

COCK O' THE NORTH

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP



CR 123 With the Scottish Rambler Rail Tour at Auchinleck on 20 April 1962.

Lindsay A C Horne

Membership open to all railway enthusiasts

COCK O'THE NORTH

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March, 1977, Newsletter

E D I T O R I A L

Unlike North Sea oil, our Editorial well of information is providing only a very erratic supply. Indeed, for the past two months nothing has been forthcoming. Possibly this situation may be due in part to the Newsletter's irregular appearances of late, the result, we are given to understand, of Christmas delays. Recently our Group has acquired several new members, whom we all most cordially welcome. We would like to take this opportunity of inviting them to submit any article, either factual or fictional, on any railway subject.

THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE

" The Directors of the North British Railway have agreed to improvement in the arrangement at present in operation in connection with the supply of uniform to their stationmasters :-

1) The supply of second - class uniform to stationmasters will be discontinued, and those presently supplied with such uniform will be granted first - class uniforms.

2) The third - class uniform supplied to stationmasters will be slightly improved, and

3) Black bone buttons will be supplied in lieu of gilt buttons on all stationmasters' uniforms.

The new arrangement referred to will take effect when the next issue of clothing to stationmasters is being made.

L.A.C. HORNE.

(from " The Railway Magazine ", December, 1917.)

TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCOTLAND

A committee was appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland in February, 1918, 'to consider and report upon the rural areas in Scotland which are most in need of transport facilities for the promotion of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and the means of improving communication in these areas, with special reference to new or improved roads, light and narrow gauge railways, and motor transport, including any consequential modification of existing steamer services.'

The investigation was a prolonged one, and the resulting recommendations advocate the construction of no less than 382 miles of new railway, 85 miles of new road, a large mileage of road improvements, and the institution of road motor services and steamer services covering routes many hundred miles in length. On the assumption that a Ministry of Ways and Communication was to be established, the committee advocated the administration of these new improved transport services - in fact, all Scottish transport services - by a separate department charged with the control of ways and communications in the country. They maintain that the conditions are greatly dissimilar to those in England, and that there would be a gain in efficiency if a distinct body were to deal with the control of Scotch communications.

Many of the proposals possess considerable individual interest, but cannot now be discussed. The proposed new railway lines are set forth in the following tables of suggested standard and narrow gauge lines:-

Narrow gauge -

On the island of Skye	75 miles
On the island of Lewis	40
Dunoon and Strachur	21
On the island of Arran	<u>20</u>
Total	156

TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCOTLAND Cont.

Standard gauge -

Culrain and Lochinver	40 miles
Garve and Ullapool	33
Parton and Dalmellington	28
Turriff and Maud	21 $\frac{1}{2}$
Alford and Bellabeg	19
Conon and Cromarty	18
Ballater and Braemar	17
Stranraer and Drummore	14 $\frac{1}{2}$
Fraserburgh and Aberdour	9
Lybster and Dunbeath	8
Pinwherry and Ballantrae	8
Balfron and Fintry	8
Thurso and Scrabster	<u>2</u>
Total	226

Total length of recommended lines, 382 miles.

Remaining recommendations advocate new roads, 85 miles in length; road improvements on 225 miles of existing road; road motor services on routes 224 miles long; and new steamer and motor boat services on routes aggregating something like 1,000 miles.

PERTINENT PARAGRAPHS.

THE RAILWAY MAGAZINE.

JANUARY, 1920.

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REMEMBER

Back copies of "Cock o' the North" are still available at only 5p each. Avoid going to the "loo" at Edinburgh (Waverley) and you can afford to buy one. Why not avoid going twice? Be clever, it's still free on the trains.

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THE TRAINING OF LOCOMOTIVE DRIVERS

In few other countries of the world, probably, was there in steam days so little systematic education of engine crews as in Great Britain. There was no royal road to the position of command on the locomotive footplate; the road was a lengthy one, and there were no short cuts. Until after World War II, however, there were plenty of young men with railways in their blood who were prepared to face all that was involved in a locomotive career. They were destined to learn that all the knowledge they would need ultimately as drivers would be picked up more as a result of their own observation than by any systematic instruction.

(I feel sure that you are all familiar with the steps taken by the driver - to - be, from cleaner to ' passed fireman ' authorised to drive.)

In later years of steam locomotive development in Great Britain, the need for more formal instruction was beginning to gain recognition. A certain amount of specific tuition started to be given to younger members of the shed staff in specially equipped instruction cars or rooms. So - called mutual improvement classes also provided means for acquiring information, though attendance at them was voluntary. As previously stressed, the major proportion of the British steam locomotive driver's knowledge was amassed casually by personal observation. As a consequence, driving standards, and hence locomotive performance, varied widely. Some locomotive men undoubtedly became highly competent, and it has not been unknown for their observations on performance to have influenced locomotive designers. But training methods were casual in the extreme, engendering by no means insignificant losses in efficiency of motive power utilisation.

In the matter of crew training, French practice has been well ahead of the British. The French driver - to - be had to pass an examination before entering a railway technical school, there to be taught mathematics and science, inter - mingled with workshop experience and practical work on locomotives. After three

years so spent and successfully taking another examination, the 'apprenti' had further practical training as a fitter, boiler - maker or machinist until being called up for compulsory military service. On return to the railway he would begin a period as a 'chauffeur' or fireman lasting two to three years, at the end of which came a very stiff examination in the construction, handling and maintenance of locomotives, and knowledge of signalling, railway operation in general and safety rules.

Success in the examination earned the title 'eleve mecanicien', or pupil driver. Then would follow three or four years of driving freight or passenger (local) trains, whereafter success in a final examination would ensure promotion to the position of 'mecanicien', or driver. In French steam locomotive work seniority counted for very little; men with high initial qualifications could be passed through the firing and pupil driving stages much more quickly, with the result that highly capable young drivers might have as their firemen men considerably older than themselves.

In addition, French locomotive handling has always been subject to extremely strict rules. Cab fittings included self - recording speed indicators, the tapes from which showed whether or not the speed limits had been observed, and whether or not, on approaching a speed restriction or signal at caution or danger, the driver has acknowledged it by pressing a 'vigilance button', so marking the tape and confirming that he has been fully awake. French engine crews were also awarded substantial inducements to drive and fire intelligently, to get the best out of their equipment. One was a bonus for recovering lost time (with the speed recorder to confirm that it was not done by scamping speed restrictions), and another was a bonus for fuel economy (to ensure that the time regained was not at the expense of thrashing the locomotive). In these and other ways, French steam locomotive handling, and with it punctuality of operation, reached a higher level probably than anywhere else in the world.

RON BEATT.

(The above notes were taken, largely, from an article in the series 'History of Railways' published by New English Library).

MR FRANCIS SYMINGTON - TALBOT

It is not often that Mr Francis Symington - Talbot has the opportunity to put fingers to typewriter and describe his often unusual experiences on the railway. Although he is essentially a practical railwayman, he is a man who has a gift of literary expression which is widely sought after not only by Scottish railway associations but those across the Border. Indeed, the A.R.G. recently had the honour to receive and publish an article which he chose to write on the Tokenless Block System.

Those who have read his latest narrative entitled " A Mid Summer's Nights...." in the most recent issue of " The Strathspey Express " may possibly have been sceptical about his uncanny experiences in town A.... and concluded that his account could be nothing else than a figment of imagination. As a personal friend of Francis, I feel a necessary duty to stress the factuality of his account. Although at the time I agreed not to mention it, he did actually refer the matter to me briefly a considerable time before his article appeared. From his initial reluctance to speak of it and my necessity to probe for details, I could determine that his experience has not been something of a kind which one can readily cast to the back of their mind. Both he and I are convinced that the events of that night really did happen. This conviction stands fast after cool deliberation.

The writer himself had a not unsimilar experience when venturing upon a journey in a friend's time machine. Details of this venture and of what was seen during a brief visit to Carnoustie have already been described in a previous issue of this Newsletter.

My good friend, whose encounter with the local constabulary occupied all too much of their precious time, uses the first person singular when kindly requested to explain his activities. This certainly is not an example of victimisation of an individual, but rather of his mode of transport. In this respect the police are prejudiced, for who has heard tell of two constables waving down a crack London express merely to ask the driver to explain himself !

SCOTT BRUCE

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