

**Established 1968**

# WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

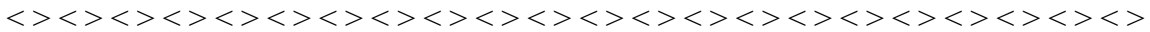
Newsletter No.179 - December 2013

[www.railwells.com](http://www.railwells.com)

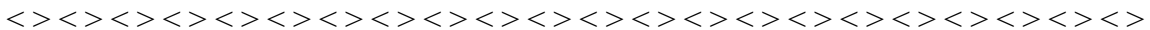
Your contributions for future newsletters are welcome.

Please contact the editor, Steve Page

tel: 01761 433418, or email [page564@btinternet.com](mailto:page564@btinternet.com)



Fraternity visit to Midsomer Norton on 21 April



## **DAVID CUTTER (1930 - 2013)**

We were saddened to learn of the death, after a short illness, on 20th August, of our member, David Cutter.

David was a member of the Fraternity for many years and, some ten years or so ago, became the main assistant in the Refreshments Team, then led by Prebendary Dennis Goodman. Upon Dennis's death in 2009, he was promoted to the post of 'Refreshment Attendant', and was to perform this essential job most conscientiously over the past four years.

David was born in the Newcastle area and was educated at Rossall School in Lancashire, where he specialised in the classics and music. On leaving school, he first of all contemplated entering the Church but, having been a fine tenor soloist at school and in the York Minster Choir, he was destined to pursue a career in church music. He gained a place at the music school at Keble College, Oxford, and graduated with an Honours Degree. After periods at Newcastle and Chichester Cathedrals - at the latter, he was to meet his future wife, Philippa - the family moved north again and David became the organist and choirmaster at Wigan Parish Church. David was always troubled with eye-sight problems and, in later years, with hearing difficulties.

He and Philippa were to move to Wells in the 1980s. They were intrepid travellers and visited many countries throughout the world when David was able presumably to indulge in his deep love of railways - but not without some adventures in the process.

The Fraternity was well-represented at David's funeral, which took the form of a Requiem Mass in Wells Cathedral, the eulogy being given by his brother, the Revd John Cutter.

David was a most loyal member of the Fraternity and, as Refreshment Attendant, he, like Dennis before him, was an enthusiastic supporter of the Railway Children Charity. Scarcely a meeting went by without him making a formal presentation to the Chairman of a cheque for that charity, representing proceeds from the donations of members for coffee and biscuits. David was a quiet, unassuming member - displaying the qualities of a true gentleman - and we shall miss him greatly.

## **RAILWAY CULTURE and EAST COAST PAST AND PRESENT** **- by Andy Cope (10 September)**

At our first meeting of the new season on September 10th, held as usual at Wells Town Hall, we welcomed Andy Cope, a professional railwayman, who divided his illustrated presentation to cover two different topics.

The first he entitled Railway Culture in which he dealt with railway history in a series of Eras, of his own devising, linking these wherever possible with members of his own family.

The earliest railways were covered as The Military Era - as the regulation of those first railways was inspired by that of the Army of the day - with rulebooks, messrooms, guards and so on. We learnt that Andy's great great grandfather had been present at the famous Rainhill locomotive trials of 1829 and had gone on to become a driver on the London & North Western Railway and later the North Staffordshire Railway.

Andy called his second era Reckless Railways - the period in the mid-19th century when safety matters had been somewhat secondary to profit when accidents led to the imposition of various regulations to rectify matters. During this period, Andy's great grandfather had also been an engine driver whilst in the Golden Years of the Railway (1890-1920) his grandfather had been a railway guard. He commented on the comparatively high wages that an engine driver could command, about £2 a week in 1904, double that of a station porter.

During the difficult years of the Depression and the Second World War, followed by Nationalisation and the Modernisation Plan, Andy's family were absent from the railway industry until Andy himself joined British Railways as an apprentice in 1972 at the start of a 40-year career during which he was mainly concerned with rolling stock maintenance.

The last two eras - Sectorisation and Privatisation - spanning the last 30 years or so, had seen great changes with the demise of the traditional goods train in favour of block trains, moving loads of single commodities such as oil and coal, much higher speeds and the rapid growth in passenger demand. Andy felt that the role of the traditional railwayman had now all but disappeared and we had entered an era of the Technical Specialist.

Since his retirement, Andy has served as a non-executive director of the East Coast Directly Operated Railway Company and the second half of his talk was entitled East Coast - Past and Present.

## **EAST COAST PAST AND PRESENT – (continued)**

After briefly outlining the history of this major route from London to Edinburgh and Aberdeen, once owned by three companies, the Great Northern, North Eastern and North British Railways and then the London & North Eastern Railway, he reminded us that on privatisation, this line, which has the most heavily-loaded passenger trains in the country, the franchise was at first awarded to the Great North Eastern Railway, a subsidiary of a major shipping line, and that this company had performed extremely well until major problems within the parent company had led to the surrender of the franchise in 2006.

The franchise had then been awarded to National Express but it only lasted for some two years before being terminated by the Government, who then set up a publicly-owned company, Directly-Operated Railways, charged with running lines where a franchise had failed and responsible to the Department for Transport. The operation of the East Coast Main Line was accordingly entrusted to this new semi-nationalised company for the period 2009-2015 with a view to restoring it to a state in which it could be once again be franchised. Andy then told us something of the strategies which the new company had developed to deal with matters such as eliminating the losses in on-train catering, combating airline competition and introducing new services. The company put great store on listening and reacting to what a fictional Mrs Jones (i.e. the general public) would like and had been highly successful, making profits of some £640 million so far for return to the Government.

A vote of thanks to Andy for a most interesting and thought-provoking evening was proposed by Roy Kethro.

## **RAILWAYS IN TRANSITION**

**– by Mike Beale (8 October)**

On the 8th October our booked speaker was unfortunately unavailable and we were grateful to Mike Beale, from Chippenham, for stepping into the breach at short notice. Mike is a trustee of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust and had acted as a guide during our visit to various sites on that line last year.

Mike took as his subject 'Railways in Transition' and with the aid of excellent slides, covered changes in the railway scene during the period 1948-1976, which saw steam give way to diesel and electric traction and the disappearance of many familiar aspects of railway operation. He started his survey at the time of Nationalisation with examples of the various experimental colour schemes for the locomotives and rolling stock of the new British Railways, and scenes recalling the exchanges of locomotives between the new regions as BR attempted to identify the best practices of the former Big Four companies.

## **RAILWAYS IN TRANSITION (continued)**

Many of Mike's slides covered much of the country but nevertheless had a strong West of England flavour, including a good number showing scenes on the Somerset & Dorset line. At Bristol, we were reminded of the two experimental gas turbine locomotives, ordered by the GWR, and of the former LMS engine shed at Barrow Road, over which many of us still remember there always hung a great pall of smoke until its closure in 1965. Mike led us through his chosen period year by year featuring the many new diesel and electric locomotives arriving as the result of the 1955 Modernisation Plan, the closure of the S&D and the end of steam trains on the Waterloo - Exeter and Bournemouth lines in 1967. Finally in 1976 we had a glimpse of the prototype High Speed Train, a concept which was to revolutionise rail travel in Britain over the following decades.

Mike concluded by commenting that survivors of the many new locomotives and multiple unit trains of 40 or 50 years ago were now regarded as historic heritage items!

A vote of thanks was given by Andrew Tucker.

## **ACROSS INDIA BY TRAIN and THE RAILWAY CHILDREN - by Colin Boocock (12 November)**

At our meeting held at Wells Town Hall on the 12th November, we were delighted to welcome back once more Colin Boocock who had travelled from Derby to be with us. On this occasion Colin took 'Railways of India' as his subject, featuring mainly his second visit to the sub-continent made in 2008. His presentation, superbly illustrated, began in Delhi where we first of all visited one of the major railway museums where the exhibits were maintained in spotless condition. We were enthralled to see a museum employee not only polishing a locomotive but dusting it with a pan and brush! The collection also included the oldest surviving locomotive in India, the 'Fairy Queen', built in Leeds in 1855. Whilst in the area we also saw the curious surviving ancient monorail worked by a steam locomotive with only three wheels, all in line, whilst stability was maintained by means of a strange outrigger running on the normal road surface.

Leaving Delhi, Colin then took us on a photographic trip on the 2'6" gauge line up into the foothills of the Himalayas at Simla, the favourite resort of the British administration during the hot summer months. The final 60 miles of this line, now operated with diesel locomotives, climbs at an average gradient of 1 in 30 and the terminus is at 6,988 feet above sea level. The town clings to the hillside and still has European features such as a church and university buildings, in Victorian Gothic style.

## **ACROSS INDIA BY TRAIN and THE RAILWAY CHILDREN** **(continued)**

Returning to Delhi, Colin's travels then took him along the main line running to the south-east, stopping at Agra for a visit to the Taj Mahal, of which Colin showed us a beautiful selection of photographs. Eventually arriving at Siliguri, we again headed north towards the Himalayas, this time over the famous Darjeeling Railway. This 2'0" gauge line runs for 55 miles, reaching a summit of 7,407 feet at Ghum before dropping to reach Darjeeling itself, some 600 feet lower down. The Darjeeling Railway is now designated as a World Heritage Site and is still worked by a fleet of 'B' Class diminutive tank engines, most of which were constructed in Great Britain between 1889 and 1928 with a few others built locally, the last in the year 2000! These magnificent little locomotives currently require a crew of five men - in addition to a driver and a fireman, a third man sits on the cab roof shovelling coal down to the fireman, whilst a further two men sit on the front buffer beam pouring sand onto the rails as and when required to avoid the engine slipping, especially in wet weather. The engines need to stop frequently for water and the local housewives also make use of the lineside water tanks for their domestic washing. Over its whole length the line follows a road and towards its terminus runs through a narrow shopping street where the traders rapidly remove their stalls and wares from the tracks only a few minutes before the train makes its stately way through.

Finally we saw something of Kolkata - Calcutta to most of us - with its amazing traffic jams with motor vehicles in competition with ox-drawn wagons and carefully avoiding the cows who wander everywhere with impunity, being regarded as sacred by Hindus. In addition to stimulating our railway interests, Colin was able to give us a real picture of contemporary life in India with stark contrasts between the growing prosperous new society and the sprawling shanty towns with their great poverty. Colin and his wife Mary act as ambassadors for the Railway Children Charity, which is supported by the Fraternity, and Colin was able to update us regarding the important work being done in India by the charity. The government and the railway police were now becoming far more supportive in the efforts being made to address the many problems faced by the multitude of children, mostly orphans or runaways, who make their homes within the vast railway stations in the cities of the sub-continent.

A vote of thanks for a most interesting talk was given by John Uncles.

### **NEW MEMBERS**

Please welcome the following, who have recently joined:

Royston Carss (Mells)

Malcolm Jones (Woolavington)

Richard Legg (Wells)

## **VISIT TO THE TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT BOOKSHOP**

**(Friday 22 November 2013)**

Eight members made their way to Larkhall in Bath for the Fraternity's second biennial visit to this specialist bookshop. We were made very welcome by the proprietor, Simon Castens, who laid on a supply of tea/coffee and biscuits while we were browsing.

Although quite compact, the shop is well stocked with railway publications including the complete range of Wild Swan, Twelveheads, Oakwood and Irwell Press titles. Also other transport and local history books, DVDs, maps, greeting cards and some model railway items.

We all agreed that it was an enjoyable way of spending a couple of hours together. The shop is open from Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10.00 – 17.30 (18.30 on Fridays). On-street parking can usually be found nearby and there is a frequent bus service on routes 6&7 from the city centre.

The Titfield Thunderbolt Bookshop,  
3A Upper Lambridge Street, Larkhall Bath BA1 6RY  
01225 462332 [www.titfield.co.uk](http://www.titfield.co.uk)

## **THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE**

Andrew Tucker reports:

At the A.G.M. last December the Fraternity kindly agreed to sponsor my son on the Railway Children's 2013 Three Peaks Challenge. This took place over three days in June and I am very pleased to say that Simon and his team mates successfully completed the challenge to climb Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis.

The special train left from Euston and took the 50 teams to north Wales for the night ascent of Snowdon. Moving on to the Lake District the transport arrangements included the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway. Back on the main line the pair of class 47s were swapped at Carlisle for two class 37s for the journey on to the West Highland line and the climb of the highest peak, Ben Nevis.

The Fraternity's sponsorship provided a boost at the start of the fundraising efforts but further donations to this very worthy cause enabled my son and his team of 'Summit Surveyors' to raise £3530 in sponsorship (including £500 from the Fraternity). With the addition of gift aid this produced a total of £3910.31 for the Railway Children.

## 2013 - 14 PROGRAMME

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

10 December	A.G.M. <i>followed by</i> Quiz – set by last year’s winner,	Brian Neill
14 January	The Paddington Sleeper Accident	Roy Kethro
	<i>followed by</i> Restoring a Clyde Puffer	Jim Hay
11 February	The Brighton Belle and the 5-BEL Trust	Antony Ford
11 March	Rails to Avonmouth	Gerry Nichols
8 April	The Gotthard Line and Luzern Area	Arthur Turner
13 May	Somerset & Dorset Journey	Brian Arman

## AND FINALLY

Having just retired, Andrew Tucker and his wife Jacky have recently enjoyed visiting Vienna, Budapest, Prague and Berlin as a guided tour with Great Rail Journeys. This particular city of Wels is in Austria but it does have the benefit of a main line railway station.

