



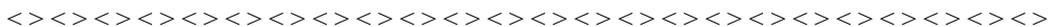
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WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.188 - May 2017

www.railwells.com

Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter.
Your contributions for future editions are welcome;
please contact the editor, Steve Page
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Mendip Mule Motorbus at Ashcott during the Fraternity trip to Burnham-on-Sea on 17 September. A full report appeared in Newsletter 187. Photo by Andrew Tucker.

WITH HIGH-VIZ AND A BOWLER HAT

by David Maidment

8 November

This evening we were delighted to welcome David Maidment, the founder of the Railway Children Charity, to talk to us on his railway career under the title '**With High-Viz and a Bowler Hat**'. David grew up in the London area and became interested in railways at a young age. Upon leaving school, whilst awaiting going on to university, he took part in a short work-experience course, organised by British Rail in connection with a management training scheme. This included spending a few days at Old Oak Common depot as an 'engine history clerk' and enjoying a couple of trips on the footplate. He then went on to London University where he graduated in early German poetry. By then, however, he had set his mind on a railway rather than a teaching career and was successful in obtaining an appointment as a BR Management Trainee in August 1960. Originally he was based at Paddington but the 3-year course provided him with a very wide experience of railway operation, not only in office work but for three months 'hands on' at a motive power depot (Old Oak Common again) - including firing and driving tuition. He also acted as a relief station master at Pontardulais in South Wales and at Gillingham in Dorset.

Upon completion of his training, David's first permanent appointment was as stationmaster at Aberbeeg, again in South Wales, and whilst there his responsibilities were extended to those of shedmaster at the adjacent locoshed. His early years were all to be spent in South Wales and he gained promotion to Assistant Area Manager, then Area Manager and eventually Train Planning Officer for the Cardiff Division. Then, after attending a middle management course at Derby, David's career took on a more strategic and planning role, responsible for drawing up new strategies for South Wales freight traffic and future plans for the development of the Parcels business, including the introduction of several productivity schemes. Promotion led to moves to the Western Region HQ and then to that of the British Railway Board. Then, to his great surprise, his career took a meteoric leap when he was - totally unexpectedly - promoted to Chief Operating Manager for the London Midland Region, based in Crewe. David suddenly found himself responsible for some 25,000 staff and an annual budget of £35 million !

In his new role, David had many interesting experiences, for example, being involved in the tests of the APT and being present at the 100 mph crash devised by the CEGB to demonstrate the safety considerations of conveying nuclear flasks by rail - which saw the complete destruction of a Class 45 diesel-electric loco ! He was also responsible for the operation of the Royal Train over the London Midland Region and this required him to greet the Royal Party and to travel on the train with them. His railway career then took a further step with his appointment as Reliability & Quality Manager to the BRB, a post which took him abroad on many conferences, including visits to France, Germany and Russia in particular. Much of his work with regard to reliability and productivity was published and adopted by other railway administrations and, on one occasion, he was taken aback by being described as "the man who told the Germans how to run their trains on time!" Finally, David became Safety Officer to the BRB, a post he held from 1990 until 1996. This involved him in giving evidence at the inquiry into the Clapham Junction accident. His recommendations with regard to the development of a new safety culture on BR resulted in a dramatic reduction in fatalities and casualties amongst British railwaymen. He sought to replace the prevalent reactive outlook with a proactive one and many of the changes, introduced as a result of his work, were adopted in many countries throughout the world. David's contribution was acknowledged by the award of an OBE.

WITH HIGH-VIZ AND A BOWLER HAT - continued

As mentioned above, David is of course well-known as the founder, some 21 years ago, of the Railway Children Charity, following a disturbing experience he had witnessed on Bombay Station. He then updated members about the Charity's work, now regarded as the largest charity in the world, whose work was specifically aimed at helping street children, many living on major railway stations. Currently the charity was raising nearly £4 million a year for this purpose.

David concluded by stating that there had now been five namings of rolling stock on Britain's railways commemorating the charity and he had felt very humble when he attended the naming of diesel-electric locomotive No.66850 - only to find that the nameplate bore his own name!

A vote of thanks was proposed by Roy Kethro, who presented David with a cheque for £600 as the latest donation from the Fraternity to the Railway Children Charity.

THE STRAWBERRY LINE – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

by Lois Brenchley

10 January

Our first meeting of 2017 took the form of two talks on very different subjects. The first half of the evening was unusual in that we had, possibly for the first time, a lady speaker, Mrs Lois Brenchley who spoke to us on her involvement in '**The Strawberry Line**' project. At the time that she came to live in Winscombe in 1977, the land which had formed the trackbed of the closed Yatton to Wells railway line was in danger of being sold off by the British Railways Property Board and the idea of forming a long-distance footpath took root. Initially there was some support from local parish councils but then the Countryside Commission took an interest. Negotiations were pursued by the then Woodspring District Council and finally the BRPB agreed to sell the section of line between Yatton and Axbridge to the Council on the understanding that a charity would be set up to take the project forward. The Cheddar Valley Walk Trust was accordingly set up in 1979 and later this charity was later to become the Strawberry Line Society.

Lois then gave a brief outline of the history of the Cheddar Valley line. Work commenced in 1867 at Axbridge and the line was completed through to Wells in 1870. In addition to passenger traffic, the line served several stone quarries along its route and conveyed much agricultural produce, becoming noted for the large quantities of strawberries transported during the summer season - hence the line's nickname. The line closed to passengers in 1963 with some freight traffic continuing until 1969.

The Trust was able to set about converting the trackbed into a footpath and cycle track from 1983 and has to date completed a 10-mile section between Yatton and Cheddar, largely using the former trackbed and the 180 yard long Shute Shelve Tunnel. Along the route, wildlife sites and a large nature reserve have been created together with children's play facilities at some of the former station sites. At Sandford the station has been beautifully restored as a railway heritage centre in connection with the imaginative redevelopment of the goods yard by the St Monica Trust with housing for the elderly; The restored station was opened in 2010 and has proved to be a popular tourist attraction as well as a centre for the Strawberry Line Society.

A vote of thanks was given by Roy Kethro. It is to be hoped that it will not be too long before the footpath and cycle track is extended over the remaining trackbed between Cheddar and Wells and on towards Shepton Mallet.

STEAM AND DIESEL

by Paul Burdett

10 January

After our usual break for refreshments, the second half of the evening was taken up with a fascinating talk by our member, Paul Burdett, entitled '**Steam and Diesel**'. Unusually, this started with a piece of classical music - Honneger's 'Pacific 231', inspired by the sounds and rhythms of an express steam locomotive. This ensured that the audience was fully awake!

Paul began his presentation with a photograph of perhaps the ultimate American steam locomotive - the Pennsylvania Railroad 'T1' Class 4-4-4-4 which appeared just at the time when the American railways were beginning to be subjected to the intense sales campaign by the diesel locomotive manufacturers. It was true that the diesel was considerably more thermally efficient than steam but its initial cost was some three times greater and early units typically had a drawbar horsepower of only 1,600 h.p. - meaning that several units working in multiple became usual. Such was the enthusiasm to change to diesel traction that several companies were bankrupted as a consequence.

Paul commented that the development of the steam locomotive in the 1930s and 1940s had been impressive. In France, Chapelon and De Caso for instance had pursued improvements which raised the power output of earlier designs from 2,000 - 2,500 h.p. to 3,000 - 4,000 h.p. whilst the prototype Chapelon 4-8-4 was able to develop nearly 6,000 h.p.! Such work ended in France with the decision to pursue a programme of electrification. It was accepted that the diesel locomotive was better at slow speeds up to about 30 mph and Paul digressed to say a few words about the remarkable Kitson-Still locomotive, designed and built in Britain in the late 1920s. This worked as a steam loco on starting but changed over to diesel technology (using the same cylinders!) once a reasonable speed had been reached. This prototype ran trials on the LNER - surprisingly with a degree of success - but the concept proved to be too complex.

Compounding only had a limited application in Britain. Francis Webb on the L&NWR did produce a number of compound locomotives, some of the early examples having a 2-2-2-0 wheel arrangement, with the two uncoupled driving axles being driven from the high-pressure and low-pressure cylinders respectively, producing interesting situations on some occasions with driving wheels rotating in opposite directions! The most successful compounds in Britain were the 3-cylinder 4-4-0s of the Midland Railway and LMS - the class eventually totalling 240 locomotives. Again, significant development work on compounding took place in France and continued almost to the end of steam in that country.

Paul then commented on various problems and accidents caused by the failure of such components as big ends. He also briefly discussed the complications of the Gresley conjugated valve gear which was used on the many three-cylinder locomotives of his design.

Paul concluded by illustrating some of the points which he had made by playing several short sound recordings of various locomotives hard at work, including a Midland 'Compound', a 'West Country' Pacific and a GWR 'King'.

A vote of thanks was given to Paul by Andrew Tucker for a most interesting and truly thought-provoking talk.

BRISTOL BUSES

by Mike Walker

14 February

The speaker this evening was our own member, Mike Walker, who had retired to the Wells area after a long career in the bus industry. Mike had originally joined the Eastern National Company as a management trainee and eventually returned to his native Bristol where he was to occupy several senior posts with the Bristol Omnibus Co. and its successor, Badgerline. Mike's subject was '**Bristol Buses**' and, after a short technical delay (the projector again!) Mike embarked on a very comprehensive review of the history of the non-railway public transport in that city.

The Bristol Tramways & Carriage Company was founded in 1886 and an extensive network of routes rapidly developed. The trams were originally horse-drawn but, under the leadership of the great Bristol entrepreneur, Sir George White, the system was electrified from 1897. A major depot for the new electric trams was built at Brislington, followed in 1900 by a state-of-the-art power station at Counterslip, near Bristol Bridge.

The first motor buses were acquired in 1905 and services began in the following year. Some buses were built at the Filton works of the associated Bristol Aircraft Company but, in 1913, a works was opened, again at Brislington, for the manufacture of buses and commercial vehicles. Over the next half century or so most buses in the fleet were of 'Bristol' designs but many products of the Company were also sold throughout the country.

Over the years, the Company expanded its sphere of operation and, at its greatest extent, included services in Bath, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Swindon and part of the Forest of Dean, centred on Cinderford. In 1928 the Greyhound Company was acquired and coach services were developed, the express service between Bristol and London being the first such in the world. The Company also became involved in the bus services introduced by the GWR.

In the 1930s the tram services were gradually replaced by motor buses but tram operation in Bristol came to an abrupt end in 1941 when the Counterslip power station was bombed. After the War, the company became part of the Tilling Group and, as such, was nationalised in 1949. At that time, it was decided that virtually all new buses for the nationalised group of companies should be standardised on Bristol types, with chassis being built at Brislington and the bodies constructed by Eastern Coachworks at Lowestoft. (Bristol lorry chassis were also standardised for the nationalised British Road Services). Thus, many thousands of 'Bristol' buses and lorries were built over four decades or so before the Brislington Works passed to British Leyland.

In 1957 the BT&CCo became the Bristol Omnibus Company and then in 1969 part of the National Bus Company. In the 10-year period from 1957-1967 a programme of building new bus stations was undertaken - at Bristol, Bath, Stroud, Gloucester and Swindon.

An unusual arrangement in Bristol existed for many years whereby tram and bus services were operated under a legal agreement between the Company and Bristol Corporation, whereby the City Council had an option every seven years to buy out the Company's interest and operate services as a municipal undertaking. This was the main reason why Bristol's trams were never modernised and their design remained that of the 4-wheeled open-top cars of 1900. The Bristol Joint Services Agreement was finally terminated in 1978. With the advent of privatisation, the Bristol-based services were subject to a management buy-out, the former City services becoming City Line and the country services Badgerline, before they too became part of the nationwide First Group.

BRISTOL BUSES - continued

Mike accompanied his presentation with numerous illustrations, covering virtually every type of bus and coach used by the company and its successors, the many changes in livery - from the original blue and cream through the green of the Post War years to the many advertising liveries and the present day First Bus colour schemes. He also covered many other aspects of the Company's history, including the provision of rail replacement services such as those associated with the closure of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway. He concluded with a few comments on the present-day scene in the area covered by First Bus West of England, including the recent launch of the new 'First Mendip' brand-name, and the advent of new competition by companies such as Wessex and Somerbus.

Mike packed a tremendous amount of information into his presentation and, despite the subject being of a non-railway nature, we all found it most informative and interesting. An appropriate vote of thanks was proposed by Cliff Ison.

THE CLASS 59s AND MENDIP STONE

by John Barlow and Robin Jacobs

14 March

Our subject for this evening was '**The Class 59s and Mendip Stone**' and we were privileged to have two speakers, both with a deep knowledge of the subject. John Barlow (a WRF member) had joined Foster Yeoman in 1970 on the commercial side of the business and had remained with the company until his retirement in 2006, whilst Robin Jacobs had also spent many years with Foster Yeoman before joining Mendip Rail Ltd in 1993 first as Distribution Manager and currently as Operations Manager.

John took the first part of the evening and gave us a most comprehensive history of the Foster Yeoman undertaking in the Mendip Hills. The Yeoman family had settled in West Hartlepool in Victorian times and by the First World War had established a successful small shipping company. The founder, Francis Yeoman, grandfather of John Foster Yeoman, however, died in 1914 whilst, during the war, all three of the company's ships were lost through enemy action. John's father then decided to diversify into quarrying, leading to the acquisition of Dulcote Quarry between Wells and Shepton Mallet in 1923. Most of the stone from this quarry was originally moved by rail over the GWR's East Somerset line, the company acquiring a fleet of wagons from the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. for this purpose. John Foster Yeoman senior died in 1949 and his son, John junior took over. In the 1960s the wagon fleet was sold and the quarry stone was then conveyed by road transport for some years.

The company's main activity then moved to the larger quarry at Merehead, which had been purchased a few years earlier, and was opened in 1963, being renamed Torr Works after the the company's engineer, Ron Torr, who had joined the Foster Yeoman company in 1950. In view of the output from Merehead, the company again turned its attention to the possibility of using rail and after various unsuccessful trials at Dulcote Quarry and via a Mells railhead, it was decided to connect Torr Works with the East Somerset line at White's Crossing and thereby gain access to the main line at Frome.

THE CLASS 59s AND MENDIP STONE - continued

In the early 1970s, trials took place using 'Hymek' diesel locomotives and thereafter the line saw 'Warship' and 'Western' Class diesel-hydraulics, pairs of Class 31 and 37 locos and finally Class 50 and 56 diesel-electrics. The company built up its own small fleet of shunting locomotives for use within the quarry plus a large US-built Bo-Bo shunter (totally out-of gauge for any line beyond the quarry sidings). The company continued to expand its interests considerably, establishing rail depots at Acton and other locations in the Greater London area, and for the stone quarried at Glensander in Scotland, acquired its own 27,500 ton ship. Meanwhile the output from Torr Works continued to grow and, during the construction of the M40 motorway, some 14,000 tons of stone was leaving the quarry daily. The company was particularly proud of the massive 'walking crusher' which had revolutionised stone extraction within the Merehead quarry since 1985. Unfortunately John Foster Yeoman died in 1987 but for many years thereafter the company was directed most successfully by his widow, Angela.

After the interval, Robin continued the story with particular reference to railway operations at Merehead. In the early 1980s, Foster Yeoman stone trains were worked by British Rail, mainly using Class 56 locomotives but the reliability of these was poor and led to many problems. Frustrated, the company decided to pursue the idea of working the trains with its own motive power, a most revolutionary concept in Britain at the time. BR was initially not happy with the idea but as Foster Yeoman were seeking a 97% availability, which neither BR nor any British manufacturer could guarantee, a tender from General Motors on the USA for four 3,000 hp diesel-electric locomotives was finally accepted in November 1984. Their design presented GM with quite a challenge to meet the British loading gauge requirements and Foster Yeoman staff assisted with the very unusual (to American eyes) cab layout. The four locos were completed by Christmas 1985 and arrived by ship in the UK in January 1986. They were numbered as Class 59 in the BR system and soon proved their worth in traffic, hauling the stone trains from Merehead to the Company's various depots, so much so that a fifth member of the class was acquired in 1989. By this time, the nearby Whatley Quarry was owned by the Amalgamated Roadstone Corporation (ARC) and that company, impressed by the Foster Yeoman Class 59s, acquired four locomotives of the own in 1990, based at Whatley, whilst in 1994/95 National Power purchased six more, bringing the final total of Class 59 locomotives to 15.

In October 1993, Yeomans and ARC combined their railway operations under a new company, Mendip Rail Ltd with a combined locomotive fleet. In 1991 an interesting trial took place with No.59005 hauling a stone train weighing some 12,108 tons and being over a mile in length, but this was marred by the failure of couplings. In 1997 No.59003 was sent to Germany for heavy haul work and was to spend many years on the Continent before returning to Britain.

Robin also dealt with various other subjects, including the variety of liveries worn by the Class 59 locos and the names which they bore, as well as the other locomotives working at Torr Works. He also outlined the development of the wagon fleet over the years, culminating in the current 102-ton bogie hoppers.

Inevitably, we ran out of time but, thanks to our two speakers, we had learned a great deal about the large quarrying industry almost on our doorstep and its railway operations, featuring the ground-breaking Class 59 locomotives - which we were reminded were now over 30 years old.

A vote of thanks for a most informative presentation was given by Simon Kennedy.

Advance Notice of :

RAILWELLS

Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 August

Railwells, our annual model railway exhibition, will once again be held in Wells Town Hall, from 10.30 to 5.30 on Saturday, and 10.30 to 5.00 on Sunday. This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Railwells Exhibition itself !

Members are reminded that they can come in **FREE** on production of their membership card. Better still, why not offer your assistance as a steward, or in some other capacity. As well as during the show, help is also required on the Friday afternoon and evening, to assist with unloading vehicles and carrying exhibits into the hall.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact the organiser, Chris Challis, on 01749 938362, or email cgchallis@yahoo.co.uk

2017 PROGRAMME

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

12 September	Railwells – 40 Exhibitions <i>followed by</i>	Chris Challis
	Railway Modelling – 40 years of change	Steve Flint
10 October	Restoring a Sentinel Steam Locomotive	Andy Chapman
14 November	Hill Railways in Germany, Switzerland and India	Alex Green
12 December	AGM <i>followed by</i> Quiz – set by last year's winner:	John Uncles

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following who have recently joined:

Malcolm Dowson, Wookey; David Mace, Wells.

AND FINALLY :

Did you know that on 1 January 1947, the South Shields, Marsden & Whitburn Colliery Railway became the first nationalised passenger railway in the country, being owned by the National Coal Board, which came into being on that day, a whole year before the formation of British Railways.

Situated in County Durham, the line was built in the late 1870s and initially just carried freight, but after improvements to the signalling, began carrying passengers in 1888. Passenger services were withdrawn in November 1953; the line continued to carry freight until Whitburn Colliery closed in June 1968; thereafter a short section to Westoe Colliery remained open until 1993.