

PAUL FRY (1932-2012)

During the last two years of his life, Paul's health was to deteriorate steadily and he was to spend many spells in hospital, primarily as a result of prostate cancer. Only a week or so after he had returned home after one of these spells of hospitalisation, he was to die peacefully there at the aged of 79.

Although he was christened Leonard Paul, he was always known by his second name and Paul was very proud of the fact that he was a fifth generation Wellensian. His father, Bob, was a guard, having entered the service of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway in 1921, and remained a railwayman until his death in 1962. For many years the family lived in the station house, adjoining the Priory Road level crossing in Wells; the house was eventually demolished in connection with the Relief Road (Strawberry Way), but some ex-SR concrete panels survive alongside the premises of Travis Perkins, still bearing witness to its location.

Having left school, Paul followed his father into railway service and was appointed as a clerk at Wells. In 1949 he was transferred to West Pennard but five years later he returned to Wells (Tucker Street) where he was to remain until the closure of the railway in Wells in 1967. Paul was present when the 'Pacific' No.34092 was named 'WELLS' in the City in November 1949 and his likeness, together with that of his father, was captured in the painting executed by David Fisher on the occasion of the Fraternity's 40th Anniversary.

On leaving the railway, Paul found employment in the chemical and medical apparatus industry and he eventually became the West of England sales representative for a Bristol company - a job which he greatly enjoyed for the rest of his working life.

Paul was a lifelong railway enthusiast and a Fraternity member from the earliest years. He served as Honorary Secretary and Newsletter Editor from 1994 to 2003 and, stepping down, a new post of Honorary Archivist was especially created for him. His last appearance at a Fraternity meeting was in October 2011 during one of his all-too-brief periods at home between hospital admissions.

Paul was a man of many interests; in his younger days he played cricket and badminton; he followed his father into the St John Ambulance and rose over the years to the rank of Divisional Superintendent in Wells; he had a great interest in industrial archaeology and researched a wide range of fascinating - if unrelated - subjects. He wrote a book on the history of railways in the City, entitled 'Railways into Wells' (published in association with the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust in 1998) and booklets on such subjects as the Russian gun, captured during the Crimean War and which used to stand in the Market Place, the histories of the Order of St John in Wells, of the Methodist Church in Southover and of the various almshouses in the City.

For the Fraternity he produced two volumes of a Yearbook - full of anecdotes and recollections and still a delightful read. He championed the case of Flying Officer John Warren Hamill, buried in Wells Cemetery and secured the inclusion of that pilot's name on the Battle of Britain monument in London. Paul was involved in the running of the City's almshouses and a great support to his wife, Kate, during her time as a local councillor and year as Mayor of Wells.

Paul's predecessor as Secretary, John Moore, died in 1996 and his wife informed Paul that it had been John's wish that a station seat should be given to the Swanage Railway in his name but she did not know how to go about this. The Fraternity's Committee offered its help and Paul, with his typical efficiency, organised all the necessary activities, negotiated with the Swanage Railway, arranged for drawings to be produced and the manufacture of the parts by local craftsmen. The seat was assembled and painted by Fraternity members, installed on Corfe Station and consecrated by the Rev. Norman Lempriere, another Fraternity member.

In 2002, Paul was finally successful, after much hard work, in persuading Somerset County Council to erect markers indicating the sites of Wells' three railway stations along the new Relief Road. He organised an unveiling ceremony, performed by Mrs P Hayes, the widow of the last station master of Wells, and supported by Roger Bennett of Radio Bristol, all followed by a reception at the Sherston Inn.

Paul was a great supporter of the Railway Children Charity and, on his own initiative, arranged for a collecting box to be placed in the Cathedral for a while each year and a substantial sum was raised over the years to supplement the Fraternity's own donations. He was also a fervent supporter of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

In railway matters, Paul was no xenophobe and travelled on railways throughout Europe as well as visiting South Africa and Canada. At home, his house name 'Ebbor Glen' is displayed on a gate in the style of a GWR curved nameplate whilst his garden was formerly embellished with railway memorabilia as well as a modest 'G' gauge layout.

Paul meticulously planned his own funeral arrangements and even provided a draft of a service sheet, for the cover of which he had chosen a photograph of him (illicitly) driving a diesel-electric locomotive whilst on holiday in Canada. Following private cremation, a Service of Thanksgiving was held at Southover Methodist Church on the 5th April. This was well attended by Fraternity members and many others wishing to pay their respects to a remarkable man.

Paul was a good friend to many and he will be greatly missed by all those who knew him.

DAVID MILTON (1934 -2012)

As a result of problems following heart surgery last year, David died in Yeovil Hospital on the 21st March, at the age of 78.

David was born in Butleigh, near Street, and was to spend much of his life in that village. His father was the goods foreman at Glastonbury station and it was not surprising, therefore, that David developed a lifelong interest in railways and a passion for the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway in particular.

On leaving school, he worked for a short while at Clark's before obtaining an apprenticeship with the General Electric Company at Birmingham. This led to a Bachelor of Science degree and a career in the electrical industry, primarily in connection with the installation of switchgear and other heavy electrical equipment. David's sojourn in the Midlands resulted in his becoming an ardent supporter of Aston Villa FC - another interest which he retained for the rest of his life.

David was an original member of the erstwhile Somerset & Dorset Circle, formed in 1965 by a group of enthusiasts at first opposing the closure and then wishing to preserve the memory of that railway - the forerunner of the present day Trusts. It was thanks to the S&DC that the 2-8-0 locomotive No.88 was saved from the scrapheap. To raise funds and publicise its aims, the Circle had a sales stand at an early Camerton steam rally and it was there that David acquired a passion for traction engines and other steam road vehicles. In 1970 he joined the Somerset Traction Engine Club and soon became its journal editor as well as acquiring *Comet*, an Aveling & Porter 5-ton steam tractor built in 1914 but later converted for showman's use. In 1978 he married Barbara and the need to raise capital to buy a house, however, led to the sale of *Comet*.

Within a short time, David found that his services were in great demand as a ringside commentator at various steam events, as he showed great talent in this regard. He particularly enjoyed commentating at the Great Dorset Steam Fair and did so for many years right up until 2011. His daily fare at this major event was always the same - spam sandwiches (later changed to cheese, for animal welfare reasons under pressure from Barbara) and Cornish pasties, washed down with organic lemonade or Butleigh tap water!

David was a member of the Fraternity almost from the beginning and served as a Committee member for a time. A regular attender at meetings, he gave occasional slide shows to the society and could always be relied upon to step into the breach at short notice if necessary. In fact, his last offering was entitled 'My Travels in 2006', given on the 8th January 2008 when the booked speaker had succumbed to influenza.

David was an enthusiastic photographer and his talks, which were always in demand, were invariably illustrated with his own slides. His collection of slides, particularly of the S&D in the '50s and '60s, must be of considerable historic value and it is to be hoped that they will be looked after and used in the future.

David always worked hard to promote the work of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust and he put pen to paper on a variety of topics. For the S&D Circle he wrote at least one paper, on the S&D 2-8-0s, and he co-authored, with D L Bradley, the definitive 'Somerset & Dorset Locomotive History' (David & Charles, 1973); for the latter he also did all the tedious reading of the background literature. Of equal note was the assistance that David gave to Robin Atthill when he wrote his classic history 'The Somerset and Dorset Railway' (David & Charles, 1967), in which the author generously acknowledged David's help.

David liked to tell the story of how one day, the artist who had produced a painting of 4-4-0 loco No.70, in blue livery, crossing Tucking Mill Viaduct, as an illustration for the book, came to them and was particularly concerned about the colour of the viaduct brickwork. So Robin Atthill rang the stationmaster at Wellow and asked his opinion. The stationmaster said he didn't know but suggested that someone be sent to meet the next train at Atthill's local station (Chilcompton). So someone went, and returned with a small parcel - which contained a brick from the viaduct!

In more recent years, David spent many weekend days travelling around the country, visiting any railway still with steam - and there can only be a few he had not seen or on which he had not managed to get a footplate ride.

On retirement, David set himself up with a PC and other equipment with the intention of using his photographs to write a book or two on the S&D. Having attended computer classes at Street, and achieved a good level of competence, however, he was then asked to take on the task of instructing others - and this he did for several years. Despite his great knowledge, David was always most approachable; he was a quiet, modest man and it was a privilege to have known him.

Following a private cremation, a Service of Thanksgiving was held at St Leonard's Church, Butleigh on the 4th April, when the Fraternity was represented. Afterwards, family and friends gathered at the local hostelry and it was a fitting tribute that David's old showman's engine *Comet*, now renamed *Princess Victoria*, had been brought to Butleigh and was quietly simmering away in the car park.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2011 Annual General Meeting took place on the 13th December and was of particular interest in that it was the last to be chaired by David Stephens, who had decided to stand down.

On behalf of all present, John Uncles paid tribute to David, who had first been elected as Chairman in February 1999 and had previously served as Hon Treasurer for a further dozen years. David had therefore faithfully and conscientiously served the Fraternity for well over a quarter century and, in thanking him, John expressed the view that the good-natured and quiet manner in which David had conducted the Fraternity's affairs would be greatly missed by his fellow Committee members and the membership in general. All present joined in wishing David well, especially with regard to his health, in the years to come.

Colin Price was elected as our new Chairman and the resulting vacancy on the Committee was filled by Ken Smith.

DINORWIC QUARRY AND ITS LOCOMOTIVES - by Julian Birley

The Fraternity's first meeting of 2012 was held at Wells Town Hall on 10th January when our speaker was Julian Birley who gave us a fascinating talk on 'Dinorwic Quarry and its Locomotives'.

Working of the Dinorwic Slate Quarry at Llanberis in North Wales began in the 18th century and, on reaching its peak in late Victorian times, was one of the largest such undertakings in Wales. It eventually covered some 700 acres of mountainside facing Snowdon and was owned by the Assheton-Smith family - who became in modern terms, multi-millionaires as a result. The quarry at one time provided employment for some 3,000 persons and ultimately slate was quarried at 22 different levels, the highest being over 1,800 feet above sea level. The quarry was renowned for the quality of its slate - primarily used for roofing - but in the extraction process, some 90% was waste; today, the site is still dominated by enormous waste tips.

Over the years, a network of rudimentary railways evolved on the various working levels which were linked by steep inclines. The railways were laid to a nominal gauge of 2 feet with the crude wagons having double-flanged wheels which ran freely on their axles.

From Llanberis a more orthodox railway, to a gauge of 4 feet, was built in the 1840s to convey the slate down the 7 miles to Port Dinorwic on the Menai Strait, from where it was shipped all over the world. On this line, the quarry wagons were carried two abreast on special carrier wagons.

Two steam locomotives were built in 1848 to work the railway and by a quirk of fate, one of them - the 'Fire Queen' - survived, hidden away in a shed, and is now displayed at the National Trust's museum at nearby Penrhyn Castle.

The development of steam locomotives capable of working on the narrowest gauges followed and this led to the adoption of this means of traction throughout the whole quarry from the 1870s, and ultimately the quarry company operated a fleet of over two dozen small locomotives. Over half were built to the same basic design, between 1886 and 1926 by the Hunslet Engine Co. Ltd of Leeds. These elegant little 4-wheeled saddle tanks weighed only about 6 tons and sported names, some of which commemorated lady members of the owning family whilst others were named after famous racehorses of the day (such as 'Holy War' and 'King of the Scarlets'), several of which were owned by Sir Charles Assheton-Smith himself. Most engines were painted a dark red, which provided a welcome contrast to the monotonous dark blue-grey of the slate workings. Once winched up inclines to its gallery, an engine would tend to stay there, often for many years, accommodated in a tiny shed, and only returning to 'ground-level' for a major overhaul.

The decline in the demand for slate led to a run-down of the industry and the quarry finally closed in 1969. The headquarters buildings and the workshops eventually became part of the Museum of the Welsh Slate Industry whilst part of the quarry was given over to the construction of the impressive underground Dinorwic Hydro-electric Power Station. Thanks to their diminutive size, a high proportion of North Wales quarry engines were bought up by private individuals, for restoration.

In the second half of his talk, Julian told us how he fell in love with the little Dinorwic 'Hunslets' and how in 2010 he eventually became the owner of 'Alice', built in 1902. She worked on the highest level of the quarry and, on ceasing work in 1960, was left there in her dilapidated shed until purchased by a group of enthusiasts in 1972. Only being able to visit at weekends, it took the members of this group some four months to lower 'Alice' down the many inclines to the level of Llanberis village. After a while, she passed to Chris Scott, an ex-policeman who spent seven years in restoring her able to working order. The final stage of this work was carried out at the Boston Lodge Works of the Festiniog Railway and 'Alice' was steamed again, after nearly 35 years, in 1994. 'Alice' then went on various travels, including visits to Belgium and Poland, before finding a permanent home at the Bala Lake Railway.

In conclusion, Julian told us about two projects which he is working on - one to recreate a typical quarry train of ten wagons and the other to restore the three 'Yellow Trucks' which were built at the very end of the Victorian era to convey VIPs and other guests on visits to the quarry.

John Uncles proposed a vote of thanks to Julian for an excellent presentation, illustrated by so many splendid photographs.

STEAMING THROUGH WEST SOMERSET

– by Peter Triggs

On the 14th February, Peter Triggs gave us an informative and interesting presentation on 'Steaming Through West Somerset'.

This took the form of a splendid slide show illustrating a trip over the whole of the preserved West Somerset Railway from Bishops Lydeard to Minehead. Peter highlighted the many places and features of interest en route and we saw a wide selection of the locomotives which have worked on the line over the last three decades. He ensured the fullest attention of his audience with a study of a curvaceous fashion model whom he had chanced to 'bump into' on the platform of Bishops Lydeard station on her way to Butlin's at Minehead, as well as another slide or two featuring scantily-clad female holidaymakers! Peter concluded by telling us something about the new turning triangle which is being built by the WSR adjacent to the main Exeter line near Norton Fitzwarren and which it is hoped to bring into full operation during 2012.

Peter's style of presentation was most lively and the evening was certainly enjoyed by all. He is certainly a wonderful ambassador in publicising the WSR and promoting its interests.

TRACTION IN THE DELTIC ERA (1961-1981) - by Hugh Ballantyne

A month later, on the 13th March, we welcomed Hugh Ballantyne, an old friend to several of us. A native of Bath, Hugh now lives in Stafford and over the years has gained a reputation for being one of the country's leading railway photographers.

His presentation was entitled 'Traction in the Deltic Era' and, in it, he illustrated the British Railways scene in the twenty-year period from 1961 to 1981, a time when the pride of the locomotive fleet was the 'Deltic' Class. Twenty-two of these 3,300 hp diesel-electric machines were built by the English Electric and Vulcan Foundry Companies and were mainly used on the East Coast Main Line from London to Edinburgh until the advent of the High Speed Train and the subsequent electrification of that line.

Hugh, however, saved consideration of the 'Deltics' until later and took us first of all on a breathtakingly rapid tour of England, Wales and Scotland, illustrating trains that could be seen in the period he had chosen. We saw a few slides of steam engines in service, mostly in a very run-down condition as their numbers rapidly diminished during the 60's and then of the numerous types of diesel and electric locomotives which replaced them.

Some of these types were very successful and examples often remain in use until the present day, but many types, ordered prematurely in the first flush of the Modernisation Plan, were far from satisfactory and were destined to disappear fairly rapidly after quite short lives. Many of us were gladdened to be reminded of the diesel-hydraulic era pioneered by the Western Region and to reflect that the remarkable 'Warship', 'Western' and 'Hymek' locomotives were to be eradicated more in the interests of standardisation than anything else.

After the refreshment break, Hugh then turned his attention to the 'Deltics' and showed us slides of each member of the Class - in numerical order. The locomotives all received names - two batches after English and Scottish army regiments respectively whilst a third batch continued the old LNER tradition of commemorating famous racehorses - and Hugh was successful in recording a high proportion of these individualistic nameplates.

Our thanks were expressed to Hugh for giving us such a fascinating evening. It was hard for many of us to realize that the period he had described began a half-century ago; it certainly provided older members with much scope for some nostalgia.

DOCKLANDS LIGHT RAILWAY – RUN-UP TO THE OLYMPICS **- by Ralph Harding**

The Fraternity meeting, held at Wells Town Hall on 10th April, commenced with members observing a period of silence in remembrance of two of our longest-serving and stalwart members - Paul Fry and David Milton - who had died in late March. Our Chairman, Colin Price, paid tribute to both.

Our speaker for the evening was Ralph Harding, a retired Chief Engineer of London's Docklands Light Railway. In 2007 Ralph had given us a talk on the DLR and had been most helpful in arranging for us to visit the railway's control centre and workshops a year later. Despite his retirement Ralph was still involved with DLR matters as a consultant with regard to the arrangements being made to cater with the huge numbers expected to use the railway during the forthcoming Olympics and Paralympics. His talk was entitled 'The DLR - the Run Up to the Olympics' and he was to bring us up-to-date with developments since his previous talk.

Ralph began by reminding us of the great success of the DLR since its opening some 25 years ago as a means of providing a cheaper public transport option to serve the redevelopment of London's docklands in east London. The system now had 45 stations and was currently carrying a staggering 80 million passengers each year, about 12% more than the total using London Heathrow Airport and even more than either the Circle or the Metropolitan Underground Lines.

During the Olympic period, it is anticipated that over a further two million people will use the DLR to reach the various sites - the main one at Stratford and others, including Woolwich Arsenal and Greenwich Park. In anticipation of this, Transport for London had invested in various engineering works to increase capacity, including improvements to several stations. Since 2008 nearly all station platforms had been extended to take longer (6-coach) trains and the fleet had been augmented by the delivery of 56 new trains. During the Games, it was proposed to run up to 30 trains an hour over the whole DLR and this had recently been rehearsed successfully.

In the second half of the evening, Ralph showed us an amateur video which he had made of a trip over part of the railway. This had been shot from the front of a train, a position which could be enjoyed by any passenger as DLR trains are normally driverless, being controlled remotely from a control centre. Ralph then answered many questions about the operation of this fascinating and unorthodox railway system and possible future extensions to it.

A vote of thanks to him for a most interesting presentation was proposed by Andrew Tucker.

GREAT WESTERN MISCELLANY

- by Brian Arman

The last meeting of our present season took place at Wells Town Hall on the 8th May and for the first time we were able to exchange the Indictment Room for the slightly more spacious Parkes Room. This worked well and we hope that we shall be able to have the use of the Parkes Room again in future.

Our speaker for the evening was the Revd Canon Brian Arman, making his now traditional annual visit to us. His presentation was entitled 'Great Western Miscellany' and during the first half of the evening, we made a photographic tour, starting at Paddington and then making our way westwards to visit numerous secondary and branch lines well into the West Country. After our usual refreshments break, the second half of the evening was devoted to a wide selection of scenes in and around Swindon Works.

A vote of thanks for a truly entertaining evening of GWR nostalgia was given by Paul Burdett.

A PRESENTATION TO DAVID STEPHENS

During the meeting, our Chairman, Colin Price, informed members that, in recognition of the outstanding services given to the Fraternity over the past 25 years, by David Stephens, firstly as Hon Treasurer and latterly as Chairman, the Committee had agreed that Honorary Life Membership should be conferred upon him. Also, as a memento of David's time as a committee member, John Blatchford had kindly agreed to produce a humorous painting reflecting David's passionate interest in the railways of Switzerland. This took the form of a Swiss rack-and-pinion steam train with, in the foreground, a mountaineer staggering towards a welcoming St Bernard dog (complete with brandy cask). John had entitled the painting 'Which comes first?'

It had been intended to make a surprise presentation to David at the meeting but sadly he was not able to attend as he was unwell. In the circumstances, Colin undertook to visit David at home and to present the certificate of honorary life membership and painting to him privately. This has now been done and David has asked that his profound thanks be extended to all members of the Fraternity. Unfortunately, David is still far from well at the time of writing and we extend to him our very best wishes for a speedy return to good health.

PETER CHANDLER

It is with regret that we record that another member, Peter Chandler, also passed away earlier this year. Although he had not been a member of the Wells Railway Fraternity for very long, he was well known on the East Somerset Railway.

RAILWELLS WEBSITE: www.railwells.com

If you have any historical information that you would like to share or have any interesting railway related stories and or photos please send them to platform1@railwells.com

RAILWELLS 2012

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 August

Once again, our annual model railway exhibition takes place in Wells Town Hall. Opening times are from 10.30 to 5.30 on the Saturday, and 10.30 to 5.00 on the Sunday.

Scalefour Southwest is an annual part of the exhibition. This year a special section for EM gauge is complemented by demonstrations showing how to convert to and model in EM.

There will be 14 layouts, 17 traders, 4 demonstrations, and a selection of society display stands.

Don't forget that Fraternity members get **FREE** admission on production of their membership card!

If you can assist at any time with the setting-up or during the opening times, even for just a couple of hours, please contact the organiser, Chris Challis, on 01749 938362, or email cgchallis@yahoo.co.uk

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following who have recently joined:

David Sedgeman (Somerton),
Stephen Stroud (Wells),

Daniel Stroud (Wells),
Harry Wright (Swindon)

SOMERSET & DORSET ANNIVERSARIES TOUR

Saturday 8 September

At the present moment, there are still some spaces on our vintage Bristol Greyhound coach trip visiting locations along the route of the Somerset & Dorset line. If you are interested, please contact Andrew Tucker on 01749 830695 or email andrewctucker@btinternet.com

2012-13 PROGRAMME

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

- 11 September 2012 A Journey Down the Somerset & Dorset Railway – Mick Hayes
- 9 October 2012 Doubling the Cotswold Line (and other schemes) – Tim Maddocks
- 13 November 2012 Building a Railway – John Blatchford
- 11 December 2012 Annual General Meeting *followed by* Quiz (set by Clifford Ison)
- 8 January 2013 150 Years of London Underground – David Mead
- 12 February 2013 The Railways of Queensland, N.S.W. and Victoria – Ian Hunter
- 12 March 2013 Local Railways of the 60s on Film–*goes digital* – Andrew Linham
Also Jeffery Grayer signing his latest books on local railways
- 9 April 2013 The Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways – David Witcombe
and Douglas Lindsay
- 14 May 2013 Back to the Broad Gauge - Brian Arman

AND FINALLY

What's in a name?

At one time during the 1960's, the staff at Highbridge station included a Foreman and a Porter on each turn. One Foreman went by the name of Roy Porter. He was known as Foreman Porter, which caused confusion, as there was no such position on the railway!

Back in the 1920's, two of the railwaymen employed at Chilcompton were a Mr Packer and a Mr Tapper. Mr Packer was a tapper (of wheels) and Mr Tapper was a packer (track worker).