

OBITUARY – KEN SMITH (1946 -2018)



It was with shock and great sadness that we learnt of the sudden death of Ken Smith. Many of you will have seen and perhaps spoken to Ken at our 50th Anniversary Dinner at The Swan on Tuesday 9 October when he was, as far as anyone knew, in good health. On the following Saturday he suffered a stroke and was rushed to Yeovil Hospital. Although initial indications were good, things deteriorated during the following week and Ken died on Friday 19 October.

Kenneth Edward Smith was born in Oldham on 19 November 1946. Together with his younger brother, Phil, Ken showed an interest in trains and this was encouraged by their father who was also an enthusiast. Ken always maintained that it was the visits to an aunt who lived close to a footbridge over the busy lines at Llandudno Junction that really attracted him to railways. As a teenager in the 1960s, Ken went searching for endangered species: steam engines and butterflies.

At school Ken showed an aptitude for languages and went on to study French at University. This led him to a career in teaching French in various schools. He was at one time Head of Modern Languages at Stanchester Community School, Stoke-sub-Hamdon. Ken's second wife, June Trask, is from the United States and the two of them lived in Chico, Northern California from 1998 to 2001. Ken became interested in US trains and joined the local High Sierra Model Railroad Club. Returning to England with a selection of American H0 equipment the seed was sown for a layout.

Having taken early retirement from teaching, Ken and June were by now living in Shepton Mallet with Ken working as a supply teacher and then part time as a Post Office counter clerk. Having met Chris Challis Ken became a member of the Fraternity in 2005. In due course Chris heard about Ken's plans to build a layout and inevitably a deadline was set – Railwells 2008.

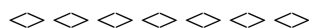
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Wyandotte Siding duly appeared with two scenic baseboards, a 4'-6" traverser one end and an engine traverser the other. This was purely for switching (shunting) operations. Another scenic baseboard and a second traverser were both added before the layout reached its final oval form with staging tracks (fiddle yard) at the rear (see the article in the November 2014 issue of Continental Modeller for more details). The layout appeared in this form at Railwells in 2015 and usually had one or two outings to exhibitions around the country each year. The last occasion was at Bristol (Thornbury) in May 2018 when Ken was awarded a trophy for the best scenery on a layout.

Ken was elected to the Fraternity committee at the 2011 Annual General Meeting and also appointed Honorary Archivist at the AGM in 2013. At the 2014 AGM, when it was decided that a separate position of Railwells Treasurer should be created, Ken volunteered for this role which he has carried out for the last four years.

Those of us who attended the celebration of Ken's life at Bowlsh House on 9 November witnessed David McLaughlin, President of the British Region of the National Model Railroad Association, present June with a certificate for Ken's contribution to North American railroad modelling in this country. We also heard about the other things that he had been involved in and in particular the Shepton Mallet Twinning Association where by 2008 he had risen to the position of Chairman. In addition to being valued for his language skills Ken was credited with advancing the ties between Shepton Mallet and the twinned towns of Oissel-sur-Seine in France and Misburg in Germany.

We extend our condolences to Ken's wife June, his children Simon and Sarah and his brother Phil. Ken and Phil's father died at the end of last year but up until then they had both been involved with building and maintaining his 0-gauge garden railway.



2018 – 2019 PROGRAMME

11 December	A.G.M. <i>followed by</i> Quiz, set by last year's winner, Brian Neill	
2019		
8 January	Railways in New Zealand <i>followed by</i> The Bristolian	Chris Challis Roy Kethro
12 February	The Berliner: British Military Train <i>followed by:</i> The Royal Train	Douglas Beazer (both presentations)
12 March	The Crossrail Project	Patrick Griffin
9 April	Tourism and the Lake Branches	Mike Peascod
14 May	To Scotland for Steam – Part 1	Brian Arman

All meetings are held at Wells Town Hall, 7.00pm onwards for 7.30 start.

EXCURSION TO THE SWANAGE RAILWAY

by Andrew Tucker

Friday 6 July

It is always nice to have some sunshine on a trip to the seaside but during a long spell of hot weather I did have some concerns that either our 1960s Bristol Greyhound coaches or the passengers would get overheated. Mike Walker provided two vehicles from the Bristol Omnibus Vehicle Collection in case of mechanical problems. Mike's friend, Stuart Turner, came as the second driver. In the event all went well for our party of twenty five members and guests although it did get very warm on board without the benefit of air conditioning.

Unfortunately Mike Walshaw, who was due to conduct us around the signal boxes at Corfe Castle and Swanage, had not recovered sufficiently from a recent operation so Tony North kindly took this on. Tony is the Manager of the Signal and Telegraph Department on the Swanage Railway. We divided into groups of five for the signal box visits. Two groups were able to go into the box at Corfe Castle before we caught the 12.02 train to Swanage. They were welcomed by the signalman on duty who, together with Tony North, explained the workings of the box and in particular the method of signalling trains on and off the Network Rail lines at Worgret Junction and the communications with the Basingstoke Signalling Control Centre.

When we arrived at Swanage there was time for lunch and three more groups took their turns to visit the signal box there. Again Tony North and the young signalman were very kind to us and made our visit interesting and entertaining.

At 14.00 our coaches arrived to take us to Herston Works. This visit had been arranged by Roy Kethro who has a long association with Southern Locomotives Ltd. When we arrived we were met by Ron Bennett. This sprightly 91 year old quickly had our attention as he explained that he started volunteering for SLL at the age of 70. With no previous engineering experience (he had been a building surveyor) Ron has carried out various jobs over the years but has now settled down as a painter of locomotives. He told us about the origins of SLL in the early 1990s and the progress that they have made in restoring ex-Barry scrapyard locos. Some have run the course of their 10 year boiler 'ticket' and then need another major overhaul. The company currently owns seven locos including five Bulleid pacifics. In the workshop at the moment are West Country No. 34028 EDDYSTONE and N class 2-6-0 No. 31874. This latter loco is being worked on by Swanage Railway staff and volunteers. SLL are not directly connected with the SR although the workshop is rented from the railway (and owned by the local authority). It was noted that this building is not ideal for its purpose as there is no rail connection and no pit or lifting equipment but the restorers still manage to do some excellent work.

Returning to Swanage station we had time for afternoon tea before catching the train back to Norden, the railway's Park & Ride station just beyond Corfe Castle. Actually our 16.40 departure was slightly delayed due to a lineside fire. The locomotive in use on all the trains during our visit was ex-LSWR T9 4-4-0 no. 30120 which is part of the National Collection although normally resident on the Bodmin and Wenford Railway. Leaving Norden slightly late, we were back in Wells at 20.00.

Grateful thanks to Mike Walker, Tony North and everyone else who helped make this a memorable day out.

FIRES DROPPED – THE END OF STEAM ON B.R.

by Les Nixon

11 September

Our first meeting of the new season was held, as usual at Wells Town Hall, on the 11th September. Our speaker was the well-known railway photographer, Les Nixon, who entertained us with a wide-ranging look at the railway scene throughout the British Isles during the last two decades of British Railways steam operation.

Les took his first photograph in 1949 and over the years gained a reputation for his railway studies, at first in black-and-white of course, and then in colour, whilst developing an eye for a more artistic approach than the straightforward record shot.

For the next couple of hours we were taken on a breathtaking tour of mainland Britain but also including Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. The locations appeared very much at random, although, as Les confessed, he seemed to return to the Shap incline rather too regularly! The variety of steam locomotives depicted brought back memories to many in the audience, although we were also intrigued by such delights as a couple of unusual fireless locomotives in industrial use. The famous 'Fifteen Guinea Special' - the last enthusiast train run on the 11th August 1968 to mark the end of steam operation on BR naturally featured but there were many other photographs recording other railway scenes, such as snowploughs in use and the mighty ex-LNER 2-8-8-2T Beyer Garratt in action on Wasborough Bank.

Les also undertook to record various features relating to railway stations and other structures and he included several examples in his presentation. One series of photos led to his being questioned by the railway police - he had become fascinated by patterns of light and shadow created by mail trolleys on platforms of major stations. He spent part of a day recording these at Crewe - unfortunately a little too soon after the Great Train Robbery!

A vote of thanks for an amazingly varied presentation was given by John Reakes.

NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

This is a new feature for our newsletter. It has been suggested that we include news from other locally based groups with railway connections. So, please send in your contributions.

PROGRESS ON THE S&D:

The Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust at Midsomer Norton have reached a significant milestone. On Sunday 28th October, their Track Gang laid the final lengths of track required to reach the start of the landfill on the approach to Chilcompton Tunnel. To celebrate the event, a cake was ceremonially cut and then quickly consumed in the mess van of the works train at the railhead. When ballasted and aligned, this will extend the running line to approximately one mile. Measured from Bath Junction, the 12 milepost is part way along the Down platform at Midsomer Norton South station. The 13 milepost was located just a few feet into the now infilled cutting. The gradient is such that the line rises 100 feet in that mile.

50th ANNIVERSARY DINNER at the SWAN HOTEL
followed by
FROM MOZART TO MOLDOVA
by Colin Boocock 9 October

On the 9th October, the fraternity's celebrations of its 50th anniversary year concluded with a dinner at the Swan Hotel in Wells. A total of 59 members and guests attended and enjoyed a pleasant meal together. The guests of honour were the Mayor of Wells, Councillor Celia Wride and her daughter as Consort, Mr David Maidment (founder of the Railway Children Charity), Mr Colin Boocock and his wife Mary (both 'ambassadors' for the Charity). At the conclusion of the meal, our Chairman, Colin Price, asked the Mayor to present a cheque for £1,500 to David Maidment, being the Fraternity's latest donation to the Railway Children Charity (funds raised at meetings and at 'Railwells') and this was gratefully received.

Following the dinner, we were entertained by Colin Boocock with an illustrated presentation entitled 'From Mozart to Moldava'. This took the form of a travelogue through various countries which he had visited, starting in Mozart's home city of Salzburg and then proceeding through half a dozen Eastern European countries, together with some scenes in England, Ireland and Turkey. Colin skilfully contrived to balance a mixture of scenes having railway, scenic or architectural interest to ensure that there was plenty to appeal to everyone in his mixed audience. John Uncles, a friend of Colin's since schooldays, proposed a vote of thanks to bring a most enjoyable evening to its conclusion.

The thanks of the Fraternity must also go to Chris Challis for all his hard work in organising the event.



Here is the certificate from the Railway Children Charity acknowledging receipt of the £1500 cheque that was presented to David Maidment at our 50th Anniversary Dinner. We also donated £50 to our speaker Colin Boocock for his Famous Trains Model Railway Project in Derby.

WELLS JOURNAL, 9 SEPTEMBER 1858

THE BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS AMONGST THE NAVVIES.

The navvies working on the Glastonbury and Wells line, near Wells (about 300), were on Tuesday invited to a good dinner of beef, potatoes, bread, and tea, in the Market-house, which was decorated with evergreens and appropriate banners. The chair was taken at six o'clock by the Mayor (J. G. Everett, Esq.), who, after tea, addressed the meeting in a very interesting speech.

Lady Auckland, with several other ladies, then proceeded to distribute a New Testament to each of the navvies.

The Chairman said there was one fact which it behoved him as chief magistrate of the city to mention. The works connected with the Wells and Glastonbury Railway had been going on for three months. Many of the men before him lodged in the city, and many continually went to and fro ; but during the whole of the time not a single case of misconduct on the part of any one of them had come to his notice on the magisterial bench. (Cheers.)

The Bishop of Wells rose amidst loud applause, and addressed the assembly.

His lordship said they were greatly indebted to the navvies for executing a work which would add so materially to the commercial prosperity of the city. What was a navvy ?

He would give great strength, enduring powers, indomitable perseverance, and unflinching courage. (Cheers.) If a valley was in his way he would soon fill it with a mountain ; a rock of granite came across his path lie thought nothing of cutting a passage through it; if a river interrupted his progress he would soon span it. In France _ there was no such thing as a navvy. If difficult railway work was to be accomplished there they sent over to England to Mr Brotherwood, or Rigby, or Brassey, or Messrs Ritson, or some other eminent railway contractors, for English navvies to come over and perform the work. (Vociferous cheering.)

It was the same in the Crimea at the time of the Russian war. We could not take Sebastopol till English navvies were sent over to make a railway from Balaklava to the camp, to convey the cannon to the front.

There was another evil he would remark upon.

The "navvy" was a man who often took the Lord's holy name vain—in fact, he could scarcely utter a sentence without an oath. Now, he (the speaker) was sure that they would be very much shocked if God were to bring down that infliction which they often imprecated. They were so addicted to the habit that they did not know when they did it. He hoped they would take it kind art if he exhorted them to leave off these evil habits. They had each received a Testament, which he hoped they would take care of, for its truths would never perish—everything around them would. The sleepers they were laying down would decay; the iron rails would be eaten away by rust; the stations they were erecting would someday fall. There was only one thing that was durable, "The Word of the Lord shall stand for ever."

His Lordship concluded, amidst great by wishing them all a hearty "Good night." After which the navvies retired in a congratulatory manner.

From Colin Price

The Station Sound Which Instantly Grabs Everyone's Attention.

The Acme Thunderer's a whistle
A little thing, not long
Though nothing much to look at
Its voice is loud and strong
Now Joe, he was a railway guard
His equipment was his pride
The Thunderer his special tool
Which never left his side
Of other whistles there were many
Of every sort and size
But Joe was fiercely proud of his
His whistle was his prize
With all the passengers on board his train
And every door shut tight
The Acme Thunderer shrilled its note
As he blew with all his might

Reproduced courtesy of railwayman and author Geoffrey Body

From Roy Kethro

WELL SPOTTED

The photo on the front page of Newsletter No.192 is credited to Andrew Tucker, but some of the more observant readers may have noticed that he is there in the back row. Well done to Roy Kethro for pointing this out – he actually took the photo!

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next Newsletter will be issued in April 2019. Please let me have any contributions by 31 March.

AND FINALLY :

Did you know that Tetbury railway station was originally in a different county to the town it served? Tetbury is in Gloucestershire, but the station, on the edge of the town, was in Wiltshire when the branch opened in 1889. The county boundary was subsequently moved two miles to the east, to follow the course of the Fosse Way, and the station then also became part of Gloucestershire.