

LEEDS TRANSPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS SHEET 174

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2013



LEEDS TRAM RIDES AGAIN!

Our hopes and ambitions for the last eight years came to fruition at the end of August.

As planned, Horse Tram 107 returned to fare-paying passenger service, albeit for two days only, and revived a short length of the Middleton Light Railway - the No.12 tram route - in the Middleton Railway Trust's car park just by the former Burton Road level crossing. This attracted a fair amount of media attention and provided a major feature for the Middleton Railway's Festival of Transport.

Readers will be aware that a sad incident cut the second day short and attracted even more attention - no doubt the media now wish that they had taken more notice of the event in the first place! Jamie Guest's account of the weekend appears below, together with a gallery of photographs from Jamie and from Colin Heaton, the reason for delaying this News Sheet. Hopefully we shall be back on time with the next issue in November.

FORTHCOMING L.T.H.S. MEETINGS & EVENTS

The 2013-2014 season is upon us and members should find the new programme enclosed.

Meetings start 7.30 for 8.00 p.m. prompt on the second Monday each month at the Richmond Hill Community Club, Railway Street, Leeds, LS9 8HB.

Mon. 9 Sept. - More Films from the TMS archives
Roger Benton

Mon. 14 Oct. - Trams & trains in the Mediterranean
Jamie Guest

Mon. 11 Nov. - European tramway video
from Mike Waring's camera

OTHER LOCAL MEETINGS & COMING EVENTS

Please give these local groups your support. Without a decent attendance they can hardly justify continuing. Remember - Use it or lose it!

Please contact the News Sheet coordinator with details of other local events which may interest members.

September

Tue. 10 (LRTA) Benelux 2013 Malcolm Hindes

Mon. 16 (LTTG) Buses, Trains and the odd Tram in the UK & Ireland Mel Reuben

October

Tue. 1 (MRT) 2012/2013 in camera Ian Dobson

Mon. 14 Samuel Ledgard Society Reunion
Rose & Crown, Otley

Tue. 15 (LRTA) USA Ian Dougill

Sat. 26 9th Annual Collectors Fair
Pudsey Civic Hall (Saml. Ledgard Society)

Sat. 26 -Sun. 27 Leeds Model Railway Exhibition
1000-1700, £6. Grammar School, Alwoodley Gates

November

Tue. 5 (MRT) To be advised

Tue. 12 (LRTA) Leeds Trams Remembered
An Evening of Nostalgia

Mon. 18 (LTTG) - Transport Films Sylvia Spencer
(her farewell performance)

December

Tue. 3 (MRT) Christmas social quiz - not too difficult! Team Plumb

Mon. 16 (LTTG) AGM members only

Groups, Meeting Places & Times

MRT - Middleton Railway Trust, The Engine House, Moor Road, Hunslet, LS10 2JQ, 7.30 p.m. Refreshments on sale at half-time break.

LRTA - Light Rail Transit Association, Leeds Area, Committee Room No.5, Leeds Civic Hall, 7.00-9.00 p.m. (room collection)

LTTG - Leeds Transport Touring Group, at Grove Inn, Back Row, Holbeck, 8.00 p.m. prompt. Room collection £1 including supper

CROYDON TRAMLINK TRIP, October

Pressure of work on 107 pushed finalising plans into the background, however details should be available by the October meeting or direct from Jamie Guest.

The idea is to travel by train one Saturday on a party ticket (to keep the cost down) then take Thameslink to East Croydon and ride the system from there.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Tony Cowell, Hon. Treasurer

The £10.00 membership subscription became due again from all members on 1 September. Payment will be welcomed at the September meeting, alternatively by cheque (payable to L.T.H.S.) by post to A. Cowell, 3 Windmill Rise, Aberford, LEEDS, LS25 3EW. If you require a receipt by return, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Alternatively, acknowledgement can be sent electronically via e-mail.

Members should note that details of membership are held on a data base. Anyone, should they so desire, can be removed from the list. Their status as a member will, of course, remain unaffected.

OBITUARY - Granville H. King

Our member Granville King died at home in Leicestershire on 13 August from heart disease. An active member in the early days and particularly with the trams at Middleton, Granville's career took him away from Leeds for most of his life.

His funeral will be at St. Mary's, Crich, on 4 October followed by a reception in the TMS's Red Lion. We hope to give a more detailed obituary and members' recollections in a future issue.

HORSE CAR 107 REPORT

Jamie Guest

Many members came down to Middleton to witness the launch into service of 107 after its restoration. This event was not a foregone conclusion and only took place after staff from Middleton had performed a thorough fitness-to-run examination on the Saturday and then a daily inspection each day that it ran. Before this, there had been much work done on operating and safety procedures.

In the weeks prior to the launch the team had been at Middleton nearly every day doing the final painting and lining, finishing the handrails, fitting the lamps and making and fitting the bell system. In fact my long-suffering wife saw a photo of me on Facebook and commented, "Thanks for letting me know where he had been for the last two weeks." Many people helped including volunteers from Middleton but I would particularly like to thank Jim Soper and Mike Waring from the LTHS and Steve Roberts, the CME, Malcolm Johnson, the machinist, Dave Hector for welding and Neil Carmichael for painting, all from Middleton.

It rained on Saturday and after Steve Roberts had done his examination I spent most of the day under the tram fitting split pins, washers, etc. and doing various other jobs, including helping with static brake tests. The last job was to fit the guard irons and their protector plates. We then pushed the tram out into the yard for a short time before it started to rain so 107 came inside again. Sunday dawned bright and fair and the horses arrived. I was busy making the second bell unit but various test runs were conducted, with and without horses before we were given the OK to put the tram into service. It was a very emotional time to see it set off for the first time drawn by two magnificent black Friesian stallions. We then got ready for the first public trip at 11.00 a.m. I was told to take my boiler suit off and join the passengers. Several LTHS members were on board for that historic first trip and I was very surprised how well it rode. The ride was steady and smooth and the view was brilliant. We reversed at the far end and came back. It was back to the workshop for me and the tram crew then settled down to a steady routine of a trip every 15 minutes. The horses got used to pulling the tram and were soon starting forward as soon as they heard the bell ring. Altogether 200 passengers were carried on Sunday.

On Monday the weather was even better. For various reasons a different team of horses turned up so we had

two full test runs before starting public running. Service running started at 10.30 and full loads were carried most of the time until lunch at 1.00 p.m. For once I wasn't in the workshop making things so was able to circulate and admire 107. The crew of Mike Waring (Conductor), Geoff Senior (Brakesman), Matt Senior (upper deck steward) and Norman the driver worked well along with the two horse handlers who helped to turn the horses and reattach them at each end of the run. Meanwhile a reception was being laid out upstairs and at 1.00 p.m. we were pleased to welcome Councillor Tom Murray, the Lord Mayor, and his wife Edna, the Lady Mayoress. They joined us for a reception in the Conference Room. There we were able to say thanks to the families of the rebuild team along with people who had contributed to the project as well as several of the craftsmen who had made parts. I welcomed everyone and then the Lord Mayor replied after which David Gibbs and Colin Heaton, President and Chairman of the TMS respectively, thanked the LTHS for the gift of 107 and in particular for the long relationship between the LTHS and the TMS. After that we went down to 107 and Margaret Donald and her family were invited into the lower saloon where the Lord Mayor unveiled a small plaque that reads

IN MEMORY OF BERNARD DONALD
1933 TO 2010
WITHOUT WHOM 107 WOULD NOT BE
RUNNING

These words had been carefully chosen to reflect Bernard's contribution to the project. The Lord Mayor then posed for photos on the platforms of the tram and was presented with souvenir ticket No. 0001 in memory of the day. He then travelled up and down the line and the rest of the official party got on the second trip.

More public trips were then done before a very unfortunate incident occurred in which one of the horse handlers was badly injured. I can't say more about this, as it is now in the process of being investigated by the Rail Accident Investigation Board (RAIB) and Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI). Fortunately the lady appears to be recovering in hospital and our best wishes got to her and her family in wishing her a full and safe recovery.

The next morning we were all back at Middleton to load the tram onto Scott's low loader for the journey to Crich. 107 was eventually loaded and left Leeds shortly after 1 p.m. It arrived safely at Crich and after the ramp had been built touched down on Crich metals at 16.02. A photo opportunity was then staged with 399 alongside. I missed that as I was being interviewed by the RAIB but as I write 107 is housed in the workshop.

The weekend was a very positive one and it was fabulous to see the "garden shed" turned back into a working tram again having carried over 450 people in the two days. We are just sorry that things ended as they did.

We returned to Middleton on the Wednesday to tidy up the workspace and are now left with decisions about how to fill our Wednesdays, but that is a story for another day.



Mike Waring supervises a happy load of top deck passengers on the Sunday



Before and after - the Lord Mayor with a photo of 107 in garden shed mode

Matt Senior shows the Lord Mayor the refurbished Kaye's Patent Fare Box. As well as a souvenir ticket, passengers received a penny to pay their "fare" to the conductor.





Sheeted for protection against overhanging branches, 107 travels south on the motorway

Touchdown! Mike Crabtree gives gravity a hand as 107's new wheels feel their first tram rail.



The eagle has landed! 107 outside the depot at Crich.

BOOK REVIEW

Malcolm Hindes

Charleroi's trams since 1940

Geoffrey Skelsey & Yves-Laurent Hansart

Some years ago this reviewer offered to present films of continental tramways at an LTHS meeting. "Our members aren't interested in foreign stuff" was the polite (?) response.

So why review a book about a once mucky town in southern Belgium? Moreover, why has the (British) LRTA even published such a book, and in English only? Why is it selling so well in the bookshop at Crich that they are awaiting fresh stocks? Admittedly, one of the authors is English, but what interest has Charleroi got for us in Yorkshire?

Think of a large town, now a city, founded in the Middle Ages with its centre on the rising ground north of the crossing point of an east-flowing river. Iron forging developed to the west, benefiting from local deposits of coal. In the nineteenth century the town expanded rapidly due to industries including locomotive building. This resulted in terraces of brick-built houses and basic private enterprise transport services, later taken into public ownership. As well as serving the locality, there were long tram routes linking with neighbouring towns.

Sounds familiar? Not quite Leeds, but near enough. Charleroi is virtually an amalgam of the geography of Leeds with the feel of Sheffield or Barnsley. It is in the province of Hainaut, the closest thing Belgium has to match the industrial West Riding of Yorkshire.

By the mid-20th Century, Charleroi had two separate tram systems. TEPCE (*Tramways Electriques du Pays de Charleroi et Extensions*) operated mainly in the eastern part of the town. The rest was served by SNCV (*Société National des Chemins de Fer Vicinaux*) the amazing nationwide tram network (so extensive that one batch of new trams built in Ostend were actually driven cross-country on interconnected track to Charleroi under their own power - the equivalent of Liverpool to Leeds if the missing links had existed, albeit half as far again).

Incredibly, although both systems were of metre gauge and electrified, and their routes crossed at three different places, there was only one actual track connection, save for a short-lived link between the adjacent termini at Gare du Sud, installed during German occupation in WWII and disconnected soon after liberation.

Following the reorganisation of Belgian public transport in the 1970's, the former TEPCE services were all replaced with buses, while a handful of the SNCV routes were retained to form the nucleus of a planned light rapid transit system MLC (*Métro Léger de Charleroi*) with central street track replaced by tunnels. This plan - as did the *préMetro* in Antwerp - hit funding problems and a substantial proportion of the system remained unfinished for many years, again

like Antwerp. The city centre circle and one route have only recently opened while another, virtually complete with track, live overhead and signalling since 1985, remains out of use. The street track north to Jumet and Gosselies was retained for depot access; it was refurbished and finally reopened to passengers, still largely street tramway, in June 2013.

However the greatest survivor must be the long westerly route to Anderlues. Beyond Pétria, the intended terminus of the MLC, it reverts to a single-track roadside tramway, typical of early 20th century Vicinal, then once past Anderlues depot runs down the middle of the village street to an off-road terminus.

For many years another route remained intact, albeit closed, from Anderlues to Thuin, where the ASVi (*Association pour la Sauvegarde du Vicinal*) established a superb tram museum, running over the southern end of the route as far as Lobbes. Before disconnection in the 1990's it was still possible to run museum cars through on to the main MLC system.

What of the book itself? Like our own "Leeds Transport on Postcards" it is a thickish A4 volume, although at £22.50 for 112 pages paperback (plus a large fold-out map) it is arguably less good value.

It is extensively illustrated, with over 200 photographs, most of them in colour. Sadly many of these are quite small - virtually contact print size (assuming 120 film) - so much so that it is often hard to distinguish features highlighted in the captions. Those that do get half a page or more are superb. A few extra pages would have allowed space to do many more of them justice. Having featured reviews in these pages of two recent Leeds tram books littered with careless mistakes, it is refreshing to find one of such clearly evident authority. Even so, this reviewer spotted a couple of slip-ups. There is occasional confusion between east and west (a shared failing) and almost inevitably the regional name Hainaut eventually becomes the English town Hainault (but only once!).

The authors have taken great pains to research their subject, even though they both already had extensive knowledge of the system; the acknowledgements run to two pages. Notable among them is our own Eric Smith - what better recommendation could there be than that?

If you don't know Charleroi this book will encourage you to go and explore it; if you do know it already you will want to go back again - this reviewer did!

NEWS SHEET DISTRIBUTION

M.H.

Members who elect to receive their News Sheet by email should receive this as soon as it is ready. Printed copies are distributed at the next monthly meeting, after which postal copies are sent out.

Opt for email and you will get first sight as well as saving the Society over 50p a copy.

Send me an email and I'll add you to the list!

Contributions of news or articles for News Sheets are always welcome and may be submitted to the News Sheet co-ordinator, Malcolm Hindes, at 34 Moor Park Villas, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 4BZ, e-mail malcolm.hindes@btinternet.com

All statements and comments are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent Society policy.

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