

COCK O' THE NORTH

Newsletter of the Angus Railway Group



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JULY 1976

ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP
COCK O' THE NORTH

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BACK NUMBERS 10p EACH FROM THE SECRETARY

July, 1976 Newsletter

EDITORIAL

The Angus Railway Group

Now that this Newsletter has been made available to, and is hopefully read by members of the travelling public, it might be considered helpful to answer an obvious question - Who or what is the Angus Railway Group? By giving an explanation, we would hope to allay any feeling of inferiority when you hear references to it at bus stops or in railway buffets.

Quite contrary to any wrongly conceived ideas which may now be circulating, The Angus Railway Group can in no way be described as a Government financed organisation responsible in some way for railway management between Invergowrie, Montrose and Brechin. But for such finance and freedom !

The Group, which has a relatively small membership drawn from many walks of life, was formed in 1972 to promote interest in railways generally and in particular those transgressing an area roughly comparable with the new Tayside Region. During the months from September to May, meetings are held every third Sunday evening in members homes. These provide a wide variety of films, slides and talks on many aspects of our railways both past and present.

Besides publishing monthly Newsletters, the Group is presently preparing a delightful book for sale this autumn, to be called " The Angus Railway Group Album Volume one ". An irresistible attraction for general readers and keen railway enthusiasts alike, it will primarily contain a most fascinating collection of hitherto unpublished photographs of railways and trains taken mainly in the Dundee area, against a blackcloth of changing years. Further details of the books availability will appear soon, but if you are anxious to secure one of the limited first editions, any member of the Committee will be delighted to receive a provisional order. For approximately £1.20, very few books will afford better value.

If, after reading through the following pages, you feel that you would like

EDITORIAL cont.

to contribute an article on any railway experience, or perhaps can elaborate on previous contents, please do write to the Editor. Dispel any hesitation because you feel that your grammar or spelling is inadequate. Your contribution will be promptly acknowledged, edited if necessary and published under your name. Should you prefer that your name is not disclosed, we explicitly undertake that it will remain confidential. Normally only the name of the town where you live will be given, unless you specifically ask for your full postal address to be included.

Possibly there are some keen railway enthusiasts in Tayside, who have by misfortune never heard of our Group. If they would like to join, then, in the first instance, drop a line (no pun intended) to the Secretary.

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DINNER DANCE

Many members of the Group gathered in the Invercarse Hotel at Dundee on Saturday, 10th June, as a farewell gesture to Leslie Morrison, who having qualified as an architect, was leaving to return to his native Glasgow. His name will, however, continue to appear in the Newsletter for many months to come, as we reproduce instalments of his lengthy dissertation concerning the history of the Glasgow to Aberdeen railway.

Our thanks must go to Ian Johnstone and John Simpson for the hard work which they put into organising our night out.

IAN RATTRAY.

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Members will be extremely saddened to learn of the death of Ian Johnstone's father, during the month of July.

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" IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED "

It is somewhat over ten years ago now that our daytime motorail train, complete with cars encased in drive - through vans, pulled out of Edinburgh's Waverley station very much to time. The journey down to Berwick and then through rural Northumbria was particularly enjoyable, with coffee served in real cups at individual seats to becalm edgy passengers who might occasion to observe the rough seas pounding the rocky coastland far below. Friendly restaurant car staff readily replenished empty cups and pampered passengers in a way by which " The Brighton Belle " and " Golden Arrow " became renowned.

Through frequent travel on the East Coast route - the Royal route to London - I have gained sufficient familiarity to know that Manors is not Newcastle's principal station. So why had we rested ? In good time the answer became more apparent - our weary diesel engine (its Class escapes my mind) had developed a malfunction or malfunctions. A second diesel was sent out to assist and dutifully hauled the entire train into the Central station. The cavernous area of Newcastle's station was our only scheduled stop. Whilst additional car vans were being attached to the train at its rear, the two engines were being uncoupled and expeditiously removed to make way for a third diesel, probably rostered for our train.

And so, eventually, our train was to be seen wending its way across the river Tyne towards Gateshead and the deep south. Our new engine had obviously been cared for very carefully, We made as good speed as possible, with several fast sprints, and our engine clearly showed its capability of reaching Darlington. The railway layout at Darlington is such that non - stopping trains may by-pass the platform area, from which they are hidden by the canopy wall. The canopy wall also makes it possible to hide trains which would rather not be seen. By now we realised our second mistake. Firstly, we had unwittingly chosen the wrong day to travel and secondly had opted for an early sitting of lunch, wittingly to avoid the passenger increase at Newcastle and thereby again enjoy the very high standards of luxury to which we always look.

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED....."

Had we decided upon a later sitting, it would have been rather impracticable to keep scurrying from the deep softness of the seat in our First Class Open carriage to an open window. Hence we were able to watch and wonder as officials conversed beside our still train. Not before they appeared sure, was our engine uncoupled and made free to falter off. After an interval, we were surprised and delighted to see an M Pacific back onto the leading coach. So, with a feeling of far greater confidence, we pulled away in great majesty. From an open window it was a sight and sound to behold. Thankfully we did not publicise our hopes that considerable lost time - and there was plenty of that - might now be regained. Alas!, there was to be no steam traction south of York.

Whilst we took the opportunity so unexpectedly afforded to make a close examination of that handsome station, the motorail train was again dieselised. With York behind, our attempt to reach London seemed at last to be succeeding. The driver, although observant of speed restrictions, was clearly a determined man. Soon we were passing Doncaster, Grantham and Peterborough and darting across the wide-open countryside bordering East Anglia. Afternoon tea was taken, as with high speed we approached our destination. Our hot pursuit of time was in earnest, but in vain. Again! Perhaps determination and experience do not go hand in hand, for motive power failure occurred near Welwyn Garden City.

A further summons for assistance had to be answered and in time we moved forward at a leisurely pace to the Holloway terminal. Outside the converted sidings the train was split and a shunter pulled back the car vans before propelling them to the ramp at the end of the siding. Whilst it did so, the engine attached to the York diesel at Welwyn detached and disappeared into the darkness of a nearby tunnel. It was then our turn to be drawn back and shunted into the empty siding.

Standing in the adjacent siding was a rake of sleeping cars and our arrival was clearly a relief to numerous passengers booked to travel north overnight. By now they should have been well beyond the Home Counties, but cars do not fit very well into luggage vans! However, they could see that the rostered engine

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED..... " CONT.

had by now arrived on the scene. Rather unfortunately, it had failed at Welwyn! However, when we left the scene we were given to understand that engineers were endeavouring to effect some form of temporary repair.

Our journey from Holloway to the west of London required only one car, but the journey south from Edinburgh - approximately 390 miles - required no fewer than seven engines to complete!

On July 16th 1976, we were standing on Perth's No.1 platform watching a Class 40 locomotive back onto the southbound Motorail train - a line of seven first class carriages alongside Platform Four. As we watched it for twenty minutes or so, we couldn't but wonder. However, then our Glasgow train arrived thirty - five minutes late, hauled by a Class 47.

Can any reader recall more than seven engines on a London train, or could anyone describe their longest train journey - in terms of time relative to distance.

SCOTT BRUCE.

IN STEAM AGAIN

The " Union of South Africa ", former L.N.E.R. streamlined Pacific, now No. 60009, has been sighted very recently heading from Perth past Magdalen Green with a lengthy compliment of British Rail coaches.

Further enquiries have ascertained that this engine was undergoing trials after completion of an overhaul at British Rail's St. Rollox Works in Glasgow. Looking resplendent in her outward appearance, No.9 was turned on Dundee's turntable, before returning to her permanent home near Thornton.

(Our acknowledgement to David Mahoney for this information)

THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN. - 2

It was during this period of railway activity that the Dundee and Arbroath and the Arbroath and Forfar Railways now saw themselves fitting into the grand strategy of Scottish railway development, and a decision was taken at once to alter the rail gauge to the standard 4ft. 8½ ins. It was not a great task to convert two relatively small railways, but it is interesting to recall that during the 5ft. 6 ins. gauge period, trains ran on the right hand rather than the left - hand track.

A very good account of the origins of the railway companies operating between Perth and Dundee, Arbroath and Forfar is published in " Steam Trains to Dundee 1831 - 1863 ", published by the City of Dundee District Council, Museums and Art Galleries Department.

Before tracing out further developments in Angus, a more detailed consideration is needed of the lines that existed around Glasgow before the authorisation of the Caledonian. So far as gauge was concerned, the Dundee and Newtyle was not by any means an isolated case. Immediately north of the Clyde, there was a group of largely mineral lines all laid for the 4ft. 6 ins gauge, and most of them became incorporated into the Caledonian system. The oldest of them was the Monkland and Kirkintilloch, which connected the Monkland Canal and the coal mining districts south - east of Coatbridge with the Forth and Clyde Canal at Kirkintilloch. This was opened in 1826 and changed over from horse to steam traction in 1831.

In the same year of 1831 came the Garnkirk and Glasgow Railway. This latter line was, from the outset, more extensive than its name suggested. From its first opening it made a junction with the Monkland and Kirkintilloch at Gartsherrie, and in 1845 it was extended southwards and roughly parallel with the Monkland line for three miles, to make an end - on junction with the Wishaw and Coltness at Whifflet. At that time, 1845, the latter line extended through Motherwell and Wishaw to Coltness and Morningside. Thus at the time the Caledonian received its Act of Incorporation, there was a continuous line of 4 ft. 6 ins. railway from Morningside

into Glasgow, with two alternative routes alongside each other from Whifflet to Gartgill, half a mile north of Gartsherrie.

In its original approach to Glasgow, from the south, and its extension to the north, the Caledonian Railway made use of all three of these railways. It joined the Wishaw and Coltness Railway at Gammorgill Junction, curiously enough at a point almost exactly half way between Wishaw and Coltness. Bound - for Glasgow, Caledonian trains took the left - hand fork at Whifflet, and using the Garnkirk line passed through Coatbridge. But if bound directly for the north, the Monkland and Kirkintilloch Railway had to be used, since it was from this that the north main - line diverged at Garnqueen. This original piece of projecting was eventually to lead to one of the most curious anomalies in railway geography to be found anywhere in Britain. North of Garnqueen the line was pure Caledonian to Greenhill Lower Junction, where an end - on junction was made with the Scottish Central Railway.

The Monkland and Kirkintilloch was absorbed into the North British system, but despite the rivalry between this latter railway and the Caledonian, the north main line from Carlisle to Aberdeen continued to include 52 chains of North British metals, and this continued so even after Grouping. The junctions at the end of this short link were authorised by the Caledonian Railway Act of 1845, though that at the south end, Gartsherrie, was originally a junction between the Monkland and Kirkintilloch and the Glasgow, Garnkirk and Coatbridge. After the amalgamation of 1865, which brought the Monkland Railway into the North British system, an agreement was entered into between the latter company and the Caledonian in 1868, whereby the North British staffed and maintained the signalboxes at Gartsherrie and Garnqueen Junctions, duly passing on most of the charge to the Caledonian. Eight years later, however, when it was observed that the North British was using the line to no more than a limited extent, and running no passenger trains at all over it, it was agreed that in future the Caledonian should appoint, pay and clothe the signalmen concerned. There was another curiosity about this group of junctions that persisted until the end of 1869. From the opening of the Scottish Central Railway, trains from the north to Glasgow, if travelling over the Caledonian line from Castlecary, had to reverse direction in the Coatbridge area.

THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN cont.

It might have been expected that they would have reversed at Gartsherrie and proceeded into Buchanan Street. This was not so. (Buchanan Street was busy enough as it was - Ed.). Trains from the North transferred to the Edinburgh and Glasgow main line of the North British Railway at Greenhill Junction and ran to Queen Street, as they do today. This arrangement continued even after the Caledonian had absorbed the Scottish Central in 1865; indeed Queen Street station and its services to the north were included in the Caledonian timetables. In the meantime, the so-called " Hayhill Fork " was constructed between Gartcosh and Garnqueen North Junction. This connecting line was opened for Goods traffic in February 1866, but for some reason its use by passenger trains was postponed for four years. When it was opened in January 1870, the occasion marked the transference of the Caledonian north - bound service to Buchanan Street.

(To be continued.)

LESLIE MORRISON.

ANGUS LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT.

Stewart McDonald's item in the October 1974 issue relating to the 'Kirrie' Branch mentions briefly the accident which occurred at Balmuckety level crossing after the War. Here is a more detailed account of what happened, almost exactly thirty years ago.

A bus belonging to R. Davidson, motor hirer, Forfar, had been on a tour to Glen Clova on July 25th 1946. When it crashed through the crossing gates, just over a mile from Kirriemuir station, it was struck by the 5.08 pm train from Kirriemuir.

The bus was on a holiday tour from Forfar and the casualties were people from that district. Seven people were killed and seventeen injured. Dead and injured were strewn along both sides of the branch line and the bus reduced to matchwood, its chassis being dragged forty yards by the train. Part of the bodywork was thrown over a six foot sleeper fence into the crossing keeper's garden.

LINDSAY A. C. HORNE.