

Angus Railway Group

JOURNAL

No. 171

Christmas 2004



A Merry Christmas to all our readers

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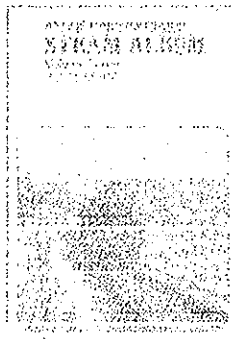
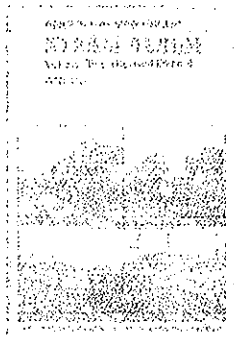
The views expressed in the Angus Railway Group Journal are not necessarily those of the Group, the members, or the Editor.

Cover picture. From a postcard in my collection, Christmas with the trains around 1900..

The next issue of the Journal will be issued on 13th March. Deadline for contributions – the end of February.

Dates of meetings for the remainder of this season are as follows:

9 th January	Public Relations	First Scotrail
30 th January	Peter Bainbridge	Steam in Northumbria and Elsewhere
20 th February	Public Relations	British Transport Police
13 th March	Keith Jones	Chinese Steam
3 rd April	Scott Bruce	Train Brain
24 th April	Annual General Meeting	
15 th May	Barry Nisbet	Waverley Route and Branches



The Group's Steam Albums Volume 2 (Angus), and Volume 3 (Perth) are still available at a cost of £4.50, and may be obtained direct from the Sales Officer, Peter Bainbridge (address above).

Editorial

Working on the basis that something is better than nothing, I am sorry to say that on this occasion you are getting something! My apologies. Unfortunately, family and business commitments have contrived to severely limit my free time at the moment. I hope, however to have a "bumper" edition in the spring with all the missing features from the Christmas issue and more. Group news is an important feature, and I have tried to let you have as much as possible within the limited space, including dates of forthcoming meetings.

My current problems also affected my participation in the Dundee Model Railway Exhibition in October, and sadly we did not have a stand this year. So – apologies on two fronts

I am delighted to report that Bob Barnes material has at last arrived, and there will be a good helping in the Spring Journal.

Meanwhile, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all readers

And now for something completely different.....

After every flight, Quantas pilots fill out a "gripe sheet" which conveys to the mechanics problems with the aircraft. The mechanics read and correct the problem, noting the action taken so that the pilots can review before their next flight. Here are some logged complaints, and the solution taken by the engineers:

(by the way, Quantas is the only major airline that has never had an accident)

P = Item logged by pilot/ S = solution and action taken by engineer

P - Left inside tyre almost need replacement
S - Almost replaced left inside tyre

P - Test flight ok but auto-land a bit rough
S - Auto-land not installed on this aircraft

P - Something loose in cockpit
S - Something loose tightened up in cockpit

P - Evidence of leak on right main landing gear
S - Evidence removed

P - Aircraft handles funny
S - Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly straight, and be more serious

P - Target radar hums
S - Target radar reprogrammed with lyrics – now sings instead

P - Mouse in cockpit
S - Cat installed

P - Noise coming from under instrument panel – sounds like a midget pounding with a hammer
S - Took the hammer away from the midget

P - Autopilot in "altitude hold" mode produces a 200 foot per minute descent
S - Cannot replicate this problem on the ground

Group News

Tom and Audrey Willison celebrated their Silver Wedding in September, with an excellent night out at Queens Hotel Dundee on Friday 24th September. A number of Group members were present. Congratulations to them both, and congratulations particularly to Audrey for giving Tom so much time off in pursuit of his railway interests!

I am delighted to report that congratulations are also due to another Willison, John this time, who has decided to make an honest woman of Angie! Their wedding was celebrated on Saturday 4th December. I am sure all Group members who know them will wish them all the best!

Lindsay has written to me to let me know that David Ferguson of Crieff was passed out as a fireman on the Strathspey Railway on Wednesday 20th October, on Ivatt 2-6-0 No 46512. David is the second Passed fireman in the ARG, along with Tom Willison at Bo'ness. Coincidentally, Tom was firing earlier the same day. (As if echoing my earlier sentiments! SC.)

It's in the news

The remaining south abutment of Barnhill bridge was swept away without ceremony in November. At least most of it has gone along with a chunk of the embankment leading to it, to make way for an expansion of the adjacent garage. The saddest sight of all is seeing a car displayed on the remaining stump!

Good news for the Strathspey was the legacy from Roy Hamilton who died earlier this year. Having no family to leave his estate to, Roy has graciously donated his fortune, estimated at £250000 to the railway. Thought is being given on the best use for the monies, with thoughts being given to funding a good proportion of the River Dulnain bridge reinstatement, to allow trains to once again reach Grantown on Spey.

Apologies also to all who have made contributions to this issue. Your work is not in vain, and all being well, these should be in the Spring issue.

The Oil Rig Worker

Bob Barnes

I was on duty at Dundee Tay Bridge station one day, when the Aberdeen to York train arrived at platform 4. An oil rig worker got off the train and proceeded to ask me where he would find the train for Newcastle! Rather bemused, I advised him that he had just got off the Newcastle train. Being a bit befuddled with drink, he was adamant that he *had* to change at Dundee, in order to proceed to Newcastle. I tried to explain to him what he had done, but I needn't have bothered - he just wasn't listening to me!

I was approached by the guard of the train, and told him the story. The guard informed me that the oilman had a through ticket to Newcastle! He knew this for certain, from having checked his ticket on the train.

I decided that some rank dishonesty was needed to settle this matter – and quickly! I asked the guard to hold the train for a minute, whilst I grabbed the oilman's bag, and told him to come with me. I hurried him up platform 4, across to platform 1, and then quickly back again over to platform 4, through the vennel, and put him on to the very same York train, advising him that this was indeed the Newcastle train that he required. He was absolutely delighted – and, so was I, because he gave me a pound tip for the supposed quick change!

I would have loved to have seen his face, when he went to the buffet car and found all his mates in there drinking! Their faces would have been a picture too, because what I think had happened was that our hero had become over argumentative on the trip south from Aberdeen. In an effort to be rid of him, his 'mates' had told him that he would definitely have had to change at Dundee for the Newcastle train, thinking that, by advising him to do this, they would have had the remainder of the trip, and the buffet car, quietly to themselves!

Ah! - the best laid schemes.....

Harbour Happenings

Lindsay Horne

An unusual case was heard in the Dundee Police Court in 1959. It concerned the British Transport Commission, which was charged with allowing a train of thirty wagons to pass along Camperdown Street, on 25th August.

This was ten more than the limit set by a byelaw of 1931 – a limit unlikely to have been exceeded in the days of the LNER Y9 class. In addition, the train in question was not accompanied by a pilotman.

The BTC was admonished on the first charge, but fined £2 on the second.

Lindsay also submitted the following interesting quote from the April 1935 LMS Magazine.

“One of the worst disasters in the history of British railways is recalled by the recent presentation to the London & North Eastern Company, through the courtesy of Mr T C D Watt, the LMS Company's Medical Officer for Scotland, of the train staff which was in the possession of the driver of the train involved in the terrible Tay Bridge disaster of December 1879. The staff, which is about 18 inches long, is of iron encased in brass, and is in an excellent state of preservation. It was retrieved from the bed of the Tay by one of the divers engaged in the recovery of the wrecked train.”

Tragedy at Soham - 1944

Recent sad events at Soham have been well documented in the media, but these were not the only tragedy to affect this small Cambridgeshire town.

Late on 1st June 1944, the loco crew signed on to work a goods consisting of 51 wagons loaded with bombs, and hauled by WD 2-8-0 locomotive No 7337. Their route was to take them via Ely, and on via Ipswich to their destination. The train started out at 12.15am on 2nd June. The driver noted nothing amiss with the engine or wagons, and did not have to work the locomotive hard.

They took water at Ely, leaving at 1.24am, still noting no problems. Again at Barway, the train was checked as the crew exchanged the key token.

After passing Soham distant signal, which was off, the driver thought he noticed some steam coming from the injector, and looked out to see that the wagon next to the engine was on fire. The flames were spreading rapidly, and the driver sounded the whistle to alert the guard, and immediately took steps to stop the train carefully, knowing what the wagons contained.

The driver instructed the fireman to uncouple the wagon from the remainder of the train, suggesting that he take the coal hammer with him as the coupling would be too hot to handle. On having done this, they proceeded with the wagon which was on fire, intending to get well clear of the station and surrounding buildings.

As they passed the signalbox, enquiring of the signalman where a train coming in the opposite direction was, the explosion occurred.



Soham Station before the explosion.

In the book "By Rail to Victory," the story of the LNER in the Second World War, the writer noted that it was difficult to envisage what the actions of the crew meant in cold blooded courage. Six or seven minutes elapsed between the time when the driver first noticed the fire, and the time when the explosion occurred. Had Driver Gimbert, and Fireman Nightfall been that kind of men, they had six or seven minutes to stop the train and run for their lives.

The single wagon contained forty 500 pound bombs. The next two contained between them seventy-four 500 pounders. Then came a wagon full of detonators, followed by more bombs. The one wagon, when it exploded, made a crater sixty-six feet in diameter, and fifteen feet deep. It completely demolished the station, and the Stationmaster's house. Of the wagon

itself, not a trace could be found. The engine was badly damaged, and in the town, the explosion did damage in varying degrees to about 700 houses. Had the whole train exploded, it is difficult to imagine that the town could have survived.

It was sheer bad luck that the explosion occurred when it did. With a little more time, the blazing wagon could have been drawn through the station and clear of the town, and Gimbert and Nightall would have had time to escape. The signalman too would have had some protection had he stayed in his box, but because of the emergency, he had come down in case he was needed.

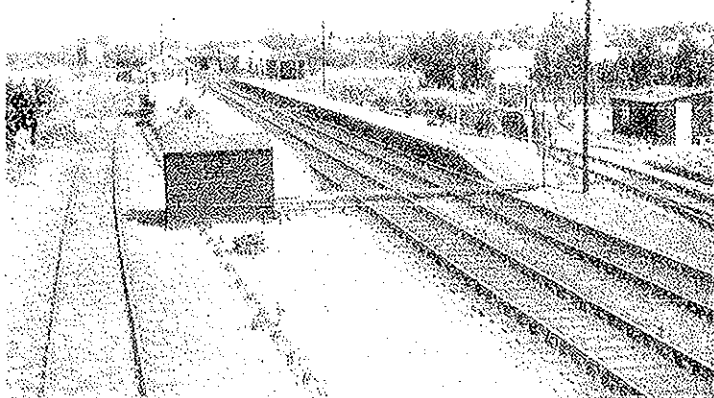
Guard Clarke, who was in charge of the train, could have taken cover when the engine went forward with the blazing wagon. Instead, he screwed the brake down and walked forward, as was his duty. He had gone only a short distance when the explosion took place, and he found himself lying on the embankment three wagon lengths to the rear of his brake van.

By 9am, American troops in the neighbourhood had rallied round with bulldozers, and by 8.30pm that evening, or nineteen hours after the explosion, the crater was filled in, the track relaid, and the line open to traffic. (**Network Rail please note!**)

Remarkably, although Fireman Nightall, and Signalman Bridges were killed, Driver Gimbert survived, although seriously injured, along with Guard Clarke.

For their heroism, Driver Gimbert and Firemen Nightall were awarded the George Cross. They also received the LNER medal. In addition a memorial was erected at Soham bearing the message "This tablet commemorates the heroic action of Fireman J W Nightall G C, who lost his life & Driver B Gimbert G C who was badly injured whilst detaching a blazing wagon from an ammunition train at this station at 1.43am on June 2nd 1944. The station was totally destroyed, and considerable damage done by the explosion. The devotion to duty of these brave men saved the town of Soham from grave destruction. Signalman F Bridges was killed whilst on duty & Guard Clarke suffered from shock."

*Soham Station as rebuilt,
in 1947*



The names of the crew will be familiar to fans of Class 47's, as they were remembered on locomotives 47574 Benjamin Gimbert GC, and 47579 James Nightall GC.

Today, maps show no evidence of a station at Soham, although, as in so many places throughout the country once served by railways, there remains a "Station Road." It is to be hoped, however, the memorial survives as a record of this earlier Soham tragedy.

Culture Corner



I am pleased to be able to produce in this and forthcoming editions of the Journal, poetry by Lindsay's dad, Driver Peter Horne, pictured here in the cab of No 44720. A number of his writings related to railway workings, and thus represent an interesting piece of railway history.

Ode to an N B Pug

Ye muckle lump o' rusty steel, I hope ye never turn a wheel,
Yir worse than ony fairm cairt, Ye've broken mony a guid man's hert.

Yer boxes knockin' wad drive ane crackers, An' mak a man stand tae save his knackers,
A'yir bushes are loose an' bangin', An' on yir frames the muck is hangin'.

As ye hammer along the road, The fireman keeps on prayin' tae God,
An' says "Noo that I've got a wife, I hope that I am spared my life."

The cattle across the field they rin, Tae git awa' fae the awfae din,
The country chiel, he stops his hummin', Wonderin' what the hell is comin'.

T'was richt tae say, when in yir prime, T'was easy work tae rin' on time,
Ye were hard tae beat, but we backed a loser, When they made you become a 'common user'

Noo a' ye chaps wha feel the strain, Forget yir brawn, a' use yir brain,
Tell them a' yir no a mug, an' whit tae dae wi' their NB pug!
