

EDITORIAL

Hopefully this edition is back to normal (I think the last issue broke the record for being the most late!). The biggest event of note since last time was of course the annual convention which saw a healthy attendance. I really enjoyed the event and it was great meeting up with old faces and a few new ones too. A thorough report on the event is included in this issue. Having only just recovered from one event we are heading into another - the East Lancs Railway's Railcar Gala which is held just days after this bulletin is published. Whilst DMU sets can always subject to changes and relocations, the last two years has seen the ELR event equal the two stalwarts of the last decade: the Llangollen and Ecclesbourne, Railcar Galas are a very niche, the market will not support many of them, and railways which run them are consequently in a very exclusive club indeed. Key to making them viable (on a regular basis at least) is a strong home based fleet, which is something that 90% of the movement do not possess. The ELR, via a combination of some relocations and conclusions of some major restorations, has propelled itself from a two set to a five set gala in

just a few years. Consequently, they are able to put on a good show during their events which are held in November. Nobody can predict what will happen in the future with regards to unit availability, so I suggest we support these events for as long as the EVR, LR and ELR are able to put them on for us. And don't forget, at the ELR at least, there's another Fish & Chip Special running too – now who can argue with that?!?

23RD ANNUAL RAILCAR CONVENTION

The 2018 Convention saw The Railcar Association return to the county of Essex for the first time in ten years, the last time being in 2008 when the Colne Valley and East Anglian Railway Museum joint hosted. It was also surprisingly only the third time that the convention had been hosted in an area previously considered part of British Railways' Eastern Region. The venue was the Epping Ongar Railway which pleasingly was hosting for the first time, it is always interesting having a convention at a "new" railway.

In contrast to the previous year's gala extravaganza format, the event was



much more in line with a "normal" convention, with the home based Class 117/121 hybrid 2-car set supplemented by visiting Class 121 W55033 from the neighbouring Colne Valley, which was able to visit as it coincided with a brief road trip to the Ilford wheel lathe for contract tyre turning. The proximity to the Great Eastern commuter lines radiating from London Liverpool Street, plus the resident and visiting stock gave the convention a decidedly suburban theme which hadn't been experienced since the Gloucestershire Warwickshire convention five years previously.

Friday

The Friday was firmly set in tradition as Driver Experience day, with Class 117/121 2-car power/trailer

51384/56287 in use for delegates throughout the day. It shuttled intensively between Ongar, through North Weald to Epping Forest, where the boundary between preservation and the London Underground exists. This latter feature was one of the unique aspects of this line. The approach to the boundary is via increasingly steep gradients starting at 1in149, then 1in70 and finally 1in56 before reaching the stop board! Of course such high risk conditions means that traditional driver experiences must stop short of this downward "ski slope", however certain trips which were being run by passed drivers from other railways were able to include this final section "to the stops".

In total six round trips were operated before the 117/121 set was swapped for the visiting Class 121 which proceeded to do several more trips allowing further experiences to be run as well as combining with some of the owning group who were able to enjoy driving their unit on a foreign railway.

The experiences themselves were most enjoyable with drivers really having to work the unit hard. With both vehicles being of the heavier "long" type a single vehicle carrying a trailer around up and



down proved a challenge when tackling most of the line which is around 1in70 for most of its length. The gradient profile for the line resembles a letter M and the vehicles were constantly powering hard or rolling downward requiring keen driver attention. The first trip terminated at Epping Forest and encountered poor railhead conditions on its return leading to a delay as sand was applied and the underpowered unit slowly crawled up the 1in56. Luckily

once the unit had passed over the rails a few times normal running proceeded for the rest of the day. It was a great pleasure being able to drive over such interesting track.

A few photographic stops were able to be made during the day and some good use made of the sun which was out in force. Instructors were very friendly and various facts about the line and surrounding areas were discussed.

Saturday

Saturday saw the event open to the public. The railway was running a steam service as normal so as not to disappoint the average visitor and also for additional variety. The locomotive in use was Metropolitan No1, most appropriate for a railway associated with the London Underground, albeit the Central Line. No1 ran three trips between North Weald and Ongar, as the Epping Forest section is limited to trains either top & tailed or railcar operated. Slotting in between No1 on the Ongar section, and having free reign over the Epping end, was the Class 117/121 and the visiting 121 "bubble car" W55033.



A trip or two was possible before a mid morning guided tour of the locomotive restoration sheds at North Weald. During this tour we encountered the final DMU vehicle on site at the railway. Class 117 DMBS 51342. This is the true partner to the Class 117 in service (51384) but its extended restoration led to Class 121 trailer 56287 being hired in to allow 51384 to enter service as a complete set. The interior restoration of 51342 had already been completed before a small corroded area led to huge further problems with the vehicle's cant rails being discovered. This meant the state of affairs when we inspected 51342 was that of serious bodywork repairs to the secondman's side, with more on the opposite side planned. Ideas and experiences were exchanged



whilst the remainder of the party explored the adjacent steam and diesel fleets under repair and restoration.

Following the tour delegates either had another small ride or in most cases, retired for lunch in the railway's Anglia buffet coach. It's funny how places providing food can be the place to be, especially during poor weather which sadly made itself known during the day, in stark contrast to the beautiful conditions present on the Friday. All too soon 2 o'clock arrived which marked the start of the general meeting.

Formal Meeting

Finding a suitable local venue for the meeting proved far more difficult this year than is ordinarily the case. Things

were looking bleak before the Epping Ongar Railway rescued us with the use of their marquee at North Weald, which whilst unheated, provided the space we needed to allow the meeting to happen. We are in debt to them for this as well as providing the necessary tables, chairs and space heater borrowed from the workshops!

30 delegates attended the meeting which was a nice middle-of-the-road figure if comparing with previous years. The meeting started with the normal Chairman's address with a brief summary of the railcar matters for the year. Apologies were received and included Ian Bradbury, Chris Bull, Gareth Coleman, Trevor Daw, Kevin Dowd, Jim Poor and the members of the Swindon Diesel Preservation Society based at Bo'ness.

The question was raised by the Chairman as to what the cut-off point for railcars within the association should be. Whilst it was felt that cutting off at a certain point may in the future lead to new members not being interested in joining as we did not cater for "their traction", different technologies and practicalities meant that it was felt there

needed to be a limit so as not to be overstretched in terms of support and expertise. It was decided that any decision could always be reviewed in the future, but for now a limit would be set within the BR era, so only stock built before 1996 would be recognised by the association.

The Chairman also nominated a prominent member of the Railcar community to be the Association's first Honorary President which was immediately seconded by Brian Smith. A vote was taken and the choice was unanimously in favour.

The first presentation was Chris Moxon's summary of the year for the preserved vehicles. There were no new additions to the fleet but three Class 141 vehicles were scrapped. Seven vehicles were identified as "at risk" of scrapping in the next 12 months but none of them were historically vital. There had been a lot of road movements this year with 10 vehicles moving permanently to new homes and a record 7 vehicles moving for gala events or hire contracts. A list of restorations and overhauls that had both been started and been completed

was then explained before some number crunching. Total DMU's preserved had dropped from 280 to 277. The operational DMU fleet had dropped from 150 to 144 whilst the number of active restorations was fairly stable, changing from 46 to 45. Generally more classes of railcars had decreased in availability than increased, the exception being the Class 119's which have done well this year.

The next presentation was by Martin Smith of Pressed Steel Heritage, who had two vehicles present at this year's event. Martin explained how the group was formed, its original aims and how these differed to what the group ended actually up with! They are now the proud owners of an authentic Class 121 bubble car and trailer pairing, although the two exact vehicles preserved did not run together. It was explained how the fleet was originally built up, with 56287 (121 DTS) being the first vehicle moved to Mangapps Farm. A powercar, 51347 (117 DMBS) was bought to run with 56287 but this arrangement was not satisfactory at Mangapps so 51347 was moved to the Colne Valley shortly after and 56287 sold. A new partner

was acquired for 51347 at Colne. 51138 (116 DMBS), as well as a spares donor in the form of 51151 (116 DMS). It was at this point that the bubble car 55033 joined the collection, this one costing a premium of £3.00 when other vehicles at the time were £1.000! Vehicles continued to arrive with 51401 (117 DMS) being sent to the Nene Valley Railway on hire with 51347 to form a set, with the now partner-less 51138 pairing up with spares donor 51151 to form a proper Class 116 set. At this point it was realised there were too many vehicles in the fleet to cope with, so the 116 set was sold to the Great Central North and the 117 to the Nene Valley, leaving just the bubble car 55033. The group then however wanted their first vehicle 56287 back to form a proper 121 pairing. 56287 at Mangapps required a repaint by this time, so agreement was reached for it to be swapped with another vehicle if the replacement vehicle was freshly painted. Class 117 DMS 51381 was duly sourced and swapped for 56287 which was able to join 55033 at the Colne Valley. Since then (2004) the collection has remained stable and the main challenges have been completing restoration work with the limited



facilities available. More recently, 56287 was not being used much so was hired to the Epping Ongar Railway who required a vehicle to run with half of their 117 set whilst the other half received restoration work. This brought the story up to the present day, and with more work including a repaint to the bubble car, it's looking like Pressed Steel Heritage have enough to be getting on with for some time!

The following two presentations were by Evan Green-Hughes with the first being an update on the last of the "Holy Grail" DMU sets to remain at risk of loss. For those who weren't aware of the "Holy Grail", the term is used amongst the railcar fraternity for an exclusive collection of extremely rare

first generation DMU's which are the last surviving sets of their class/type. A scrapping of any of the Holy Grail sets would be considered by the community as a huge historical loss and should be avoided at all cost. The Holy Grail sets include the Derby Lightweight (Ecclesbourne Valley), Gloucester 100 (Llangollen Railcars), Park Royal 103 (Helston), Cravens 105 (East Lancs), Wickham 109 (Llangollen Railcars), Gloucester 119 (Swindon & Cricklade) and Swindon 126 (Bo'ness & Kinneil). All of the above over the past 25 years have changed ownership and slowly been moved into secure hands and are either restored to running condition or under restoration to similar standards. with the exception of the Park Royal 103 which is currently deteriorating with no realistic funding or facilities to reverse the situation. The current owners appear to be unfamiliar with how DMU preservation works i.e. unrestored vehicles are normally worth no more than their own scrap value (regardless of their rarity) whilst running sets command the higher prices when sold. This fact proves a sticking point to a degree as it would be hard enough re -homing a unit which requires a full rebuild without adding a large purchase

cost. Evan had been down this year to complete a condition assessment and was well placed to do so having been heavily involved in two Holy Grail sets already (109 & 100). Initially in pictures on the internet the unit doesn't look too bad, however up close the tell-tale signs of severe structural corrosion is apparent. The unit obviously hasn't operated for many years and despite being advised it is complete there are a few major components missing. However luckily most of the missing mechanical components are very standard items (such as vacuum cylinders) which would prove no problem to any of the established groups to replace. The set has several modifications, the most amusing being a large central heating boiler fitted to the outside of the trailer car! Underneath the vehicle is reportedly quite nasty with corrosion evident, probably from its days near the sea front at Minehead. There was a suggestion that asbestos "may" be present, although not proven on this occasion. The rear passenger saloon of the trailer is now a buffet and the guards van a kitchen. Evidence of roof leaks is present. The final consensus was that the set was by no means

beyond redemption, as it is broadly complete and in better condition than other Holy Grail sets were before their restorations started. Having said that however, Evan advised that any notion that the set was "not bad at all" and could have a "normal restoration" such as that applied to a Class 101 or Class 108 should be dispelled immediately. and that he estimated the 103 could be a £200,000 project in a similar fashion to other Holy Grail restorations. It was obvious that all of the main groups with the skills and experience to restore the Class 103 were all committed to their existing fleets, which was most frustrating as it would appear we are currently only in a position to sit and watch where the 103 ends up. Agreement with the existing owners has been reached that they will stay in contact should they need to dispose of the set in the future, and we at least know more now about its condition.

Evan's second topic was the future of the Railcar Association's constitution. Last year, it was agreed that we should at least investigate other options towards formalising our constitution, to possibly be able to trade as a single body and have parts produced and sold across the UK. This would require being a company limited by guarantee and then applying for charitable status, although we would have to be careful in our wording as from an outsider looking in, it may look like the association is in fact a trade group for operators, due to the number of vehicles that are in private ownership. It would appear there would be a £1.500 set up charge and then £1,100 a year running costs. After a discussion, we thanked Evan for completing the research as we now know for sure, however at the present time it was voted unanimously that we should remain as we are as the fees were too costly for us and the benefit would not outweigh it. We currently do not produce/commission enough parts to make it worthwhile. It was agreed the topic could be reviewed in the future if ever things changed.

The next topic saw Chris Nesbitt speak about Vacuum Cylinders, particularly in elation to problems they had experienced with W55006's on the Ecclesbourne Valley. Changes in vacuum cylinders did not cure the problem and they had drawn a blank for some time. Further investigations revealed shortened/lengthened brake gear can affect vacuum cylinder behaviour and should be checked

carefully on vehicles if cylinder problems persist. 55006's was out by an inch after BR had modified a pull rod. Another problem on 55006 was multiple cylinders having defective check valves. Inside the cylinder is a check valve with a stainless steel ball inside, it has been discovered that overhaul companies are not always inspecting or replacing these valves, and if the brass inside is worn or damaged, the cylinder can lose its tops side vacuum. This check valve should be directly above the release valve when reassembling the cylinder, which is important as being located on a round piston, the check valve can be easily located in any orientation, so this is important to bear in mind when positioning during reassembly. The above paragraph may make more sense if the vacuum areas of the original railcar website is studied to properly understand how vacuum cylinders work and the function of their component parts.

The floor was then opened up to any other business. Evan briefly gave an HRA update as our representative. The only items relevant to us were the recent interest of the HRA and ORR in Mark 1 coaches and particularly their



condition after problems with corrosion. We were reminded that being similar vehicles it was only a matter of time before DMU's were scrutinised, so if required we shall stay ahead of the game and make any changes as required, as we did with the national model maintenance scheme some years ago. A voluntary whip round was undertaken to cover the association's HRA subs for the next 12 months and we were £4 short, which the Chairman duly made up!

We then received a brief update on the GWR Railcar (W20) at the Kent & East Sussex Railway. Due to heath issues a full presentation was not possible, but needless to say that the vehicle is now progressing better then ever before.

The underframe is done and funding arrangements for the completion of the restoration have been made more secure. Hopefully a full presentation will be made next year.

It was confirmed that the next year's convention will be at the Weardale Railway, on October 4th-6th 2019. A second venue was nominated for 2020 and agreed, the identity of which can be published after the resident group can get it confirmed by their railway.

Saturday Evening Fish & Chip Special

One of the highlights of the event was the Saturday Evening Fish & Chip special. This was run earlier than in previous years, starting at 17:00 from North Weald for ta trip to Ongar where chips were served at 17:30 followed by two round trips with several stops for people to depart if desired. It was noticed that this format worked really well and it was suspected that the earlier time allowed people with long journeys to stay for the special when in previous year's they wouldn't have. One to remember for future conventions perhaps? We were treated to fish or sausage and chips with a selection of



ice cream for dessert as well! This was also new to us and also an excellent idea! With everyone in one place, it was a great social and a good time was had by all as the light dropped and the units ran into the dark. The Class 121 and 117/121 sets were coupled together for the run as is traditional, however we couldn't help but notice that the best heaters and a bar were in the bubble car, so strangely people seemed to congregate in there!

Sunday

Sunday saw the weather revert to how it had been on Friday, giving those delegates who had made a weekend of it another burst of sunshine and warmth. The timetable and trains were broadly similar to that offered on



Saturday, with the notable swapping of the steam locomotive with a Class 31 as no steam crew was available. Whilst the railway had advertised a steam service, most of our delegates were in fact pleased with the substitution, given our lean towards diesel traction, making the Brush Type 2 a bonus!

From lunchtime onwards and with long journeys home ahead, the remaining delegates dispersed signalling the end of a fantastic weekend. All that remains is to thank the Epping Ongar Railway for everything they laid on for us, organisation of the event, and particularly their hospitality in providing us with a meeting room in our hour of need. It really felt like we were very well catered for indeed. Links between the

railway and groups were made and we hope to stay in contact with the line on matters regarding DMU's and other heritage railway issues.



NEWS

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway: During the "summer work week" The Class 126 3-car set was not neglected, and an analysis was done of the repairs to an engine on Sc51017 to see if there was still water contamination in the oil, looking good so far.

East Lancashire Railway: Work has been gearing up to ready all of the sets required for this weekend's Railcar Gala. The Class 104 set has seen remaining cab fittings fitted to M50455 including notably the destination blind,

as well as receiving thorough interior cleaning. The unique Class 105 has had some repair work to its multiple working jumpers and the guards van door woodwork has been repaired and adjusted. The Class 117 is being de-mothballed having been in store for a year, which thankfully hasn't raised many issues. The Class 122 has had a fuel leak on one of its engines repaired. However the most work has been put into the Class 110 which sadly due to some unfortunate failures shortly before the event has required a lot of effort and last minute repairs to allow it to return to service for the event. On the DMBC vehicle, it has required a replacement final drive dog, and electrical repairs to the saloon and guards van lighting. The DMCL vehicle has received a new injector and the idle speed has been reset. All of the vehicle's direction selection switches have also been cleaned and repaired where required to ensure reliable operation.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway: Work continues on the long-standing vacuum brake cylinder problem on Class 122 single unit W55006. It should be back in traffic for the Santa season. Class 101

E51505 has had its toilet cubical refurbished and tank leaks repaired. The springs on the No 1 bogie have been adjusted as they were found to be over tightened. Finally the Class 108, E53599, is currently in the works for crash pillar repairs to the corridor connection end.

North Norfolk Railway: Not much to report his time, E51228/E56062 have run the majority of services throughout the late summer. The two sets have however been swapped over again, with M51188/M56352 now working the last October/November services due to that set being the only one of the pair (at present) to have functioning heating. This will allow E51228/E56062 to have their heaters repaired and put back into service. Once M51188's duties are concluded in December it has a space booked in for repainting during the winter shut down period.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway: 50160/59539/50164 completed their duties during the wartime event without issue with one of the Saturday trains being full and standing. With good loadings throughout the day an additional tea time train was started to



clear the crowds at Levisham but cancelled at NB10 (presumably that is a signal at New Bridge, outside Pickering? - ed). Thanks to the Diesel team some TLC had been administered and all 4 engines work, the issue having been corrosion in the fuel system causing fuel starvation. Standing in the open is not doing it any favours. The heaters have been attended to which was welcome on the Sunday which was cold and wet. The south end destination blind has been replaced and now matches the north end. The next planned running dates are a Pickering based diagram between 27th December and 1st January. The

NYMR's own unit, 50204/51511, having worked 1000's of miles between 2005 and 2013, is still in store requiring heavy bodywork repairs.

Strathspey Railway: The operating lass 117 set has had a replacement drivers window fitted to the DMS (SC51402). The team have also been busy carrying out anti-freeze checks ready for the Highland winter.



RESTORATION NEWS

Derby Lightweight 79612 (Ecclesbourne): This trailer car has had more roof repairs to fix a persistent leak. Further interior work has been carried out, including installation of rock wool for insulation.

Class 103 56160 (Denbigh): The drivers side has received attention with the battery box and step board brackets being cleaned and painted. Two new step boards have been finished, and the timber cut for the others.



Class 104 56182 (North Norfolk): The outside repainting work has now finally been included, just in time before the frosts start! All of the underframe between the bogies is now in gloss black and also treated are the solebars and rear bufferbeam/buffers. All of the pipework and conduit "below deck" has

also been picked out in their various colours – white for vacuum and air pipes and orange for electrical conduit. We now retreat to inside work for the winter!

Class 117 59511 (Strathspey): Work continues on fitting the new side panels to the interior with both first and second class saloons progressing very well.



Class 122 55019 (Llanelli): The vehicle has been nominated for some grant funding in the Aviva Community Fund awards, which could kick start its restoration proper if they were to win. To do this however they need our help as readers and members of the public – see the separate section further down the bulletin for details on how to vote for them.



E&G 79443 (Bo'ness): Good progress continues. A summer work week saw a visit to the goods shed for more 'hot work', the welding on the bodyside is now more or less completed and a start made on the final area - the gangway at the kitchen end. This required dismantling of much of the gangway pieces to allow repairs to begin. Back in it's normal home of the workshop area

of the Scottish Railway Exhibition, work continues inside and out. Underneath. the south side solebar continued to be descaled with a needle oun and painted, and the cleaning and painting of other components (such as gas bottle and battery boxes) continues. Inside, when the vehicle was asbestos stripped the timber framework between the steel body and formica sheets were broken off, leaving their fasteners behind. These have been invaluable in determining the sizes of the replacement timberwork, and now that the woodwork is being made the fasteners are being removed and new timber framework fitted to the ceiling areas of the compartments, in some cases using the original nuts and bolts. Some of the wood pieces, which we nicknamed 'hockey sticks', were made some years ago during the restoration of Sc59404, laminated in a jig to form the correct curvature for the ceiling.

W&M Railbus 79963 (Chappel): 79963 has been out on more successful test runs, although some proper reproduction driving tools are still required. The restoration is coming close to its conclusion, the last jobs being taking the doors to bits and

rebuilding the door latching mechanisms, then put the chairs back and final paint job.

RAILCAR OF THE YEAR 2018

It is getting to that time again, to give The Railcar Association's award for the best vehicle (or set) for this year. Voting will be open during the month of December, so look out on the website (preserved.railcar.co.uk) for details on how to cast your vote. In the meantime, don't forget anyone can nominate a vehicle to be included in the choices next month, so if anyone has any ideas feel free to send them to railcar@live.co.uk before November 30th.

AVIVA COMMUNITY FUND

The Class 122 "bubble car", 55019, based at the Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway, South Wales, has been shortlisted for the latest Aviva Community Fund awards. It is down to public votes to propel their project into winning £10,000 to provide the bulk of the finance required to progress the restoration of the vehicle. Being a Railcar focussed bulletin we can hopefully count on all readers quickly registering and giving them our votes —



which will cost us supporter nothing financially. To give them our vote, please use the link below, which also contains a more thorough description of the project than has been published here:

community-fund.aviva.co.uk/voting/ project/view/4-3040

TIME TRAVELLER

Green Era Class 116—Bristol—1959 Class 121 - Hayes & Harlington – 4/5/63

E&G - Cab

Blue Era

Class 101 - Heyside - 29/6/74

Class 103 - Barmouth - 5/79

Class 105 - Ipswich - 1982

Class 126 - Newton on Ayr - 1968

Blue/Grey & Later

Class 114 – New Holland Pier – 29/10/80

<u>Class 108 – Whitehaven – 31/8/91</u>

Class 117 51401 - Reading

SUBMISSIONS

Hopefully the contents of this bulletin was both interesting and informative. If you know anyone who could provide similar material found in this issue for future bulletins, please make yourself or them known to railcar@live.co.uk The following types of submission would be most welcome:

- Photographs of vehicles in service
- Restoration articles
- Reports on special events
- DMU modelling articles
- Articles on DMU history
- Recollections of DMUs on the national network.
- Requests for information
- News & images of recent DMU activity
- Anything that may be of interest to readers

Feel free to send submissions at any time to railcar@live.co.uk but no later than December 29th for Issue 151 (due out January).



GALLERY



1212 (Helga) is prepared for service after a few minor repairs, 6/10/18 (D. Shell)



Sitting spare at Dufftown, 8/10/18 (D. Stokes)



51412 under restoration at Whitwell, 1/10/18 (*M.Hughes*)



51887 looks a bit rough at Minehead, 24/10/18 (M.Hughes)



56287/51384 between Epping & North Weald during driver experience runs, 5/10/18



Giving good service at the Ribble Steam Raiwlay is W&M Railbus E79960, on long term loan from the North Norfolk Railway, 6/10/18 (*A.Deamer*)

