

The Railcar Association News Bulletin



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FRANK RICHARDS
PHOTOGRAPHY

EDITORIAL

It was great seeing friendly faces at the three DMU events that have occurred since the previous bulletin: at Llangollen, Weardale and East Lancs. That is it now it for railcar events until 2020, although the winter will prove useful for many groups getting deferred maintenance completed before the onslaught of the next running season. Look out for the Railcar of the Year award which will be advertised on the website in early December, as always its just for fun and free to participate. Lastly the next issue of the bulletin will be a slightly special one for two reasons: one good and one not so good!

2019 CONVENTION

Introduction

This year's annual gathering for Railcar Association members took place at the Weardale Railway in County Durham, with activities being centred on Stanhope Station. This was the first time the Weardale Railway had hosted the event, although they have had DMU's based on their line since 2001. It was the first time the convention had been hosted in the North East, the tangerine coloured BR signs being

somewhat of a novelty! In many ways this was much overdue, as the North Eastern Region of British Railways made extensive use of first generation railcars, with enormous 4-car (and 8-car) sets becoming a trademark for the region. This story is under-represented in preservation, so it was fitting to at last to gather in this spectacular area of the country.

The traction available was similar in format to the previous year's convention: a single unit and a 2-car set, in this case of classes 122 and 108 respectively. Notable was the 108 which was making its first passenger runs on the Weardale Line, following protracted heavy maintenance work after an extended period of use and relocation from the Bodmin & Wenford Railway. This created a mix of low and high density designs, with the classic Derby front end in common.

Friday

The customary driver experience trips took place using the section of line between Stanhope Station and Scotch Isle Loop (where the main depot is situated) using Class 122 'Bubble Car' E55012, covering a distance of just

over five miles each way. The line is varied with a distinct gradient bias one way, requiring control of speed in one direction and power in the other. The high power to weight ratio of a single unit ensured the route was tackled with ease, first gear not even being required to accelerate away from low speed restrictions. The route was peppered with bridges, curves, level crossings and other features with a variety of speed restrictions imposed on them, creating a driver experience with plenty to do and think about. Another unusual (in preservation terms) feature was the radio signalling system with no moving signals (semaphore or colour light), the line instead being controlled by "one man and his laptop", communicating via radio at the correct points which stop



boards the driver has permission to pass.

Eight round trips were operated with a variety of participants, most indulging in a round trip each. The flag was well and truly flown with the President, Chairman and Secretary of the association all booking for a drive! Between runs, members talked in the pleasantly heated passenger saloon, with the occasional comment on driving technique aimed at participants as they passed through changing ends! The station buffet at Stanhope was manned and providing all the required food and drink for the day. A common feature of the driver experience days is being able to experience the railway without the hustle and bustle of the main event on the following day, where there are so many people to meet to chat to!

Saturday

Saturday saw the public part of the event begin, with the railway commencing a 2-train DMU service for the first time. It was also the first opportunity to ride on the ex Bodmin Railway Class 108 which had been out of service for over a year being brought up to passenger carrying standards.



More work is needed on the Class 108 to bring it up to the same level as the Class 122 which the line has relied on for most of its services the past 5 years, nevertheless the 108 has been improved greatly since it arrived, with of course much of the progress being invisible, concerning the mechanicals underneath.

The two train service operated all day, as the railway does not an operational steam locomotive at present the timetable was able to be 100% dominated by the railcars. For those who wishing to attend the event by rail connections were available at Bishop Auckland (which has hourly trains from Darlington), and indeed this option was taken by some members attending



Saturday on an "out and back" basis by rail. The line is so long that only a handful of round trips can be made by each unit, and vehicles are moving for longer periods of time than most other heritage lines. As a result, much of the socialising would be on the units themselves whilst travelling up or down the valley. The trick was catching people that were on the other unit!

Once again lunch was centred around the station buffet at Stanhope, as this was where the bulk of the railway's amenities were located. For those requiring to attend the AGM the timetable allowed for at least one full trip to be made in the morning, followed by a half trip after lunch, not bad for such a long route!

Formal Meeting

The formal meeting (AGM) was held in a Caledonian Sleeper lounge car of all places! Whilst this arrangement may have been a bit of a squeeze at some conventions, the modest meeting attendance of 22 meant the coach was perfect in terms of capacity. The heating, so cosy it had to be turned off part way through, was in stark contrast to the arctic condition's of last year's meeting space!

The meeting began with the opening remarks from Chairman, Paul Moxon, who commented on a "normal" year but with the anticipation of the "pacer revolution". More legislation was coming in and members were warned not to be drawn in too much by the

media hype. Thorough risk assessments in most cases were allowing many things to go on the same with only minor alterations. Balance was needed between copying the "big railway" and keeping the hobby alive in a format that it is still worth giving up time for in the first place.

Apologies included Steve Beck, Kevin Dowd, Ben Field, Mike Grimwood, John Joyce, Chris Lings, Ritchie Marcus, Bruce Pollard & Nigel Smith.

The first presentation was a welcome from the Weardale Railway by Kevin Richardson, Chairman of the Weardale Railway Trust. He explained about the railway in its current form and the paradox of having a 16 mile railway run with only 30 active volunteers. A weekend only operation was run relying on the Class 122 bubble car. His talk centred on the DMU's (for our benefit) and it was explained how they had sought out a 2-car set to support the single unit which was running out of capacity at certain events. The ex-Bodmin 108 was sourced but its condition was well below what was expected. Some brakeblocks were shown to members which emphasised

the level of wear that the set had experienced.

The next presentation was History of the Weardale Line by John Asquith, also of the Weardale Railway Trust. His interesting narrative took the line from its construction, reason for building and life under BR through to the preservation society being formed in 1993. DMU's had been a part of the story since 1955, although the last passenger services to Wearhead finished in 1953. The line was kept open by cement trains to Eastgate Works until 1993. Post preservation, DMU's returned in the form of Class 141 units in 2001 which lasted until 2018 when they were scrapped. More recently, first generation types had been favoured.

The next presentation was Chris Moxon's usual Round-up of the Year. There had been no additions for the second year running, although Classes 142, 143 & 144 were expected before long. One vehicle had been disposed of (a 117 DMBS) with a further eight on the "at risk" list. Five vehicles, of classes 108, 115 & 117 had moved to new homes, with a further four (of



classes 117 & 121) moved as part of contract restoration works. In terms of restorations and overhauls, seven new projects had been started whilst three major and 11 minor projects had been finished. Overall, the number of preserved railcars had decreased slightly and the number operational examples also decreased. The number of restorations underway remained constant. The presentation ended with a final note that after many years of slow decline, exactly 50% of the preserved railcars in the UK were in an operational state, some may say we have reached a 50/50 tipping point? How future "clearouts" and scrappings, plus the preservation of operational second generation vehicles, affects this figure remains to be seen with interest.

The next preservation was a historical interest item by Evan Green-Hughes, looking at the origins of the first generation DMU. The start was a move at the turn of the 20th century to experiment with internal combustion versions of the steam railmotor. The limits of the early petrol engines limited the technical advances until the 1930's when diesel engines became sufficiently powerful for the likes of the

GWR railcars to emerge, although these are the most well known there were a string of other designs and experiments through the 1920's & 1930's that contributed. Post second world war economies created the right conditions required for BR to back a lightweight design of train for cost cutting railways that needed to survive into the future, and the lightweight trains committee was born which, in essence, created the first generation DMU fleet as we know them today. From the inception of the committee in 1951 to having large fleets being produced from 1954 is an exceptional achievement by any standards.

Less formal discussion followed concerning a variety of technical topics including the Office of Rail and Road's concern on the continued use of droplight windows. Several members already had experience of what heritage railways were doing right now to combat the recommendations, and advise concerning correct signage, risk assessments etc was given. At the moment, most of the work required (such as reviewing lineside structures etc) was more appropriate for the host heritage lines rather than the DMU

owners themselves, although obviously working together was a theme.

One item questioned was the bemusing article published by the normally neutral Railway Magazine, stating that the preserved DMU world could be threatened by the arrival of the Pacers next year. Members were questioned over whether anyone had given any statements on behalf of the association, nobody had, so we are none the wiser as to where their information to publish that story originated from. On the contrary, the almost open hatred of the Pacer fleet by most of the boards of directors of traditional heritage railways would ensure they had little chance of usurping the much more "steam friendly" first generation fleets. The view of the floor was that the second generation units would probably be preserved elsewhere and prove more of an addition rather than a threat. Second generation units follow similar maintenance regimes to their older counterparts and as existing second generation knowledge already exists within the organisation (reference Evan Green Hughes!) future owners would do well to join in as the first generation owners have.

A further item concerned bogie overhauls by a firm which will be looked into by committee members in more detail. It is a new firm offering set price overhauls and they are willing to move into DMU bogies if the demand is there. Previous struggles getting DMU bogie overhauls through heritage railway machine shows meant this was certainly worth looking at at least. A spin off conversation started from this topic concerning new defects we are now seeing and how the maintenance regimes should be reviewed where possible to reflect that we are still current given our railcars are now that much older.

Members were then thanked and sent on their way by the hosts and Chairman, in good time for the Fish & Chip special!

Fish & Chip Special

The traditional fish and chip special departed at 17:45 for a return trip to Bishop Auckland, again connecting with a Network Rail service for those heading home by rail. A choice of sausage or fish with chips was enjoyed, cooked in house at Stanhope. The Class 108 was used and headed back

to Stanhope as the light turned to dark. The earlier start time was selected as such good feedback was received when this was trialled at the Epping & Ongar event last year.

Sunday

Most members headed home on the Saturday evening however further running was enjoyed with the Class 108 & 122 on the Sunday, which also allowed those who were engaged on the Saturday to also join. Although not part of the event, a small party of six members headed to the Wensleydale Railway on their way back south as their Class 121 bubble car was also by chance in operation on ordinary services.



2020 CONVENTION

The next convention will be held at the Mid Norfolk Railway. It will celebrate a quarter of a century of groups gathering, which brings the possibility of doing "a few extras". Plans are being made for the possibility of some branded merchandise provided there is demand for it to celebrate the 25 year milestone.

The date for the convention has yet to be confirmed but the 2nd-4th October 2020 has been requested. Traction will centre around the Mid Norfolk Railway's Class 101 collection, with the possibility of a visitor if the arrangements are possible. There will of course be an extended and much developed railway to play on following all the achievements that the railway has made since we last visited almost 20 years ago!

NEWS

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway: We changed the cylinder head gaskets on one of Class 126 Sc51017's engines about 18 months ago, following a problem with water in the oil. As the unit saw a lot of use in service last year, the engine was checked by opening the

sump plugs and draining out a little of the contents. Unfortunately we again found water and emulsified oil in the sump. Fault finding shall continue...

Keighley & Worth Valley Railway: Railbus M79964 has returned to service following extensive repairs to the doorways and is now back in service running winter duties allowing the Class 101 set a rest.



Llangollen Railway: First of all, thanks to those who turned out to the gala. We were blessed with unseasonably good weather, which may have helped. Despite lacking a visitor this time, the tail loads and associated shunting at each provoked some interest.

Class 104 50454/50528 is in traffic, and handled quite a few of the late season midweeks after the gala. Now stopped for an 'M' exam over the Winter.



Class 108 51933/54504. The trailer cab has received some attention after the gala, after one of our members couldn't resist prying off what turned out to be a large lump of resin in the front. Some other patch repairs to the cab were followed by a fresh coat of green with small yellow warning panel. The bufferbeam took a large amount of needle gunning to achieve a condition worth painting - the years beside the sea seem to have affected it particularly badly. We finally have a complete seat ready to refit the mystery missing one in 51933.

Class 109 50416/56171 stands serviceable after sharing the late season trains with the 104.

Class 127/108 51618/56223 is in the shed for the Winter. The next area of bodywork on 51618 is being tackled, adjacent to the guard's van. Although the framing in the area isn't as bad as expected, the cantrail in the guard's van area is decidedly worse for wear.

North Norfolk Railway: The "main" Class 101 set (E51228/E56062) has spent the end of the season out of traffic following prolonged repairs to a water pump on E51228. All services have therefore been provided recently by "secondary" set M51188/M56352 which has been performing admirably. Once weekend November duties are completed, there will be no more booked DMU running until February which will give both sets a rest.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway: Daisy performed all her rostered duties and did a few extra runs due to non availability of steam heat loco's. Next duties are 26/12 to 1/1 inclusive on a two trip Pickering based diagram. Due to various works for Yorkshire's

Magnificent Journey there is no half term running in February next year.

Strathspey Railway: Under restoration Class 117 centre car 59511 made non-passenger carrying test runs within the Class 117 set during November, making it a 3-car for the first time in preservation.



RESTORATION NEWS

Class 104 56182 (North Norfolk): The past few months has seen dramatic progress around the front 1/3rd of the vehicle. The aim is to have the exterior completed, watertight and

moved out of the restoration tent before New Year, so a lot of work is being put into realising this aim. The bodysides along the first class section have been fully painted now and are in green gloss. At the cab end the new laser cut sheets have been welded into place, new compound corners fabricated to replace the rotten ones and also welded in. This done, the fibreglass roof dome was fitted and the cab is now in the process of being painted to match the bodysides. Once final painting and



glazing is completed, we will have a vehicle with it's "face" back, and we move onto phase 2: the middle saloon.

Class 114 50019 (Butterley): With all the metalwork fitted and welded into place, the finishing of the brake van area gets closers, both guards doors need new timber thresholds and the chequer-plate sheets have been cleaned up and are ready to be refitted. There are a lot of finishing off jobs to do, but light fittings, luggage racks and assorted trim is slowly being fitted elsewhere in the vehicle, all the seat frames have been cleaned, repaired and repainted, the day we extract all the cushions from store isn't far away. The vehicle has had a new set of batteries.

Class 114 56006 (Butterley): 56006 has had some small bits of trim fitted in the cab and the last few electrical repairs completed in the cab. The vehicle has had a new set of batteries, the best of the displaced batteries being donated to the 115 trailer car.

Class 115 51669 (Butterley): With tarpaulins covering it, being parked at the end of a siding, would appear no

work is taking place, however, it was known prior to purchase that one of the engines wouldn't rotate 360 degrees, this engine has had the cylinder heads removed to enable investigation of the issue. The cylinder heads have been sent away to local specialist for refurbishment, the engine now rotates freely and we are attempting to locate some headgaskets/injector seals and associated items to enable this engine to be put back together. This vehicle has a long way to go before running but a start has been made.

Class 115 59659 (Butterley): With welding work awaiting the welders torch, attention has turned to the inside, to enable work to continue in the dark the lighting circuits have been checked over, a set of batteries fitted, with some old cable theft damage repaired, we have a full set of working lights. Attention next month will turn to the heating system to see if we can keep ourselves warm while working through the winter. All the seats have been removed to storage to enable the work to continue, all of the wooden window frames are being removed, stripped of paint and cleaned and varnished, with at least 6 coats of varnish, this work

has identified several areas of further corrosion in the usual places however. Also found behind the seats removed from M59659 was some depot artwork... nothing rude for a change!



Class 117 59511 (Strathspey): Interior work continues. The vehicle has also now run with its powercars, which is a great step forwards (see News section).



E&G 79443 (Bo'ness): Sc79443 was again in the goods shed at Bo'ness for the summer work week in mid-July. Much useful work was done, with the installation of the floor plates for the "fixed" buffet furniture perhaps being the most significant and visible. This establishes all the datum measurements for the very characteristic furniture and much checking and rechecking was carried out before we committed to welding in the plates to eliminate any possible error. Continuing with interior preparation for fitting out, the heater ducting support strips were fitted and the weld lines ground down. These will eventually be hidden behind the thin formica/hardboard wall panels. Many of the studs required to fit the interior timber framework are missing or had to be cut off as they were bent. We welded on replacement studs above the windows on the corridor side from the compartment. Exterior bodywork saw more rubbing down, washing and painting of the bodywork, including painting over of the last of the maroon paint applied when the buffet was used as a stationary buffet on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Other work done included cutting out the last of the

rotten metal panels at No.2 end. The metal on the end panels (2mm) is slightly thicker than the bodysides (1.6mm) due to the ends' higher exposure to corrosion from driven rain. We only had time to repair the lower corroded section of one of the 4 substantial crash pillars at No.2 end. We need to replace such sections one-by-one to retain the remaining structural integrity, but the entire area is prepared for finishing on our next work week, hopefully in February 2020. With the buffet vehicle back in the museum building after the Work Week, interior joinery work has been progressing and we have been busy removing old varnish from compartment bulkhead veneer panels in Sc79443 - this task is nearing completion. A trial fitting of

some of our existing chairs and table was made. All legs, seats and tables will be cleaned then put in place as a mock-up to give an idea of what the open seated area will look like when restored. One seat and table leg have been take off-site to show to firms quoting to make replacements.

MOVEMENTS

A vehicle believed to be **Class 117 DMBS 51354** arrived at the **West Somerset Railway** in October from a private site. An announcement giving more information is "promised soon" according to an unofficial WSR source.

TIME TRAVELLER

Blue Era

[Class 101 – Newcastle – 19/10/74](#)

[Class 104 – Bolton – 5/70](#)

[Class 105 E56124 – Peterborough – 13/11/76](#)

Blue/Grey Era

[Class 101 51446 – Cheltenham – 23/6/88](#)

[Class 108 M51565 – Croston – 27/7/85](#)

[Class 120 – Duffield – 7/77](#)

[Class 124 – Liverpool Lime Street](#)

“Modern”

[Class 101 L830 – Upminster – 14/6/92](#)

[Class 101 – Greenhill](#)

[142070 – Grindleford – 6/87](#)

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
- Articles on DMU history
- Recollections of DMUs on the national network.

Feel free to send submissions at any time to railcar@live.co.uk but no later than December 29th for Issue 157 (due out January).



GALLERY



51397 now undercover, 15/9/19 (S.Godber)



51367/59511/51402 as a 3-car, 1/11/19. (B.Faulkner)



M50203/M50266 in service for the Great Centrals "Last Hurrah" gala, 16/11/19



The unique 105 set shines in the sun, 10/11/19 (F.Richards)

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PHOTOGRAPHY



© K Felstead Photography

55005/51131 pause at Shenton, 7/9/19 (K.Felstead)



(c) Mundanephoto

W51859 leads the sole operational Class 115 set out of Blue Anchor on the West Somerset, 16/9/19 (A.Freeman)



M51941 leads a four car set inside the carriage shed at Kidderminster, all Class 108 vehicles awaiting attention in the Severn Valley's carriage works. All have been withdrawn from service for the 2019 season and repairs are expected to take further time. 5/10/19 (M.Miller)

