

# TRANS PENNINE

## THE MAGAZINE OF THE PENNINE RAILWAY SOCIETY



No.106 - Winter 1998

# Committee Notes

## Seasons Greetings

The Committee of the PENNINE RAILWAY SOCIETY join together to wish all our members and their families a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year and we thank you for your support and friendship in 1998.

## Magazine Editor

We are pleased to announce that Tony Booth has kindly offered to take on the role of Magazine Editor. Tony has been a member of the Society for over 20 years and, in fact has previously served on the committee as Promotions Officer.

In future would you please send any correspondence relating to the magazine direct to Tony at his home address.

We also wish to sincerely thank David Bladen for the hard work he has undertaken whilst Magazine Editor and I am sure you will agree that under David our magazine has become a quality production. We are also sure that this will continue under Tony's stewardship.

## Members Fees Unchanged

With this magazine you will find a renewal membership form. We are pleased to announce that again, membership fees remain unchanged at £4.50 for a full year. We hope you will rejoin the society in 1999, our Silver Jubilee Year, by simply completing the renewal slip and forwarding it together with your remittance to our Membership Secretary Tony Caddick at the address shown on the form. You may also rejoin at our social evenings at the Corporation Brewery Taps. We look forward to your support in 1999.

## Annual General Meeting

The society's AGM will be held on Sunday January 10th 1999 at the Corporation Brewery Taps, Doncaster. The AGM will commence at 12 noon and will be an opportunity for you, the members to have a say in how you wish the Society to be run. It is also a chance to socialise with friends you may not have seen for some time. Membership renewals will also be taken at this meeting.

## Free 1999 Diaries

All members rejoining for the 1999 season will receive a free PENNINE RAILWAY SOCIETY pocket diary. Yet another good reason to renew your membership.

## Committee Shorts - A Pot Pourri of Rail News

### We Apologise (1)

As a Nottingham - St Pancras Midland Mainline service was recently edging into St Pancras a few minutes late the guard announced over the intercom that the delay was due to "too many passengers joining the train at Beeston" LF

### We Apologise (2)

Rail chiefs blame the profusion of weeds growing on station platforms and other areas, on contractors using the 'wrong type of weedkiller' After pressure from the Green lobby, the chemicals used to control weeds have been watered down since 1992. As a result , the weeds grow back quicker than before.

### We Apologise (3)

Massive disruption to Channel Tunnel freight and passenger services has been blamed on 'the wrong kind of wind'. Eurotunnel admits that wind speeds of more than 28 mph force the rescheduling of trains amid fears

that the high sided lightweight carriages may topple over after emerging in Calais. It only occurs in south westerly wind conditions a few times a year. On these occasions a Push-Pull operation is used. Instead of taking a train round an exposed loop at the French terminal so it faces the right direction to re-enter the tunnel, the train goes directly to the platform for unloading. It is then reloaded and heads back for England in reverse. Officials have also admitted that wind speeds above 55 mph would result in all shuttle trains being halted.

### Great Train Robber

A rail depot boss "stole" engines, coaches and wagons to sell on to enthusiasts. Barry Daly took cash from collectors for rail stock he claimed he owned. They became suspicious when engines and coaches failed to turn up. One of his victims was pop producer Pete Waterman who runs the Waterman Railway Heritage Trust. He gave £42,000 to Daly who was in charge of shunting at Crewe, and also worked for the Trust. At Chester Crown Court he admitted to stealing four locomotives, thirty wagons, six passenger coaches and three breakdown vehicles. He also pleaded guilty to the theft of £42,900 from Waterman's Trust

### Skinnerballs (Revived)

"We've slipped up in that we should have made efforts to ensure that passengers know which platform to go to". This statement was made by a Virgin Rail spokesman after a Glasgow express left Euston completely empty because of a fault with the departure information board.

### Skinnerballs (2)

Veterans will remember Robin Skinner working as a part time steward on the buffet cars of Merrymaker excursions many years ago. (Has he ever worked other than part time!! - he is on the railway!!).

On one occasion a passenger asked for a glass of Chardonnay. Robin's unfortunate response was 'Would that be a Bitter Chardonnay or a lager Chardonnay Sir'.

### Cable Car to Dome doomed

Plans for a cable car link to the ill fated Millennium Dome have been scrapped after backers pulled out of the £ 10m scheme. It would have carried passengers 170 feet above the Thames to the dome.

The project is becoming a farce; no one expects the Jubilee Line extension to be opened on time and car passengers have been advised to park extreme distances away eg. Luton, Wembley or Hampton Court and use public transport!!.

We await the next announcement that the Millennium has been put back to 1st Jan 2001 to allow for the project to be completed. Incidentally, all is not well with the Millennium Wheel to be built on the South Bank, opposite Westminster. It has already been re-christened "*The London Eye*", in case it is not ready for the 2000 deadline.

(On the theme of the Millennium, those of you who have videos etc. which are not Year 2000 compliant need not worry. Set the year on the clock back to 1972. It has the same date/day/month format as 2000 - Trust Me. Ed.)

### New Metro Line

The new line 14 has opened on the Paris Metro, running between Madelaine in the heart of Paris and the National Library on the eastern edge of the city. The driverless trains run along on rubber tyres.

### Virgin into Africa

Richard Branson's Virgin wants to buy south Africa's Blue Train. The Cape Town to Victoria Falls luxury service, known as Africa's Orient Express has been earmarked for privatisation.

## Editors Notes

Welcome to the Christmas 1998 Issue of Trans Pennine, my first attempt to edit our illustrious magazine.

First of all I would like to say a very big thank you to David Bladen for the high standard of production during his long tenure as Magazine Editor and also offering to guide me through my early days of editorship. He will be a hard act to follow but I will give it a try. Since the original publication by our first editor Jon Davies we have had an enviable reputation for publishing an excellent magazine for our members.

Also we wish David our best wishes in his new career with EWS (As Ed's chief wagon counter!!).

Remember that this is not my magazine it is your magazine. As editor I can only collate the information supplied by you, the members. I would be most grateful for any articles, sightings, quizzes, etc. to help keep up the high standard of our magazine. Finally, it should be every person's ambition to have at least one highlight in their career. Mine is to be the Pennine Editor who published the long awaited epic 'The Worsborough Banker' which has been promised by our President since 19??

### Driving Experience - Memories of a B1 at Loughborough

by Paul Slater

The Great Central Railway's station at Loughborough was deserted when Chris and I arrived, a great contrast to the crowds that we had become used to seeing there at gala weekends. Today was the first Wednesday in December, and the normal train service was not running. It was a sunny but very cold day, with a keen north wind, when we left Gainsborough earlier that morning the pavement outside our house had been a sheet of ice.

Soon we were met and escorted to a room where the day's programme was outlined to us. We had come for some driving experience with the Thompson B1 Locomotive Society's engine, No. 1264. This was the green engine that I had proudly watched steaming along the line for the first time on Good Friday after a restoration which had taken over twenty years. That day I had travelled behind the engine on a special train from Loughborough to Leicester North and back, today Chris and I were to make the same journey, but this time we would actually be driving No. 1264.

The engine came in with its train while we were being shown a video. By the time we had put on the overalls provided and gone out on to the platform, the engine had run round its carriages and was ready to depart.

There had been some confusion over our booking. I had only paid for one person, so that Chris and I could share the driving. We were now told that another man had paid to do the return trip, and as regulations allowed only four people on the footplate, there would not be room for Chris and me as well as the other man and the driver and fireman. We would have to do the driving separately, with the other person riding in the train, and change over at Rothley. Chris said that she would drive first and was escorted towards the engine; the guard took me to the rear of the train to ride with him. There were no passengers in the train, although people who had already driven today or were waiting their turn, could ride in it if they wished; the eight carriages were to provide a realistic load for the engine to haul.

The steam heat had not reached the rear of the train, and the carriage was cold. I looked out of the window as whistles sounded and the train got on the move. I had driven an engine once before when at university, but Chris had never done so. The engine had been standing well clear of the platform at Loughborough, and Chris told me afterwards that she had had difficulty in hauling herself up on to the footplate from the ground: she also said that the driver and fireman seemed a little taken aback at having a woman in the cab.

The train accelerated out of Loughborough, the engine working quite hard and making a great plume of smoke and steam in the cold air. I thrilled to the sound of the engine, and hoped that Chris was enjoying herself; she told me afterwards that she certainly was.

The first station out of Loughborough, Quorn & Woodhouse was passed at reduced speed, and then the train accelerated vigorously up the slight gradient towards Swithland. It looked and sounded magnificent from my vantage point in the rear carriage, and I felt very glad that Chris had at last achieved something which she had wanted for so long.

As we slowed to pass Swithland sidings, the guard led me through the empty carriages up to the front of the train, and as Chris carefully brought us to a stand at Rothley I stepped down on to the platform and went up to the engine. There was a change of plan, and Chris was told that she could stay on the footplate while I drove. I climbed up, the glow of heat from the fire very welcoming and was shown to the driver's seat on the left-hand side of the cab.

The uses of the regulator, reverser and vacuum brake were demonstrated to me, I was told to check that the signal was clear and pull the whistle cord, and soon I had got the train on the move. Like Chris, I found the regulator stiff and difficult to pull, and I had problems locking the reverser in position; leaning forward to check the reading on the reverser, I banged my head on another instrument. The driver told the fireman that we were going to storm the bank, and the firemen began to shovel coal. The engine was already making a purposeful sound as it accelerated its train slowly away from Rothley, but now the driver told me to open it right up. With regulator wide open and reverser well forward, the engine charged up the rising gradient shaking and vibrating and making a tremendous noise. I watched the smoke and steam erupting from the chimney and pouring out across the wintry countryside. The engine I had driven while at university was of the same type as No. 1264, but I had driven it tender-first with a light train along a level track across the Fens of Cambridgeshire, and there had not been the same impression of power unleashed.

Following the driver's instructions, I whistled at the distant signal for Leicester North, shut off steam, adjusted the reverser, and made several applications of the vacuum brake. We coasted gently into the station and came to a stand. There was an opportunity to take photographs of the engine, and of ourselves on the footplate, then No. 1264 ran round and prepared to take the train back to Loughborough. It was now the other man's turn to drive, but Chris and I were told we could both remain on the footplate. Chris stayed in the fireman's seat on the right-hand side of the cab, I stood behind her, squeezed between the front of the tender and the handle of the engine's screw-down brake. There was very little room, and I saw why five was considered an excessive number of people to have on the footplate. I also realised why tender-first running was disliked by engine crews, especially in winter, the back of the cab was open, and I had a very cold ride back to Loughborough. Most of the journey was downhill, but on the rising gradients away from Leicester North and Rothley I could see how each blast from the engine's chimney made the fire glow more brightly.

When our most unusual ride on the Great Central Railway was over, we drove out to Woodthorpe to see No. 1264 pass by on its next trip to Leicester North. The footplate crew waved to us when they saw us standing by the bridge, and the green engine made a beautiful picture steaming hard in the bright winter sunshine. I thought back over all the years that I had been a member of the society dedicated to its restoration. A week later, we each received a certificate to say that we had successfully completed the driving experience course. We would treasure them, and we would remember our venture on to the footplate.

A Week in Bavaria - mostly by rail!

by Gerry Collins

After many vain efforts to book a holiday to Margaret's liking I chose PRIEN east of Rosenheim, booking with DER the German travel firm. Flying into Munich after a 2 hour flight delay, we took the train to Munich Ost to catch the mainline train (we had booked seats on the earlier train we should have caught), the 19.46 to Salzburg was very full, so we crowded into the Buffet Car. Remember it was the time of the Oktoberfest, and one inebriated German chatted us up, in German first until someone said 'English!' and he changed to quite good English. He had roses for his wife to throw in the doorway before he fell over it! Alight at Prien a small town by Chiemsee, a very large lake, and most of the trains stop here. DER Brochure said the Hotel was five minutes from the Bahnhof, but was in fact one minute away!! So you can imagine the taxi driver's surprise when we insisted on going by taxi.

Next morning we boarded the Chiemsee-Bahn, an adhesion rail steam train hauled by a 111 year old engine to Stock to board a steamer for a sail on Chiemsee. We had bought a DB Ferien Ticket for £24, which allowed unlimited rail travel between Munich and Salzburg with many lines off the main route. So we boarded a 2 car DMU (putting the British ones to shame) for the short ride to Auschau from Prien. Single line and 0 M 0, so the driver never looked at any ticket.

The next day we went in the rain to Salzburg. The day after we would catch the Salzburg train to Freilassing for the connection to Berchtesgaden. This train was 30 minutes late!! but there were frequent trains from Freilassing. Single line but electrified and a winding journey. Now do not be surprised, but this is the day we went on the buses! the service bus went up this hilly road to Hintereck where there were four buses to take

people up the private road to Kehlstein, the Eagles Nest - Hitler's mountain retreat. We then walked through a long tunnel to a brass lined lift to go 407 feet to the Eagles Nest the views both from the bus and at the top were fantastic.

We had another trip to Auschau on the Chiemgau DMU, and reckoned we had had our money's worth with the Ferien Ticket. We noticed that the DMU had been replaced, and presumed this took place in the evening before the last run to Aschau.

The railway was interesting with plenty of freight. Austria and Germany (COB & DB) were integrated. One day a double header to the west had a DB 8t DUB loco.

I tried to compare the UK & Continental loading gauges. Continental coach frame was higher from the ground and the roof raised for no apparent reason, but I could see how the locos were shorter than ours with the less restricted height to put all the 'works' in.

### Membership Details

The Editor now holds members address details on an Access Database.

These details may, on approval of the committee, be passed on to interested parties such as transport book or video publishers as a list of prospective customers. This transaction usually means a monetary contribution to the Society.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act any member is entitled to have his name removed from this database. Please advise the Editor by phone or letter if you wish to have your details removed from the database.

### The Pennine Quiz No. 95

by Ian Shenton

Something for everyone. Much better than Xmas TV

Answers to the editor by February 14th please.

Any offers for future quizzes grateful accepted.

1. Where is Johnston Station?
2. What does six consecutive beats on a signalling block bell mean?
3. How long is Clay Cross Tunnel?
4. Which named express, still running today, has been into more London termini than any other?
5. How many arches has Yarm Viaduct?
6. On what date did Motorail services finish?
7. Which locomotive was involved in an accident at Peterborough on 1st September 1955?
8. What was the previous name of Coulsdon North Station?
9. What was the name of 45530?
10. Which locomotive attended Birmingham's Lord Mayor's Show in 1996?
11. Which city had a station named Rewley Road?
12. What did Ship and Gribble worms close?
13. Which preserved Merchant Navy class locomotive was painted Blue?
14. Where was Schools class locomotive No. 30928 first displayed in preservation?
15. What is the name of 37674?
16. What are the station buildings at Ballater now used for? Junction?
17. What was the previous name of Alfreton Station?
18. On what date did Class 325 Postal Units enter revenue-earning service?
19. What was the date of the first GWR 6000 steam special?
20. Which class of locomotives is known as "Egg Timers"?
21. Which class of Units is known as "Plastic Pigs"?
22. What is the present location of Test Car RDB 998901?
23. Which Devon town has a preserved station called Queen's Park?
24. On which date was the Brick A4 unveiled at Darlington?
25. Which Class 92 locomotive is named after two people?
26. Where was 43 155 named The Red Arrows? (The answer is NOT "On the side!")

27. Which two class 47's had Union Flags painted on their body sides?
28. Which rail line regularly has Jazz Evenings on timetabled trains?
29. On what date did Midland MainLine unveil its new livery?
30. What was the original name of preserved station Leicester North?
31. At which London Underground station would you alight for Little Venice?
32. On which pre grouping line was Edwinstowe Station?
33. On which dates did the train 'Night Ferry' commence and end?
34. What were the numbers of the locomotives damaged in the Channel Tunnel fire?
36. What was the name of the lord Mayor who named locomotive 87006 in 1977?
37. What was the date of the fatal accident on the Settle & Carlisle between two Class 150 units?
38. What was the name of the joint GWR/LNWR station at Birkenhead?
39. Which terminus station is reached from Connel Ferry
40. Which was the first main line Railway Company to use oil burning steam locomotives?

### Pennine Quiz No. 94 - The Answers

1. 23 Feb 1998
2. Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway
3. 08849
4. George Reynolds
5. St. Trillo
6. Andrew A Hodgkinson
7. Robbie Coltrane
8. Deltic
9. Melinda Messenger
10. Wolverton
11. Snaigow
12. 54767
13. Media
14. GWR 2908
15. BBC Scotland 75 Years
16. Nat Lofthouse played for 47831 and was named 47807
17. 999
18. Battle of Britain 50th Anniversary
19. MR 2299
20. La France
21. 62411
22. 2197
23. 30147
24. B17
25. Lord President

Winner overall was Ken King, with John Dewing gaining second place and Paul Slater a creditable third. Well done gentlemen!!

### Pennine Observers Notes

#### Cross Country:

Virgin Trains were again in trouble on 29 Aug.  
 47095 took the 09.13 Liverpool/Weymouth south from Birmingham NS.  
 47051 took the 09.10 Edinburgh/Bournemouth south from Birmingham NS.  
 47051 returned to Birmingham NS with the 18.14 Bournemouth/Manchester.

#### Eastern Region:

90025 was on hire to GNER over the weekend of 22/23 September.

Saturday 4 July saw the last booked workings for the veteran Class 302 EMU's. Units 302201/216/228/230 worked various duties from Fenchurch Street to Southend, Grays and Shoeburyness throughout the day.

On 21 Aug 47747 was noted at Doncaster with a 308 EMU ex Neville Hill.

Recent sightings at Lincoln include:

28 Jul 60001 60051 on oil trains  
29 Jul 60002 60006 on oil trains  
03 Aug 60006 60090 on oil trains  
13 Aug 37059137109 60045 on oil trains  
18 Aug 37706 56121 60002 60042 60096 on oil trains. 31142 light engine.  
15 Sep 37688 60048 60098 on oil trains.  
17 Sep 60012 60045 on oil trains  
25 Sep 56068 on oil. 31142/31255 on PW 56051 on cargowaggon.  
09 Oct 60014 60036 on oil trains  
13 Oct 60026 60098 on oil trains  
19 Oct 31207 on oil. 56096 on coal.  
20 Oct 60003 60026 60065 on oil trains.

Weekend workings on the Gainsborough-Barnetby line have shown increased activity recently with the following observations:

12 Sep 60062 Steel. 60066 Oil.  
13 Sep 56060 Coal.  
19 Sep 56041 Steel. 56124 Goods. 60012 Oil.  
20 Sep 56064 56102 Coal. 60098 Oil.  
26 Sep 56054 Oil. 56069 Goods. 60090 Steel.  
27 Sep 56099 Coal.  
03 Oct 37899 60003 011. 56056 60066 Steel. 60055 Goods.  
04 Oct 56131 Coal.  
10 Oct 37899 60009 Oil. 56117 Coal.  
11 Oct 56035 Coal.  
17 Oct 56101 Steel. 56118 60094 Coal. 60066 Oil. 60003 Light Engine.  
24 Oct 31450 Light  
31 Oct 37203+37895 Light  
07 Nov 56112 Light  
14 Nov 37705

#### Midland Region:

86252 failed just north of Stafford on 31 Aug on the 11.40 Plymouth/Liverpool and was dragged back into Stafford Station by 90143 and terminated.

47200 was noted at Birmingham International on 30 Aug on the 14.58 Edinburgh/Paddington.

On Aug 30 at the Toton Open Day the Derby/Toton shuttles were top and tailed by 47475/47767, 47624/47761 and 47776/47766.

Saturday June 20th turned into a "Virgin Entertainment Day" at Birmingham NS where the following workings were observed:

47792 on the 11.17 Man Picc/Bristol  
56019 on the 08.40 Glasgow/Paignton (from Preston to New St)  
47033 on the 08.40 Glasgow/Paignton (from New St to Paignton)  
56019 on the 09.10 Edinburgh/Bournemouth (from New St to Bournemouth)  
31434/465 on the 15.30 Bristol/Glasgow (from New St to Preston)

On Aug 22 stone trains at Peak forest were hauled by 60046 and 60076 with 08915 37685 56053 60026 60035 60081 at the stabling point



## Western Region:

Noted at Acton on 22 Aug were 59103 37114 60031 31308 and 58045.

## Preserved Lines:

On Aug 4 at Severn Valley Rly 48773 80079 and 46443 were all working.

On Aug 8 at Yorkshire Dales Rly 68005 and NCB Primrose No.2 were both working.  
Also present but not working was 65894 on loan from NYMR.

On Aug 15 North Tyneside Rly had 03078 and 401 (Steam) on Push Pull services between Percy Main & Museum. 401 is named 'Thomas Burt'.

The KWVR had a successful Diesel Weekend on 1 and 2 Aug. Visiting DRS locos 20308 20311 37609 and preserved 37029 teamed up with resident locos D13336 08436 D8031 D5209.

On Aug 13 The Battlefield Line 'Shackerstone 125' event had 7752/9466 and 76069 on passenger duties with 1054/1300 on a demonstration goods train.

Boston 'Rail 150' event on 12 Sep was host to displayed locos D2112 D3871 56091 and 990 "Henry Oakley". Thomas giving rides.

The Middleton Railway Gala day on 26 Sept had the following on show 385, 1310, 51218, Mirvale, Sir Berkeley and a Cockerill vertical boiler engine working passenger trains to Middleton Park and demonstration goods trains over Moor Road level crossing. Diesel 7051 banked by the Cockerill hauled a breakdown train following the derailment of Sir Berkeley at Middleton Park.

The GCR Autumn Gala on 10 Oct hosted 6990 Witherslack Hall, 7821 Didcot Manor, 34039 Boscastle and 78022 on passenger, demonstration goods and breakdown trains.

## Railtours

The Worksop Wessex Venturer' Railtour on June 27 was hauled from Worksop to Weymouth and back 58039 and 58047.

On Sunday 30 Aug Pathfinder Tours "The Toton Recall" was hauled by

47363 - Salisbury /Nuneaton  
60044 - Nuneaton /Toton Yard  
60068 - Toton Yard/Birmingham International  
58041 - Birmingham International/Salisbury

Pathfinder Tours "TheNorth East Excursioner" on 15 Aug was hauled by 56097 from Cardiff to Newcastle and 56018 on the return journey.

The "Ribble Nibble railtour on 01 Aug was hauled between Swindon and Preston by 37040 and 37293.

On 14 Nov Great Western King Class 6024 'King Edward I' was noted at Chesterfield on a Didcot-York steam special.

Thanks to Tony Caddick, Paul Slater and John Dewing for their contributions.

## What the Papers Say

*Definitely something different this time! Our extract from the finest in objective journalism is taken from the "Ironbridge Gazette" the issue being dated Summer 1895! In a four-page spread, three things stand out. Firstly, the number of stories concerning railways secondly, the number of accidents and thirdly, the*

*lurid manner in which the graphic details are reported! if you are of a nervous disposition, you might like to skip this bit!*

## SHOCKING FATALITY ON THE LINE AT SHREWSBURY

Fortunately in past years the mass of visitors to the great fete at Shrewsbury have been got away from the station with a remarkable absence of accidents, and considering the limited means of dealing with so much extra traffic, the railway authorities may be congratulated on the admirable way they have dealt with it.

On Thursday it is computed that something approaching 50,000 excursionists had to be despatched on their homeward journey and this was again done in excellent order, and there was every reason to believe without any mishap.

Yesterday morning, however, a man named Holbrook was proceeding to his work about half-past five, and had occasion to travel under the railway bridge leading from Castle Foregate to the bottom of Chester Street and on reaching the large advertising board of the L & N. W Railway Co, which is fixed by strong stay- nails to the wall of the embankment he saw a quantity of blood on the pavement and on the wall, between which and the board there is a space of about a foot. On looking up he was horrified to find the body of a man jammed in between the wall and the board. He immediately raised an alarm, and the police were soon on the spot but so tightly was the body fixed that the huge board had to be removed before it could be extricated. On examination it was found that life had evidently been extinct some hours. The body was at once removed to the mortuary and the clothing searched for some identification of the unfortunate man, who appears to be about 26 years of age, and 5 feet 8in. in height with red hair and moustache. He had the return half of an excursion ticket to Crewe, but no letters or other documentary evidence of identification. A silver watch found on him is number 4612, and the maker 'Walwork, Chester Bridge, Crewe.' It was further noticed that he had some deformity in the right foot. Among other articles found on him was a photograph of some workmen employed at a joiner's and builder's establishment and on a sign over a group appears the name of 'J. R. Goulden, Joiner, Builder and Contractor'. It is conjectured that the man must have wandered along the metals from the down platform, and had been either knocked down by an engine or accidentally fell in the extraordinary position where he was discovered. The face is very much crushed, and other marks bear testimony to a terrible death.

## THE RACE TO SCOTLAND. 540 MILES, AND STOPPAGES, IN 512 MINUTES.

The West Coast Express on Thursday night accomplished the journey from London to Aberdeen, 540 miles, in eight hours thirty two minutes, beating previous records by eight minutes. The East Coast Companies did not maintain accelerated speed, but reverted to advertised times.

## FATAL ACCIDENT NEAR WALCOT RAILWAY STATION.

A man named Thomas Elliot, platelayer, was killed on the railway near Walcot Railway Station yesterday afternoon. He was at work there, and is believed to have been trying to get out of the way of one train, when he was knocked down by the corridor train which left Wellington at 5.30 and was instantly killed, his body being dreadfully mangled. He resided at Shrewsbury.

## DISTRESSING ACCIDENT ON THE RAILWAY.

An old man named Towers and his little grandson were killed on the railway near Clitheroe on Saturday. Towers saw the child walking on the line, on which a light engine was approaching. Acting in a most heroic manner, he threw himself in the way of the locomotive in an endeavour to push his grandson to a place of safety. He almost succeeded but the child was caught by the side of the engine and received fatal injuries, The grandfather was instantly killed.

## AN INTERESTING RAILROAD INVENTION.

The specification of the United States patent numbered 536,360 and dated March 26, 1895. is an interesting bit of literature (says Cassier's Magazine) having been designed to actually secure legal protection for the very simple method, proposed years ago, of enabling two railroad trains to pass each other on the same track without collision. The frequent attempts of trains to thus pass each other have been attended so uniformly with

disastrous consequences that the feat has become pretty generally recognised as an impossible one, and most engineers have concluded to desist from further efforts to accomplish it. The plan now proposed in all seriousness seems to be the exact counterpart of the one which, in a spirit of levity, was mentioned in these pages in November, 1893, and of which the appended particulars may be of renewed interest at the present time. The idea is altogether very simple, as most really great plans and ideas are. The inventor of earlier years proposed, as the present one does, to place on the front of every locomotive going in one direction a long, inclined plane, and on this were to be two rails. These were to come close to the regular track at the forward and lower end of the plane, and at the upper end were to be connected with other rails running along the tops of the cars and down to the main track again on another inclined plane at the rear end of the train. When the train provided with this attachment would meet another train on the same track, the latter would simply go over the former its weight making the connection of the front of the inclined plane and the rails on the main track perfect and acting, at the same time, as a brake on the speed of the train underneath. It is, of course, perfectly evident that if this invention had been properly appreciated and generally adopted, the number of double-track roads the world over would not now be half as great as it is. A single track with occasional switches for heavy freight trains, would have answered all purposes, and the cost of building railroads would have been decreased by an important percentage. However it is not too late to make up for lost opportunities. We may still live to see the system adopted on all single track roads, so that before very long the sensation of riding over or passing under another moving train may become so common as to pass almost unnoticed.

Now for some culture! Britain's bookshop shelves are currently groaning under the weight of various collections of "favourite poems". I own up to having recently purchased a copy of Classic FM's "One Hundred Favourite Humorous Poems". Among the gems contained inside this modest tome, is one written by William McGonagall, a man widely held to be the worst poet ever!

Construction of the Tay Bridge began in 1874 and was completed in 1877 at the cost of £350,000. Officially it opened on 31 May 1878. It inspired the fifty-two-year-old William McGonagall to write the 'Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay', and the Dundee press to proclaim him the 'Poet Laureate of the Tay Bridge'. He meant his poetry to be taken seriously, but it sits firmly in the realms of doggerel and his style has always raised a smile. His beloved bridge carried Ulysses S Grant, the Emperor of Brazil and Queen Victoria, who noted in her diary... 'began going over the marvellous Tay Bridge, which is more than a mile and a half long. It took us, I should say about eight minutes going over. The view was very fine'. Sadly the bridge only lasted another four months, a gale bringing disaster to both bridge and a train crossing at the time. McGonagall, unsurprisingly, wrote a poem about the disaster. See what you think!

#### The Railway Bridge of The Silvery Tay - William McGonagall (1825 - 1902)

Beautiful Railway bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
With your numerous arches and pillars in so grand array  
And your central girders, which seem to the eye  
To be almost towering to the sky.  
The greatest wonder of the day,  
And a great beautification to the River Tay,  
Most beautiful to be seen,  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
That has caused the Emperor of Brazil to leave  
His home far away, incognito in his dress,  
And view thee ere he passed along en route to Inverness.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
The longest of the present day  
That has ever crossed o'er a tidal river stream,  
Most gigantic to be seen,  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
Which will cause great rejoicing on the opening day,  
And hundreds of people will come from far away,

Also the Queen, most gorgeous to be seen,  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
And prosperity to Provost Cox, who has given  
Thirty thousand pounds and upwards away  
In helping to erect the Bridge of the Tay,  
Most handsome to be seen,  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
I hope that God will protect all passengers  
By night and by day,  
And that no accident will befall them while crossing  
The Bridge of the Silvery Tay,  
For that would be most awful to be seen  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!  
And prosperity to Messrs Bouche and Grothe,  
The famous engineers of the present day,  
Who have succeeded in erecting  
the Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay,  
Which stands unequalled to be seen  
Near by Dundee and the Magdalen Green.

#### More of What the Papers

A synopsis of press cuttings from various newspapers & magazines

At the risk of making the understatement of the year, I would say that Virgin Trains has not had a good press lately. This article from the Guardian, written by Andy Beckett, does little to dispel the gloom!

#### Grief encounter

On the forecourt of Crewe station, where the wet west wind scours the kerbstones, a line of Britain's more fortunate taxi drivers lie in wait behind their tabloids. Crewe, it is true, does not seem much of a town for cabbies. The station is vast, but shrinking: lonely passengers on long concourses, weeds capturing abandoned platforms. The road into town is quieter still. Boards nailed over windows darken in the drizzle. A dead pub waits for long-gone crowds of railwaymen. Yet the taxi drivers have been rescued from this slow decline. Crewe is a Virgin Trains station.

Most evenings, towards midnight, a Virgin service - or several - arrives far behind schedule. Passengers miss the last connecting trains to their final destinations. They trudge up the cold steps from the platform, along the corridor shrouded in builders' plastic, past the door to the Virgin centre for training drivers, and out on to the damp forecourt. Sometimes there are one or two of these passengers, sometimes there are dozens, but they are always carrying a piece of paper called a white ticket. By the terms of the Virgin railway franchise, the company has to get its customers home.

From Crewe, this can mean Chester, or Shrewsbury, a whole county away, or even Holyhead in Anglesey, for the Irish ferry. The taxi drivers like that one: two easy hours along the motorway, a refreshing blast of coastal air, and an invoice to Virgin for £135. Last Christmas Eve, when more than 20 of its trains were delayed, every cab in town was shuttling people from the station. The rest of Crewe had to walk to the night-clubs in neighbouring towns.

This is probably not what Richard Branson had in mind when Virgin began operating its franchise last year. In "Losing My Virginity" his recent autobiography, he describes his first thoughts about running a railway. 'I took the train from Tokyo- the Bullet Train. It was rather like being on board a plane: there were audios to listen to, steward service and even vending machines. Why can't trains be like this in the UK, I wondered.'

The moment rail privatisation was mooted, Branson began wondering out loud. Seven years ago, he started telling newspapers that he would 'increase quality and bring down prices'. A Virgin train service would provide luxurious carriages, on-board videos and faxes, free drinks in first class, popcorn for children. Virgin 'would make it fun to travel by train'. The Conservative government said it was 'delighted'. Branson promised faster trains, then non-stop trains, then trains that would be faster than plane services. During the last general election, this vision began to dazzle Labour too. A Virgin-run railway, profit-driven and aggressive, but informal and efficient - became a symbol of the coming New Britain. Four days before polling, Tony and Cherie Blair became two of Branson's first customers. As the three of them waited for their photo-call, around a table on a newly repainted train from Euston, the country's favourite businessman made a short speech. 'Tony has made clear that he wants to see the railways staying private,' Branson said. "We want to prove to him over the next five years that we can run the best rail network in the world."

So far, Virgin seems to be proving something rather different. In *The Comprehensive Guide To Britain's Railways*, the West Coast line linking London and Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester, North Wales, Glasgow and the whole redbrick British heartland in between - is described as 'the ultimate challenge of rail privatisation'. In the press releases for Virgin Trains, the dream of a modernised rail system lives on. New, tilting trains will glide north at 160 miles per hour. Digital signals will guide them. New tracks will carry them. Annual passenger numbers will double to 25 million. And here and there, in the minor details of Virgin's current operations, this streamlined and gleaming future has already arrived. On some trains, a 'communications carriage' offers e-mail and on-line databases. At Manchester Piccadilly station, an "Information point" provides toys for bored children. And recently, Virgin hired the former leader of the train drivers' union to help run a driver-recruiting agency. Few gestures could have been more precisely New Labour.

But gestures and promises have not been enough. In fact they have made people angrier. In April 1997, just before Branson took over, passengers were heard triumphantly chanting his name at the last remaining staff from British Rail. By the autumn, those same travellers were already souring. The trains were still late. The carriages were still dirty. Fares were still high, and rising. Customer information still trickled out like a confession of adultery. The whole West Coast service, it seemed, with its squeezed and patched-up tracks, its wheezing trains, its low ceilings and dust layers, its neglect since the early Seventies, had simply been bought by Virgin as a harvester of subsidies. In its first financial year, Virgin West Coast received £76.8 million from the Government. It could afford a few taxi fares.

This year, though, the cost to Branson may have escalated. Against strong competition, Virgin Trains has become the most complained about rail company, the most high-profile privatisation calamity, a joke even to people who never use the railway. A month ago, due to 'an electronic communications failure', a Virgin train left Euston without its passengers. The week before, Branson went on the radio to defend his trains, and forgot not to use swear words. The week before that his company left several carriages of cabinet ministers and journalists, en route for Labour's conference at Blackpool, in a siding outside Crewe for two hours.

The scale of Virgin Trains' unreliability takes some absorbing. This September and October, for example, one service in seven was 'late' (this definition does not include trains that arrived less than ten minutes behind schedule). And at no point since the franchise began - using timetables already slackened to allow for engineering work - has Virgin managed to run much more than 90 per cent of its services on time. During some four-week periods, punctuality has been closer to 70 per cent. And it is getting worse. Is running a privatised railway simply impossible? Or are Virgin's methods less of a virtue than we've been used to thinking?

Before you board a Virgin train, the first things you see are the apology notices. In the ticket office at Euston, there is one about the slowness of the queues, and one about the days- 27 over the past 12 months - when 'no effective train service was offered'. At the platform entrance, there is another about punctuality.. "Sorry, we've slipped", it begins. 'Punctuality, on some routes, has slipped to levels we're far from satisfied with. We're working on that'. A Virgin steward usually stands nearby, a slight young woman in an oversized red uniform. She holds a busy walkie-talkie and a sheaf of timetables, much amended in Biro.

One Tuesday evening last month, just before six the train waiting behind her seemed to have misplaced a carriage. Most of its length was in the Virgin colours... dark grey and bright red, with three white lines above the wheels like go-faster stripes. But the engine section was quite different. No one had had time to repaint it

so it stood, stained and worn, in its old British Rail livery, its boxy yellow cab was straight from the Seventies. The journey to Manchester stretched far ahead.

The first two hours were easy. The seats had been re-covered and the new carpets shone. Litter had been swept from the aisles. The toilets were an advertisement for detergents. The Midlands shot past in the dusk. Gradually, though, something uncomfortable became apparent: the train was juddering. Not every now and again, as trains do, on sharp corners or going through stations, but all the time, with a rattling erratic motion, as if the carriages were scrambling along the tracks. On top of each aisle seat Virgin had fitted a knob of pale metal. As the train swayed, and the connecting doors banged, and the night roared in through the windows, passengers edged their way to the buffet car between these hand-holds, like explorers on a rope bridge. In the buffet there were metal bars to grasp on every wall. A small bag of crisps cost £ 1.10.

And the train was getting hotter. Outside, it was stormy but mild; inside, by the time we got to Rugby, a shirt felt like an overcoat. The windows were sealed and double-glazed. A puff of tepid air came from the vents above. In an aisle seat in carriage C, a man with a season ticket had an explanation. "The heating's always on," he said. "Except first thing in the morning".

Mark Austin was about 30, wore his chinos with a crisp crease down the front and had paid £6,797 a year for his ticket to commute to Watford. He was trying to read a fantasy novel, but every time he began a page, he looked up and thought of something new to complain about 'I've never been delayed so often as I have been the past 12 months,' he started. "I think they're consistently worse than British Rail. The quality of customer care is appalling There is a signal failure about once a week. We have to wait for late trains on the platforms, at six o'clock in the morning in the cold".

Austin smiled thinly as he said all this. Above his big brash tie-knot, there were tiny furrows round his eyes. 'I've travelled across Europe on trains, and this is worse. They should get the Yanks over for holidays on these - Fawltly Towers on a train. His smile thickened at the idea. The staff are only here because they can't get jobs on the planes.'

Did he ever complain? Austin levelled his gaze: 'I phone up daily.' Before he got into the office - from the station, in fact he put in his Virgin call: 'I ask them why I'm late, and they say, We're getting new trains! I'm waiting to see the first tilting one topple over.' Ten minutes later, the train began to slow for Austin's station. He had his car keys out long before the doors opened.

At Manchester Piccadilly, Virgin dishes out complaint forms like timetables. The 'information point` is a shallow, bright room with three walls, like a department-store window display, so people walk straight in off the platforms, ask for the piece of paper to record their grievance on, and stride out. The staff do not ask for details, or try to provide an explanation. They just keep a pile of forms beside the computer.

As a whole, Virgin's West Coast line draws seven times as many complaints as the average privatised railway service. Virgin promises to reply to any postal criticism within 18 days. In practice, as might now be guessed, this promise becomes somewhat blurred and stretched. Eighteen days, it turns out refers to the time between the receipt of a complaint and the despatch of a reply. This period is measured in working days. And, besides, according to the rail regulator's most recent figures, only one-third of all queries is answered in that time, anyway. This proportion is shrinking. Virgin's explanation for this, and for all its railways other failings, can be summarised by the poster the company currently favours in stations. Under the headline 'Our Platform, in a clear and unstuffy typeface, it begins: 'Britain's railways have suffered from thirty years of underinvestment-' This assertion, with accompanying statistics to suit the intended audience, has been repeated for many months, as modern PR agencies advise, in letters from Branson to newspapers, in briefings for transport journalists, in brochures sent to the journals of trainspotters. If only passengers can be patient this argument goes, Virgin's planned railway investment - variously put at £ 1.8 billion, £2 billion or £3.5 billion - will soon come whispering into their platforms. Blackpool could do with a bit of that. Until May, no London trains had ventured along the line's flaky tracks for six years: British Rail had given it up as 'uneconomic'. Now, Virgin is trying again, as Frank Dobson and his colleagues discovered on their way to the conference, with rather mixed results. On the Wednesday I took it the afternoon train seemed doomed before it sorted.

The Preston station announcer spoke with unusual clarity. The service to Blackpool would be 'approximately 30 minutes late'; it had been 'delayed at the start of its journey in Euston, awaiting the arrival of a previously delayed train'. In the narrow Virgin office, several staff tried to explain the intricacies of interlocking train

timetables. When the train ground into view, it was difficult to see its passengers. The windows were a pale, dusty brown, as if hung with old net curtains. The destination stickers on the carriages were askew, and starting to peel. Inside, too, refurbishment remained a mere possibility. The carpets were bald. The seat covers were coming away at the edges. Seat foam spilled through a knife-slit. Dead chips curled in the aisles. In the toilets, there was no water for the basins. In fact there were barely any working toilets at all. They had used up so many 'temporarily out of order' notices that one cubicle was cordoned off with the promise: "This defect has been reported to British Telecom."

In truth, there may not be much money in mid- afternoon trains to Blackpool. Each carriage was thinly scattered with passengers, barely troubled by the conductor. As the fields flattened out towards the sea, and the train sped up and slowed down, and the wheels clanked and hissed past crowds of staring cattle, Blackpool Tower still mockingly distant on the horizon, the idea of regularly carrying businessmen or cabinet ministers this way seemed rather optimistic.

Wednesday's customers were less busy people. Bruce Deeny was near the buffet (long closed), with his headphones on. He was wearing a tight T-shirt and had side burns like tiny, curving daggers; he was probably not in marketing. Actually, he had a pantomime audition to get to, by three o'clock. He was hoping to play Aladdin, 'I don't think train privatisation is a good idea' he said.

Deeny, though, still wanted to believe in Branson. 'He seems like an honest chap, from what I've heard. I've been very impressed by everything he's done in the past. Deeny let his head fall back against his stained head rest. 'Its just that I wouldn't be able to tell this is Virgin.'

The next day, Virgin Trains was due to take part in a public meeting in Crewe. It was at the Crewe Arms Hotel, a big, brick pile just behind the station, and, beforehand, the coat racks were heavy with anoraks. The train enthusiasts and the rail regulators sipped coffee and ate little packets, railway buffet-style, of complimentary biscuits. Then they took their seats, which had been arranged in a horseshoe in an overheated function room called the Gladstone. Three places in the middle remained unfilled.

The men in grey suits waited for Virgin. Bubbles rose and burst in their glasses of mineral water. A portable fan swung back and forth. 'There are a number of timetable issues we will raise when they arrive,' said the chairman. Fifteen minutes late, three men squeezed through the door. They did not scan the room, or apologise, but stepped quickly between the regulators to their chairs.

The three men exchanged glances and whispers. Finally, the head of Virgin Trains looked up. With his beard and yellow shirt Chris Tibbits looked a bit like Branson, and he answered the first few questions with his boss's disarming humility. "that's a very perceptive question," he began one reply. 'We have taken some steps,' he began another. "We could do more, and we will do". Virgin staff would be more welcoming; more reliable locomotives were being hired; better food trolleys were on their way., many improvements were 'in the pipeline'. Tibbits kept saying how 'delighted' he was to be present.

Yet behind his soft clouds of words, his first-names and small admissions, Tibbits took responsibility for very little. When someone raised the labour conference disaster, he apologised, then blamed 'an engineering blockage' (Railtrack's fault), 'delays to other trains' (another operator's fault), and the fact that Virgin drivers don't all live near Euston. When someone else complained about the on-train catering - an advertised 'full restaurant service' had turned out to be 'a cheese toastie' - Tibbits replied: 'Well, it depends on how you interpret a full restaurant service.'

After half an hour, one of the regulators had had enough. 'We don't want promises of jam tomorrow. We want bread and butter. People don't want retrospective travel vouchers. They want performance.' Tibbits frowned. He clasped his hands as if in prayer. 'I share everything that has been said, except- Performance is significantly better. My goodness, we are working like devils. You have to keep faith in us.' He paused, then said, quite evenly, 'There is no other show in town'.

The Virgin rail franchise has more than 13 years to run. Until the new trains arrive, in 2001 or 2002, or whatever year becomes the next estimate, the reputation of Virgin Trains may rely on less tangible initiatives. There is Virgin's ability to co-operate with Railtrack, which must mend and modernise the tracks the trains struggle along. Railtrack has agreed to spend £2.1 billion, but the work has yet to start. At Manchester Piccadilly, staff in the Railtrack information booth still tell jokes about their collaborators. Then there are

Virgin's little innovations. Passengers can book ahead, and have their tickets posted to them; people can be upgraded during their journey, if they are judged 'suitable' for first class, they can choose from a small library of new fare options, Virgin Value, Virgin Value 11, Virgin Value First, Virgin Value Business; they can wait for the relevant carriage on a colour-coded section of the platform. Virgin customers, in short are treated rather like airline passengers.

This has its downside. During the meeting in Crewe, the phrase 'business traveller' was the only one used to describe rail users. Near the end, when it was time for the public to ask their questions, a man in a cheap, worn shirt enquired why Virgin did not publicise all their ticket prices. Tibbits answered without looking at him: 'I don't intend to publish a full list of tariffs. There are broad ranges of fares that are promotions. These days, people are used to buying air tickets. They understand.'

The trouble for Virgin is, people often don't. Trains are not like planes; rail travellers tend not to plan their journeys months in advance. Instead, they queue up, mouths turning down, at Euston and Crewe and Manchester, and find out that all Virgin's advance tickets have been sold, or that the quota has been changed, or that the cheap fares do not apply when they want to travel. At this point the staff of Virgin Trains become rather important.

There are 3,500 of them, mostly young. They wear red ties and red blazer, red fleeces and puffed jackets, and red blouses with station names printed on them. In the gloom of the commuter hours, up and down the West Coast line, the Virgin staff almost glow. They fiddle with their new buttons. They tightly clasp their clipboards. They stand in self-conscious huddles, or stare, in worn British Rail cubby-holes, at inherited computers. And they try to calm down the passengers.

By mid-morning at Crewe station, the day after Virgin's public meeting the delays were spreading down the departure boards like a yellow virus. Two Virgin staff stood on platform five, both of them lads with gelled haircuts, hands in their pockets against the station draughts. An elderly man approached them. Then two middle-aged ladies. Then a young man in a suit. None of them went away scowling. How could you blame those two nice lads, with their friendly fulsome apologies? Afterwards one Virgin man turned to the other.

"Suspected track fatality, Deano."

"Lovely."

The first man raised a nonchalant eyebrow. "That's two in two days! British Rail would have been proud".

Recruitment does not appear to be one of Virgin Trains' problems. The hotels around Crewe are busy with staff up for tuition. The door swings to the training centre in the station. And, at the extreme southern tip of platform five, where the trainspotters gather, Virgin had made at least one convert.

"Their trains are a bit more colourful than the InterCity,' he said, quickly noting one down in his little blue book. 'In five years time, people will have forgotten all the problems" He stuck his pink hands back in his pockets. It was almost six in the evening and getting cold. He had come all the way from Birmingham. He hadn't been out here all day, though. He was applying to be a Virgin driver, he was up for a medical. The aptitude test was in a week. 'I can't bloody wait. In the old days to be a driver you had to start off cleaning the wheels. Now you can learn straight off.' He was a bus driver at the moment There was only one problem: 'Virgin gave me a free ticket to get up here. But I can only use it on Virgin Trains. There's a massive gap until the next one.'

The rest of Virgin's passengers may have quite a wait too. A faster service for the West Coast line has been planned, by various organisations, since at least 1985. And new trains, when they first arrive, are almost always troublesome. According to the railway press, Virgin's timetable for introducing them assumes an unprecedented absence of problems. The other privatised rail companies, which have been around for longer, have so far barely managed to get 20 new carriages running between them.

And Railtrack's renovations will get in the way. Until 2005, they warn, West Coast travellers will enjoy 'significant disruptions.' And while the men in orange waistcoats are flagging trains to a halt, Virgin's subsidy will be ratcheted down year by year, until, in 2002, the company begins passing money back to the Government. By the end of the franchise, this 'premium' will be three times what Virgin currently receives.



Tougher rail regulators, as promised by John Prescott should be at work. Virgin passengers may not be the only ones scrutinising the small print on timetables. Perhaps, sometime in the next century, they and the trains will be simpler, more reliable, faster. Virgin's name for taking risks, and trouncing critics, will survive enhanced. Or perhaps, when his initial 15 years are up, Branson will have had enough, and will move his staff and money into mortgage-selling or manicure, or wherever bright-red uniforms might bring more profit. Virgin's West Coast service will just be remembered as a venture too far, an over-confident tilt at the improbable, a barely thought-out gesture from a tycoon.

The company that built Crewe saw its business a bit differently. Until the 1830s, the town was two hamlets; then the Grand Junction Railway Company put down track, and erected arches, and laid out a locomotive works five miles long. A lot of this is in ruins now, or in a sad little heritage compound, of dead trains and damp sheds, past the northern end of the station. Yet some people still care for these remnants, a man on a ladder repaints the carriages, with delicate flicks of a small brush. He paints Virgin trains too, but he doesn't have much to say about them.

### Government Unity

John Prescott has the full backing of Gerald Kaufman MP in his bid to encourage people to make better use of public transport

When asked about visiting the Millenium Dome he tells the BBC "Hanging on in an Underground train that is unpleasantly crowded, maybe with children or pensioners, will not be a pleasant start". How very true!.

### Railtrack Tales

Meanwhile, times are hard for Railtrack. First there was the Southall crash. Then there was the Health & Safety Executive's decision to prosecute the company over the poor quality of track after a number of derailments. To cap it all the HSE is now taking Railtrack to court for endangering life by hacking into a 33,000 volt cable.

So how does the company respond? By giving board member Derek Roberts, who chairs the safety committee, a 20% pay rise.

The government also joined in the congratulations and awarded an MBE to one of Roberts' underlings. Paul Jonathan Abbott a Railtrack standards manager, was given his medal for 'services to security and emergency planning standards in the railway industry` in the Queen's birthdays honours list.

### Wellington 1 - Napoleon 0

Campaigners in France are demanding that Waterloo station, the terminal for Eurostar, be renamed to spare their feelings over Napoleon's opprobrious defeat in 1815. 'Many French visitors feel quite humiliated when they arrive in London' said leading campaigner Monsieur Florent Longuepee. (Talking of silly names, our soccer expert David Bladen reminds us of referee Philip Don who often appears in the programme a P Don, leading to remarks after the game of "and so he should be!").

Their suggestion is to name the station Churchill - no doubt to annoy our German, Italian and Japanese visitors. So much for European harmony! There has been no response from either Railtrack or the UK government. I cannot see how the French can object to our station naming policy, but there again, what have they had to celebrate in the fast few hundred years except for the 1998 World Cup?

### Privatisation - The Forgotten Agenda

Next time you hear your Deputy Prime Minister (Johnny Two Jags) complain about rail privatisation remember the fact that they had a chance to make a difference in 1995.

A high powered labour group including "J2J" cooked up a scheme which may well have had a profound effect on the then future of our railways. An announcement was to be made in the Railtrack Prospectus, published in early 1996, that if labour came to power at the next election they would do two things:

Exchange Railtrack shares for Preference shares, which would pay a dividend, based on performance and not profit.

Transfer the subsidy away from the TOC's and pay it direct to Railtrack to channel investment more directly.

At the last moment Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor vetoed this plan, and the reason for this never appears to have been made public.

We can only speculate what might have happened. Would this have been the private/public partnership, which may, at the end of the day, have been the best solution for an Integrated national transport policy?

## ROBIN'S RAMBLES

First of all compliments of the season to you all and best wishes for the New Year. Don't forget the Pennine Railway Society AGM is on Sunday 10th January 1999 at 12 noon at the Corporation Brewery Taps in Doncaster. It's your chance to see Mr Sanderson's figures and talk to the committee about the Society and its plans for 1999. Any items for the Agenda should be sent to me one week before the meeting. For this edition I thought I'd ramble on about London trips and there's been a few of those, during my forage into the attic I came across four trips in the space of two years -13/05/78, 07/10/78 and 22/3/80.

One of the highlights of these visits was the use of a preserved bus to get around London. The buses were obtained by Mr Gordon Laming (Chops) who was a colleague of mine when I worked in London as a Guards Roster Clerk on the South Eastern Division of the Southern Region in 1976 and 1971. Chops was a likeable character who lived for his buses and it was not unusual for him to come to work having spent the night before working on one of his vehicles and then kipping in the vehicle overnight. The particular vehicle for the trip on May 13th 1978 was RTI 396 and the agenda was as follows:

0930 Depart Kings Cross.

1030 Stratford MPD.

1130 Woolwich Ferry

1200 Lunch and Woolwich Transport Museum.

1330 Depart Woolwich.

1400 Hither Green Depot

1630 Old Oak Common Depot

I believe we also squeezed Willesden Depot into the trip before Old Oak Common. Woolwich Transport Museum can be so interesting. People on the visit that day were T. Helliwell, T. Caddick, T. Booth, S. Lancaster, E. Plenty, Tony Stubbings, Mr Woodward, John Riley, Mr Holt, R Skinner, J. Sanderson, K. Connell. A total of 25 were on the visit. I'm desperately trying to remember if that's the visit where at Stratford the bus was reversing with Chops in the driving seat, as I was calling him back he accidentally hit a concrete bollard damaging one of the rear panels! Also can you remember which was the trip where an elderly gentleman got on Highgate, High Street and asked if this was the number 55 and then got off a few stops later having had a free ride. I know we had a good laugh about it at the time.

London trips were never easy to organise, as you had to take into account the first Inter City arrivals in London from such places as Sheffield, Doncaster, Liverpool and Manchester (for Mr Bolland). So the earliest you could get away from Kings Cross was after 0930hrs and it would take you up to an hour to get to your first depot which was after Stratford as it would only take morning visits. The maximum number permitted at each depot often varied as well as the times was open. Stratford was always Saturday morning, usually the first Old Oak Common was always Saturday afternoon, usually the last visit on the agenda. The maximum number at Stratford was twenty and the maximum at the Old Oak Common was twenty five, so often you had to juggle the numbers. However to be fair we very rarely had a problem at the Depot.

Other Depots visited were as follows:

7th October 1978 Finsbury Park, Hornsey, Cricklewood, Willesden and Old Oak Common.

8th December 1979 Selhurst (20) Finsbury Park (max 12) Willesden(20) and Old Oak Common ( 25).

22nd March 1980 Finsbury Park (20), Hornsey (20), Stratford (20), Ilford (20), Willesden(20), Old Oak Common (25).

The visit was that each Region, and usually each Division, had a slightly different policy regarding visits to depots, so initially you had to write to each asking for the latest conditions and prices and then put together an agenda that was realistic within the timescales available. The Health and Safety at Work Act became law in 1974 and by this time BR and many other companies in Britain were beginning to wake up to their responsibilities and liabilities safety wise. Opportunities to visit depots were beginning to reduce. The biggest problem of course was the fact that most of the members could only go on trips at the weekend. I'm sure if we could have filled a trip on weekday (which to my knowledge we only did once). Most London location Depots only had a minimum number of staff on duty at the weekend, and the argument from the authority issuing the permit was that we always must be supervised, in reality we know that this was not always the case. Indeed I often argued in correspondence that there were less rail movements on a depot on a Saturday afternoon therefore the risk factors were less. However it rarely did the trick.

For my part London trips were never easy to arrange. However this was fully compensated for by the enjoyment of the day. A trip to London was always looked forward to with immense enthusiasm by all members as a good day out. In the next edition I'll look at some of the Merrymaker trips we did.

### Coaching Stock Formations

The editor has a database containing a reasonably up to date list of all current coaching stock formations. The list is updated on a regular on-going basis.

Any member who would like a FREE A4 Printed copy of this list can obtain one by sending an A4 size stamped addressed envelope to the Editor.

### ROBIN'S REVIEW

#### Steam Days

Steam Days is published by Red Gauntlet Publications and is priced at £2.95 monthly.

Subscriptions are £35 for 12 issues and £64 for 24 issues.

Steam Days is as you will have guessed about steam and the History of Steam although it often goes back to the pre-grouping days very early in this century. It therefore covers probably a larger slice of railway history than the previous two magazines reviewed in these columns.

The November 1998 edition has articles on Sunderland, Edinburgh Princes Street and the STAR attraction on GWR Star class locomotive's regular features includes Lineside Cameraman, Titled Trains, this edition is No. 13 in the Series, the "Thames Clyde Express" certainly a train in its latter years well known to many Pennine members and a fascinating train -if only for the number of different routes it took between Sheffield Midland and Leeds City (or Wellington ) over the years.

Signal boxes of the LSWR. Part five Ground Level boxes is good reading for Signalling buffs and finally Tail Lamp -the letters at the rear of the magazine is often stimulating.

The magazine's slogan is Steam Nostalgia and Railway History at its best! To a certain extent it is that in sixty pages. Steam Days remit appears to be much broader than "Steam World" or "British Railway Illustrated".

So there is often something for everyone and only you the reader knows how predictable your read does or does not need to be. Steam Days and its content is not always as predictable as its main competitors.

VERDICT - If you are looking for a very broad overview of Railway History not exclusively about steam or a defined period in Railway History this may be the read for you.

## ROBIN'S MEETINGS

All meetings are held at the Corporation Brewery Taps Cleveland St Doncaster commencing at 2000hrs.

Wednesday January 6th 1999. Members slides and videos.

Sunday January 10 1999. Annual General Meeting 12noon.

Wednesday January 20 1999. Peter Marsh.

Wednesday February 3rd 1999. Glen Williamson.

Wednesday February 17th 1999. Derek Porter '50s, 55s, 56s, and 58's

Wednesday March 3rd 1999. Members slide competition.

Wednesday March 17th 1999. Graham Wade Part 3

Wednesday April 7th 1999. Chris Theaker.

The next edition of Trans Pennine will be produced in March 1999. Please let me have your contributions by 28th February. Thank you!