

Tornado : Completed and Working – by Bob Alderman (Tuesday 9 February)

The first meeting of 2010 took place at Wells Town Hall on the 9th February, as unfortunately the January meeting had had to be cancelled because of the heavy snowfall and also the indisposition of the speaker.

A capacity audience gathered to hear Mr Bob Alderman give an illustrated presentation entitled 'Tornado - From Dream to Steam'. Mr Alderman, of the A1 Locomotive Trust, had previously talked to us on this project in 2004 and so this evening was very much in the nature of an up-date.

He began by reminding us that the 'A1' Class was designed by Arthur Peppercorn, the last Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London & North Eastern Railway, with all the 49 members of the class, with the exception of the prototype, not being built until after Nationalisation in 1948-49. After a comparatively short life hauling trains over the East Coast route between King's Cross and Edinburgh, they were all taken out of service by 1966 following the introduction of diesel locos under the British Railways Modernisation Plan. Unfortunately, all were destined to fall victim of the scrapman's torch.

Years later, a group of railway enthusiasts, bemoaning the failure to preserve an example of this important type, rashly decided that they would build a brand-new locomotive, the 50th 'A1', and in 1990 set up a Trust with this in view. Preliminary work began at Tyseley in Birmingham and it was found that the 1,000 or so working drawings were still in existence at the National Railway Museum but these needed to be copied before construction work could get under way. In 1987 Darlington Borough Council had bought the historic former carriage works originally built for the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1853 and in 1997 these were made available to the Trust - thus ensuring that the new engine would be built in the town where many of the A1's had been built 50 years previously.

Many railway enthusiasts felt that the project was an impossible one and fund raising was indeed a real challenge. The final cost of the new locomotive amounted to over £3 million but much of this was raised by regular donations by enthusiasts responding to the slogan 'An A1 for the cost of a pint a week!'. Construction proceeded slowly but steadily but the plethora of new standards and requirements for safety features presented problems - for example, there are some 3.8 kilometres of electrical wiring on the engine, surely something that would have amazed the engineers of the 1940s.

The most important (and expensive) part of any steam locomotive is, of course, the boiler and the search for a firm which could construct one led to a contract being placed with the Meiningen Locomotive Works in Germany. Unlike the original 'A1' boilers, the new one was of modern all-welded construction which offered a welcome reduction in weight.

Tornado : Completed and Working – continued

The locomotive 'Tornado' was finally completed in 2008 and took the next number in the 'A1' series - No.60163. The name had been chosen long before, commemorating the principal fighter in the First Gulf War and thereby serving as a tribute to the role played by the RAF in that conflict. Mr Alderman reminded us that the name, however, was not a new one in railway usage, as it had appeared on several engines over the years since the 1840s.

In August 2008 'Tornado' hauled its first revenue-earning train on the preserved Great Central Railway and then underwent a series of main line trials, based on York, culminating in a high speed run in November. The first main line passenger train was run at the end of January 2009 and this heralded the start of a very busy period hauling special trains and visiting various heritage lines (including the West Somerset Railway). On the 19th February, 'Tornado' was formally named by HRH The Prince of Wales, accompanied by the Duchess of Cornwall.

The arrival of a brand-new main line steam locomotive on Britain's railways after almost 50 years attracted much media attention, including the 'Great Race to the North' in the TV series 'Top Gear'. Mr Alderman concluded his talk by telling us that 'Tornado' had successfully run a total of 17,600 miles during 2009 and had recently passed its first annual inspection with flying colours.

A Vote of Thanks was given by Derek Lampard.

Southern Branch Lines – by David Milton (Tuesday 9 March)

At the Fraternity's meeting on 9th March, held as usual at Wells Town Hall, the speaker was our own members, David Milton, who gave an illustrated talk on 'Southern Branches'

Using slides, taken mainly in the 1960s, David took us on a nostalgic tour of various branch lines of the former Southern Railway. Starting at Havant we first of all 'travelled' over the Hayling Island line, a favourite of enthusiasts on account of the use on trains of the ancient and diminutive 'Terrier' tank engines, the light weight of which made them eminently suitable for running over Langstone Harbour Bridge which linked the mainland railway with the Island.

We next crossed to the Isle of Wight, travelling on the Paddle Steamer 'Ryde'. From Ryde Pierhead to the town passengers then had a choice of using the railway or a tramway which ran the length of the pier. The railway still exists as far as Shanklin - nowadays using aged ex-London Transport tube trains - but the tramway has long disappeared. In the 1960s, all services on the island were worked by a fleet of attractive 'O2' Class steam locomotives, all of which bore the names of local towns and villages.

Southern Branch Lines – continued

Our next visit was to Brockenhurst where the Lymington branch (still) connects to a ferry to Yarmouth, again on the Isle of Wight. A long jump then took us to the Swanage branch, which fortunately still prospers as a preserved heritage railway. Continuing ever westwards, we were entertained to scenes on the ex-Southern Railway branch lines serving Chard, Seaton, Axminster and Lyme Regis. All of these are now no more with the exception of the Seaton line which now has a delightful narrow gauge tramway running over part of its formation. Finally we entered Cornwall to enjoy views on the most westerly line of the SR - the Bodmin and Wadebridge.

David was warmly thanked for an evening which brought back so many pleasant memories for those present - although it is hard for some of us to believe that the familiar scenes which we saw now date from almost a half century ago.

Railway Roundabout – by Brian Arman

(Tuesday 13 April)

On the 13th April, the Revd Canon Brian Arman paid his annual visit to us. He began by reminding the Fraternity that this year was the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Great Western Railway and, in celebration of this event, he entitled his illustrated talk 'Great Western Miscellany'.

He had arranged his presentation in three parts - the first of which dealt with the broad gauge locomotives, not only of the GWR but also of its associated (and later assimilated) companies, the Bristol & Exeter, the South Devon, the Cornwall and the West Cornwall Railways. He also spoke for a few minutes on the career of the GWR's last Victorian locomotive engineer, William Dean, and concluded with a photograph of the famous broad gauge engines 'North Star' and 'Lord of the Isles', prior to their crossing of the Atlantic to be displayed at the 1896 Chicago Exposition.

The second part of the evening was more sombre in content with Brian dealing with various accidents on the GWR between 1871 and 1946. These included, locally, the two serious accidents at Norton Fitzwarren (in 1890 and 1940) and one at Highbridge in 1909. We also saw scenes of serious flooding at Creech Junction (near Taunton) in 1894 with one of a train valiantly ploughing through the deep flood waters.

The final instalment of Brian's presentation was entitled 'Odds and Ends' and concluded with a wonderful selection of colour slides showing scenes in and around Swindon Works in the years around 1960.

A vote of thanks was given by Paul Fry.

The Blue Pullman Story – by Mick Hayes

(Tuesday 11 May)

The final evening meeting of the season took place at Wells Town Hall on the 11th May. First of all, we congratulated our member, David Humphreys, on his successfully taking part in the recent London Marathon, as a result of which he had raised a significant sum in aid of the Parkinson's Disease Society.

Our speaker for the evening was Mr Mick Hayes from South Yorkshire and his subject was 'The Blue Pullman Story'. Mick, however, began by telling us a little about his 44-year career on British Railways from which he retired as a 'top link' driver in 1996.

Turning to the 'Blue Pullmans', we learned that, in connection with the Railway Modernisation Plan of 1955, British Railways decided to develop a small fleet of luxury diesel-electric multiple unit trains aimed primarily at the 'Premium Business' sector. The trains were intended to offer the highest standards of comfort and on-board catering, coupled with a maximum speed of 90 mph, considered high in the 1950s. Eventually authority was given for the building of five trains, two of them in a 6-car formation and three of 8 cars, a total of 36 vehicles (of no fewer than six different types). They were built by Metropolitan-Cammell Ltd at their Saltley Works near Birmingham and the final cost amounted to £1.6 million - a considerable sum at the time.

Various routes were considered for the operation of these trains and finally those chosen were the former Midland Railway route from London St Pancras to Manchester (via Leicester and Nottingham) and the Great Western routes from Paddington to Bristol and South Wales and to Birmingham and Wolverhampton. To emphasize the high standards on offer it was decided to brand the services as 'Pullman' (the British Transport Commission having acquired a controlling interest in the UK operations of the Pullman Car Company in 1954). The 6-car trains were exclusively First Class, seating 132 passengers, whilst the 8-car trains offered accommodation for 108 First Class and 120 Second Class passengers. A full range of meals was offered to be served 'at seat' and each train contained a state-of-the-art kitchen car.

The trains were innovative in many ways; they were the first in Britain to feature a 'power car' (locomotive) at each end. These were each fitted with a 1,000 hp diesel engine (of German design) which provided electric current to motors mounted on its rear bogie and also to motors on the leading bogie under the adjacent carriage. The power cars were also unusual for the time that they contained seating for a small number of passengers, their accommodation being well insulated against noise and vibration from the nearby diesel engine.

In view of the high maximum speed of the trains it was decided to use bogies of a Swiss design. Despite such bogies being entirely satisfactory in trains on the Continent, they gave the 'Blue Pullmans' a rough ride at speed; this problem was never fully resolved and almost certainly contributed to the trains having a comparatively short working life.

The Blue Pullman Story – continued

In appearance the trains were of a pleasing design, considered very modern at the time, and they were painted in a rich 'Nanking Blue' and white colour scheme. With the addition of the Pullman 'coat of arms' on they front end, they made a most striking impression.

Branded as 'Midland Pullman', the 6-car trains went into service on the Manchester service in July 1960 whilst the 8-car trains were introduced on the Bristol / Wolverhampton routes two months later. Finally, the latter services were supplemented with a 'South Wales Pullman' in September 1961. To emphasize the new image, train staff were provided with new uniforms and the drivers of the Western Region trains were adorned in long white coats and peaked caps - which earned them the nickname of 'ice cream sellers'.

The trains continued in service for 12 years and despite efforts latterly to find new uses for them as charter trains, they were finally taken out of use in 1973. In their final years the striking blue livery gave way to a version of the new BR 'corporate' livery of mainly white with blue trim and a yellow front end - a scheme which did not suit them at all well. Efforts to secure the preservation of some of the 'Blue Pullman' vehicles sadly failed and all 36 vehicles were scrapped in 1974.

To supplement his account, Mr Hayes showed us two films, one made on behalf of Metropolitan-Cammell, the builders, and the other by British Transport Films. Following these, we were entertained by a film, made from a 'Blue Pullman' cab, of a journey from Paddington to Birmingham - taking all of 5 minutes! Finally, Mr Hayes illustrated various details of the trains and showed scenes of them in service by means of a series of slides.

A most interesting evening concluded with a vote of thanks given by Andrew Tucker.

New Members

Please welcome the following who have recently joined:

Peter Geldard (Shipham),
Philip Neve (Cheddar),

Peter Morgan (Wells)
Ian Smith (Wookey Hole)


Fraternity Website – by Peter Bowen

Your Free Railwells Email

As a full paid up member of the Wells Railway Fraternity you are entitled to your own email address: yourname@railwells.com in addition you also have your own unique page that you can have a short write up about you and pictures of your interests see this example www.railwells.com/wrf_member_profile/wrf_peterbowen.html you can even add video into the page!!!

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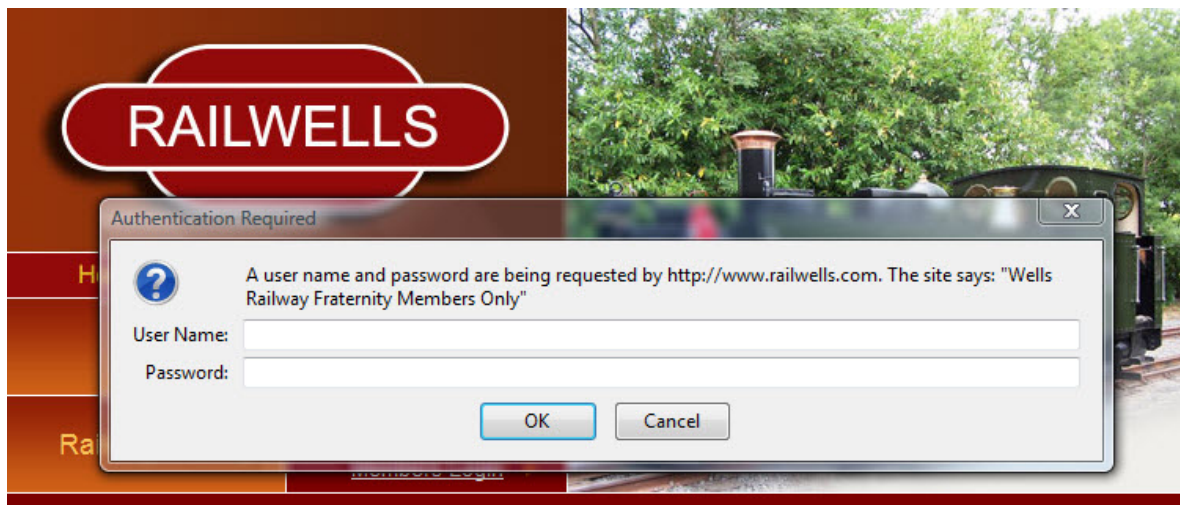
If you are using Outlook Express or Outlook and want to add your Railwells email account then please send an email to platform1@railwells.com and ask for the setup details.

Fraternity Website – continued

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

To access the members only section and see member's profiles and a complete list of all members contact details you will need to use your username and password – if you do not have a username and password please send an email request to platform1@railwells.com



2010-11 Programme

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

14 September	Quiz and Members Slides Evening	
12 October	Go Great Western	Mike Wyatt
9 November	Rails Around The World (Part 2)	Mike Beale
14 December	Annual General Meeting, followed by Members Short Talks	
11 January	Building the Bath & West Railway	Roger Davis
8 February	The Titfield Thunderbolt & The Camerton Branch	Simon Castens
8 March	American Narrow Gauge Locos	Richard Pelham
12 April	25 Years of Electric Trains to Ipswich	John Day
10 May	Railway Roundabout	Brian Arman

And finally, a piece of trivia:

Stroudley's "Improved Engine Green" was not green at all. A golden yellow would be a better description of the colour the locos were painted. William Stroudley, Locomotive Superintendent of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway, was colour-blind!