks                                                                            |

## And finally, a piece of trivia to round off with.

Did you know that the slightest railway gradient in Britain indicated on a gradient-post is 1 in 13,707 between Sturt Lane Junction and Farnborough, Hampshire, on the former London & South Western Railway main line.