

NARROW GAUGE NEWS

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A CALL TO ALL AREA AGENTS!

DO YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR AREA
MAKE PROGRESS ?

If so, then contact the News Editor regularly and let him know your plans, well before the Newsheet is due to be published.

Remember, that due to widespread advertising, sometimes many months ahead the Leeds Area, as an example, has regular monthly meetings with illustrated talks on widely varying narrow gauge topics, and since its inception some eighteen months ago, the membership in this Area alone exceeds 45, and an average of at least 20 members attend these meetings; as well as this, visits are also a regular feature.

So remember, you Agents, write in good time, the Newsheet goes to press on the 10th of every alternate month, and if groups of members in other parts of the Country are contemplating getting together with a view to forming Areas, then contact the Hon. Secretary, AND the News Editor, and they will see that all the publicity necessary to the formation of new groups will be given every accordance.

Ed.

AREA NOTES & NEWS

LEEDS AREA; Agent: R.N.Redman, 11 Outwood Walk, Horsforth, LEEDS.
The Area A.G.M. went down quite satisfactorily at the last meeting, held on Friday, January 29th at the usual venue; Headingley Hill Congregational Church rooms, Headingley Lane, Leeds 6. After the business there were a number of slides shown by Geoff Fitzpatrick, all in colour and comprising both narrow and standard gauge subjects; after this came a preview of some of the most wonderful shots to be taken on the narrow gauge railways of Spain, preview being of course due to the fact that the owners, and photographers of the slides, Mike Swift and Ken Plant, are due to give a complete show in April.

Future activities: Fri. Feb.26th P.G.Brennand is to give what he hopes will be an interesting talk on the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad, the longest 24" gauge railroad in the U. and the World at the time.

Fri. Mar.25th: 'One hundred years of Hudswell Clarke narrow gauge locomotives'. This being the Centenary year of this well-known loco building firm, R.N.Redman is to give a very appropriate talk on the above subject.

SAT. Apr.23rd. 'Narrow Gauge in Spain'. This promises to be the film show of the year in this area, and to this end, the Leeds University Railway Society, The Festiniog Preservation Society, and of course the N.G.R.S. are combining for this show and it is to be held in the Physics Dept., of the University of Leeds, starting at 7 p.m.

Fri. May 27th: 'Narrow Gauge Railways of Majorca' etc. This will be given by Selby member K. E. Hartley.

LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA. Sat. Mar. 26th at 6.30 for 7 p.m.
As many members as possible are urged to attend the Area Annual General Meeting. By kind invitation of the Model Railway Club this will be held at their new Headquarters "Keen House" 6-8 Calshot Street, London, N.1. This is a turning off Pentonville Road and 6 mins. from Kings Cross Station. We expect to hold all future meetings at this address.

We were delighted to have over 40 members and visitors with us to hear Mr. Hynd give an excellent talk at our meeting on Feb. 5th. He also gave an appendix telling members how to go about historical research. By the way, in view of the Editor's comments above, we shall be glad to see the other 40 or so members of this Area at our meetings in the future.

BIRMINGHAM AREA It becomes rather obvious, according to recent correspondence with the Birmingham Area Agent: Ron.Heaton that attendances at recent meetings has been rather disappointing. Therefore I am going to repeat the notice that was sent out to all Midlands members not so long ago:

'Members are urged to make every effort to attend meetings whenever possible since, apart from the discouragement low attendance affords to the organisers, there is the much more important fact of discourtesy to visiting speakers. Talks by prominent speakers can only be arranged if maximum turnout can be assured. Please, therefore, DO try to attend every meeting that you possibly can, and thus enable Area meetings to maintain the desired high standard. (This could also go for other Areas too. ED.)

- Future Activities: At the Exchange Restaurant, Stephenson Place, which is now the recognised venue of this Area.
- Tues. Mar. 8th A joint meeting has been arranged, starting at 7 p.m. with the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society at which their Hon.Sec., Mr.P.B.Whitehouse, will show some of his fine collection of Cine Films. This is definitely an occasion that NO ONE SHOULD MISS.
- Tues. Apr.12th. Mr.C.C.Green is to give an illustrated talk entitled: 'The Narrow Gauge Associations of the Cambrian Railways'. Mr. Green has made a very extensive study of this subject over the past few years and his talk should prove to be most interesting, due to the fact that not a lot is widely known about this particular ramification.
- Tues. May 24th. Mr.R.M.Sinclair will give what promises to be a very interesting talk which, of course will be illustrated on 'The Location and Preservation of Narrow Gauge Locomotives'. Mr. Sinclair himself, has had very practical experience of his subject on several occasions, and his reminiscences should undoubtedly prove most entertaining.

We look forward to seeing you at all these meetings and please do not hesitate to bring along any friends whom you think may also be interested. Personal propaganda is one of the most effective ways of boosting membership of the Society, thus enabling more ambitious activities to be undertaken.

NORTH WESTERN AREA. Due to the irregular hours of the members in this Area it will not be possible to hold meetings at present. Mr. R.C.Ormiston Chant is however, organising visits etc. for the summer months and has other plans by which he expects the Area will become very active indeed. If you are interested please contact him at 17 Roseleigh Avenue, Burnage, Manchester 19, Lancs.

RIO GRANDES' SILVERTON BRANCH SOLD.

The 45 mile Durango-Silverton section of the once mighty 36" gauge 'Empire' of the Denver & Rio Grande Western has finally been sold. For years now this has been the last branch of what must have been the most complex, not to mention fascinatingly grandiose, 36" gauge common carrier railway ever known. It would need a year's supply of News sheets to just very lightly touch the surface of the history of such a system, and quite a goodly number of books have been written on this particular system alone.

Now, the Helen Thatcher White Foundation, a newly organised non-profit making institution to preserve Colorado historic assets, has agreed to pay 250,000 Dollars, subject to I.C.C. approval, and begin operations in 1961.

For its money, this Foundation, which is to name the branch, the DURANGO & SILVERTON R.R., will get the line, and all fixed facilities, water tanks, stations, etc., plus outside frame 2-8-2-No.473 (Alco 1923) 1 baggage car, the baggage/buffet 'ALAMOSAS', 7 coaches, 3 maintenance cars, 2 box cars, 4 flat cars, 2 coal cars, 3 track speeders, and 2 track trailers. Plus an option to buy another steam loco for 10,000 Dollars.

Surprisingly though, there is still one narrow gauge branch left on this railroad; this is also under serious consideration for abandonment as it serves a mine and has a very wicked switch back and it appears that the 'Road isn't too keen on spending any more money on its remaining steamers. No-one seems to know just exactly how many locomotives are still in existence on the D. & R.G.W.'s narrow gauge.

'SALUTE TO STEAM' The West Riding Branch of the R.C.T.S. are holding a railway exhibition at the Leeds City Museum, Park Row, Leeds 1, opening Saturday, April 23rd, through Sunday May 1st.

Its theme will be a retrospective survey of the development of railways in the North of England, with the emphasis on steam traction.

Photographs (Nominal size, Postcard) Models (Mainly pre-grouping,) books etc., works and Company Nameplates and the like, are all needed on loan for this venture.

Any member of the R.C.T.S. or non-members too, are asked to write to Mr. Whiteley, 5 Holme Grove, Burley-in-Wharfedale, nr Ilkley, Yorks, enclosing an S.A.E., as soon as possible. During the period of this exhibition, talks will be given by well known railway personalities, colour slide shows and lunch time lectures.

NARROW GAUGE IN THE MIDLANDS

Part I

by Mike Swift.

Early last October, Mike Swift, in company with Dr. & Mrs. R. P. Lee (Members too) spent a very enjoyable three days visiting as many of the remaining narrow gauge systems in the Midlands, as possible.

The first visit, to the Peterborough works of the London Brick Co. was to view the unique 2'11" gauge Sentinel (7701/1929). In company with 'Nutty Rowe' the loco fitter, a tour of the works was rounded off by a footplate trip on this Sentinel to the kilns, which runs for about 3/4 mile. alongside the East Coast Main Line. This locomotive is the last survivor of a considerable number of such locos that have been owned by the L.B.Co. It is rather a curious machine, chain driven on all four wheels by a high speed vertical engine, together with a small vertical boiler mounted in the cab. Conditions on the footplate are cramped due to the overall height of the loco of no more than 5'6". The name it carries is 'NUTTY' after the fitter who maintains it, quite a job, due to it being ⁱⁿ service 16 hours a day, 6 days a week.

Thrapston, where the now derelict limestone quarries are situated, was briefly visited; here was hoped to see the early Hudswell Petrol loco (D.254) used until 1939 on the 1'11 1/2" line. However, it was discovered

that this loco, in company with an old Kent Coast Construction Co. Petrol loco had been scrapped around 1956. The track to the quarries, laid through a deep cutting, was still largely in situ, but in many places the sides of this cutting had caved in leaving wagons isolated on short lengths of track between mounds of debris.

After poking about the standard gauge shed of the Cranford Ironstone Co, where two immaculate 0-6-OST's stood gently simmering in the sun, we drove up to the quarry, there to see the 2'0" gauge Bagnall 0-4-OST 'PIXIE', (2090/1919). Another sad tale here, as 'PIXIE' has been dis-used this last 12 months, but there is talk of preservation, and the loco is in full working order.

We had an appointment with the foreman of the Wellingborough Pits of Stewards & Lloyds at 2.30, so we headed in that direction, picked up the foreman at the level crossing over the main road and drove up to the pits. This 3'0" gauge system was extensively modernised after the depression of the early thirties, and is now a perfect example of a narrow gauge system doing heavy haulage on a scale normally associated with standard gauge. The track is laid with rail of 40lbs and 60lb flat bottomed section upon concrete sleepers. The flat wagons, each of which carry two large 5ton capacity ore skips are fitted with brakes and Norwegian 'Chopper' couplers.

One only of the massive Peckett 0-6-OST's was working. This was No. 1870/1934, but it made a fine sight as it pounded up the grade-out of the pits. The other two Pecketts, 1871/1934 and 2029/1942, both 0-6-OST's were 'On shed' at the iron works. Old No.4, an old Hunslet built 0-4-OST (473/1888) had stood out in the open for the last five years and had now gone to her final resting place, being cut up for scrap at the works.

(Correspondence with Stewarts & Lloyds Minerals Ltd., has resulted in their donating the nameplate from this loco to the N.G.R.S. for preservation in the proposed Transport Museum at Leeds City Museum. Our grateful thanks must surely go out to S.&L. for their very kind gesture).

To fill in the rest of the afternoon, we called at the shed of the Loddington Iron Ore line, converted from Metre gauge to standard gauge last year. The old tranship bank still possessed its metre gauge track, complete with a large number of ore tubs, while the remaining loco, 'WILLIAM ELLIS', a big 0-6-OST built by Avonside (2054/1930) was isolated at the 'metre gauge' end of the loco shed.

The standard gauge side was occupied by a spotless 0-6-OST purchased from United Steels at Scunthorpe. We had an interesting chat with the Manager, and learnt that the demand for ore had fallen so much recently, that the replacement of the metre gauge with the standard gauge was unlikely to pay for itself, and, had the company been able to foresee the fall in demand, the narrow gauge would probably still be working.

'TRACKSIDE JOTTINGS'

Notes from E. K. Stretch:

SPAIN An article about certain electric light railways of Northern Spain in the October issue of 'Modern Tramway', mentions that the gasworks at Gijon have three-gauge, mixed gauge tracks comprising: Metre 4'8½", and 5'6". Must be quite an intriguing sight.

VALE OF RHEIDOL Hydro-electric works in the Rheidol Valley have resulted in the construction of about three hundred yards of contractors narrow gauge track alongside the valley road near the Valley Falls, in connection with the construction of a new bridge across the river at that point. This track can be quite clearly seen from the Vale of Rheidol train high above. The gauge appears to be about 2feet (It is certainly about that), and the line seemed to be worked by a tractor, though, unfortunately, this could not be clearly distinguished from the height above.

INDIAN STATE RAILWAYS Report that the Japanese Rolling Stock Company at Nagoya are building four 56 ton, NH5 class 2-8-2's for the 2'0" gauge lines of the Indian State Railways.

INDONESIAN STATE RAILWAYS. Another report states the following statistics about the Indonesian State Railways: 3525 miles (99 electrified), 917 steam locos, 92 diesels, 13 electric, 25 electric motor-cars. 2'5½", 317 miles, 34 steam locos.
60cm gauge; 57 miles, 17 steam locos.

FESTINIOG NOTES. (Odd snippets taken at random from the F.R.S. Mag.)

First off there is a plea for a member of the F.R.S. who wishes to purchase a colour transparency of the railway between Moel wyn Tunnel and Tan-y-grisiau station, prior to the lifting of that section of rail. If any of our members have such a transparency, and would care to sell a copy of such would they contact: Mr.D.J.McGeach, Histons Hill, OAKEN, nr. Wolverhampton, Staffs. Thank you.

The most striking development to anyone approaching Portmadoc from the south and east, is the extensive work at Rhiw Plas. A new road overbridge is being built in connection with the road-widening scheme, and whilst construction is in progress, a temporary level crossing is being prepared. The track has been relaid with check-rails, telephone wires taken underground, and the ditch carried in open-jointed drains. A large quantity of spoil has been dug out of which most of it has been loaded into F.R. wagons, to be transported away to Tan-y-bwlch, for filling the hole beside the road bridge. TALIEBIN has been used for this duty.

At Boston Lodge work is proceeding slowly on Morddin Emrys.

Certain repairs have had to be done to the top bogie, and the boiler and its cradle are being prepared for the fitting of the tanks.

PRINCE has been stripped so as to patch a crack under the steam chest and also to fit new side rod brasses.

The wheel-drop has been completed and all the trackwork refitted and generally tidied up. The roof has been temporarily supported and new brick piers are now being built to provide permanent support for the roof and overhead gantry.

During 1959 the Festiniog Railway Society celebrated its Eighth Birthday. Membership at the end of that first year was - 230.

Also during 1959 the membership list sported over 1,600 names !!!!!

THE FLETCHER JENNINGS LOCOMOTIVES
OF THE BETCHWORTH QUARRIES.

Being an interesting account of notes and a certain amount of correspondence between the Author: Mr. R. Taylor of Poole, in Dorset, and Major E. W. Talorson, Managing Director of the Quarries.

viz: In his report upon the railways of the Dorking Grey-Stone Lime Co. Ltd., at Betchworth, Mr. Garwood said that the gauges were: Standard, 3'0" and 2'0". In fact the intermediate gauge is 3'2 1/4".

In the 'Locomotive' for September 1931, it was stated that the gauge was 3'2", and in the same for January 1948, Mr. McGowan Gradon said that Fletcher Jennings records show the gauge to be 3'2 1/2".

In September 1951 I wrote to the Company as to this and, on the 20th October, Maj. E. W. Taylorson, the Managing Director wrote:

'.....The track to which you refer has a gauge of 3'2 1/4".

I am quite unable to answer your query as to why my great-uncle adopted this gauge in 1865'

'The two locomotives supplied in 1881 are still in service'.

On 10th May, 1958 I wrote to him again:

'.....I have found that in the 1880's, Fletcher Jennings supplied several locomotives to the Sugar Plantations in Mauritius. Also that 'pieds de roi' (or the pre-1794 French units of length) are still in use to some extent, in Mauritius.

'3 'Prids de roi' are almost exactly 3'2 1/4" and it has occurred to me that perhaps when your great uncle was considering using steam locos. Fletcher Jennings had two for sale, cheap, which had been ordered for Mauritius but, for some reason had been left on their hands. The track, then in use at Betchworth might have been of, say 3'0" gauge, but the cost of altering it to 3'2 1/4" to suit these locomotives would have been very slight.'

Maj. Taylorson replied:

'.....I have never heard that there was an adaption of the 3'2 1/4" gauge from any other gauge in these works.

My great-uncle had been a resident engineer in the construction of a section of the Nord Railway of France in the 1840's, and maybe that he had some experience of this gauge in this connection.

As regards the locomotives for this gauge Fletcher Jennings & Co offered the Company two 0-4-0's, one saddle and the other side tanks. Two of the latter were ordered, but there is certainly no record of their being bought cheap, or that they had been made for another service.

It will be seen that Major Taylorson neither supports nor opposes my suggestion.

Even if his grandfather had had experience with a gauge of 3'2 1/4", or .972 metre, there does not seem to have been the slightest reason for choosing so peculiar a gauge for his railway at Batchworth, 20 years after working in France, instead of say, the popular gauge of 3'0".

Apparently there were not any locomotives of this peculiar dimension in the Fletcher Jennings lists but there were several locomotives for Mauritius of 2'7 3/4" gauge in 1880, and one of 3' 1 1/4" gauge in 1878.

The former is exactly 2 1/2 'Prid de roi' and the latter, 2 11/12 or 2 prieds 11 ponces. As Mr. McGowan Gradon's 3'2 1/2" does not fit anywhere, it seems probable that either he, or Fletcher Jennings records were at fault.

The two locomotives are: No.4 'TOWNSEND HOOK', and No.2, 'WILLIAM FINDLAY'. 0-4-0 Tanks (side) with outside cylinders, 8" x 16", and 2'4" dia. wheels. Fletcher Jennings Nos.172 and 173 of 1880.

CONCLUSION

Members who have sent in contributions recently and have not seen their efforts in print yet are advised not to be discouraged, as they will be in the next issue of the Newsheet, published for May/June.

Ed.