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Newsletter of the VINTAGE CARRIAGES TRUST.

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 Secretary : W. G. S. Henderson.
 Treasurer : G. Massey.
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 Editor : C. G. Smyth.

News of the "Future Coach Policy" Meeting at Haworth on Saturday November 10th will already have reached many VCT members. A copy of the minutes of this meeting is attached. Among the meeting's decisions are recommendations that the Gresley Observation Car, the Gresley BSK, and Mr. Watkinson's LMS coach should be evicted from Worth Valley metals in the near future.

Why should any of these coaches be of direct concern to the VCT?

Since last July the VCT has been negotiating with the Gresley Society about the future of the BSK. These negotiations were instigated by the VCT Committee and approved by the Worth Valley Council. Agreement in principle between the VCT and the Gresley Society was reached several weeks before the "Future Coach Policy" Meeting.

Thus the decision to evict the BSK, if ratified by the WV Council, requires the VCT either to go back on its word or to come into direct conflict with WVR policy.

PLAN AHEAD

The decisions of the "Future Coach Policy" Meeting represent the views of a vociferous group of WVR members which includes some of the Railway's most active operating staff.

They feel that the railway is overcrowded and impoverished and have convinced themselves that the ritual sacrifice of a number of "hen huts" will put things right. They argue that the railway has no obligation whatever to such vehicles even if it has used them in the past.

Such strongly held views deserve attention. The Worth Valley is certainly overcrowded, it would be virtually impossible to find a safe location for a single extra vehicle. But what is the cause of this congestion? The new "Stockbook" gives the explanation - a continuing influx of big engines and surplus BR coaches. Have these been bought to a plan? No. Most of the locos are too big for regular WVR service while the coaches represent the fad of the moment (TSO, SLO, Suburban, TBSL). There are now 12 operating coaches with the Mets and Chatham in reserve to meet a peak requirement of 10 vehicles in traffic on a handful of days a year. In addition there is the rapidly expanding departmental fleet. Is it not time a halt was called.

The railway's poverty is a more debatable subject. The new sheds at Oxenhope and Danems Loop are more likely to give the unbiased observer an impression of modest prosperity. Such an observer might also note that KWVRPS now owns 12 steam locos against two in 1968. Cries of woe from the Finance Committee might be more impressive if it were a little less elusive and a little more consistent.

The VCT has now gone a long way towards putting its own house in order and has even managed to take on one or two of the Worth Valley's responsibilities. With £2350 in hand we should be able to provide the WVR with a collection of historic vehicles it can be proud to display. It is true that volunteer labour will be required; labour of the sort now being put into "City of Wells" or railbus maintenance. Some of us believe that such "non-essential jobs" help to keep the WVR alive.

Is it too much to ask that the WVR should pursue a consistent policy towards historic coaches? Or must the VCT always be ready to defend its interests at a moment's notice? If this is the case perhaps some effort could be made to ensure that all the ramifications of schemes like those to purchase extra coaches or to move the railbuses into Oxenhope White shed are fully discussed by all interested parties. Sometimes their disadvantages outweigh their more obvious benefits.

C. G. Smyth

(For further comments on this contentious subject see correspondence below).

KEIGHLEY VCT SHOP

This provides a good proportion of our income and if we are to remain "in the money" this shop must be open at weekends.

At the moment staffing the shop falls on the shoulders of one or two people who are also actively involved in other parts of the Worth Valley Railway. Need I go any further? You can probably guess what is coming next, - yes an appeal for staff (no salary or any other benefits).

If any VCT member would care to have a go at selling our wares to the festoons, please come along and present yourself. Anyone requiring any details should write to P. Andrews, c/o Haworth Station, Keighley, Yorks.

P. Andrews

A VOTE OF THANKS

This must go to Mr. A. C. Coope of Bradford who has, since the opening of our premises at Keighley Station, provided the VCT with pictures that have proved to be very popular, particularly with children. Mr. Coope makes these himself with magazine 'cut-outs' and carefully sized pieces of glass, the end product being an attractive picture of railway interest.

P. Andrews

A Balanced Collection (Continued)

Mr. J. Watling writes to amend Gordon Massey's list of preserved vehicles in VCT News No. 3. The GER complement is rather larger than 3, an up to date list being:

Bressingham	Eastern Counties 1st class coach 1851
M&GB PRS	GER Brake 3rd 50' No 295 built 6/07 for Norfolk Coast Express.
Stour Valley RFS	GER passenger train brake van 32' 6-wheel No 553 of 6/90.
Saffron Walden MRC	GER 3rd family saloon No. 37 built 1897.
MRFS, Chasewater	GER passenger train brake van 6-wheel No. 44 built 1885.
Market Overton	GER ex Royal Saloon No. 5 built 1898.
	GER Directors saloon No. 63 built 1912.
	GER General Manager's saloon No. 1 built 1920.

It is noteworthy that only 3 of these vehicles are proper coaches, the remainder being vans or special purpose vehicles. Analysis of the preserved vehicles from other pre-grouping companies reveals a similar state of affairs and emphasizes the value of the VCT's collection.

LETTERS

Sir,-

The list of railway company coaches made very interesting reading in the last newsletter, and I wholeheartedly support the VCT in its interest in the Gresley BSK, particularly in view of its rarity. I think it is extremely unfortunate, therefore, that one of the results of a Worth Valley meeting held on November 10th to look into coaching policy, was a vote against the BSK staying on the line, despite the very positive steps being taken by the VCT to rescue it.

I think it is interesting that the railway can boast a number of main line engines of the LMS-LNER era, and until a couple of weeks ago there were six comparable main line coaches of that era. Since then, "Zena" has been removed from the Worth Valley, presumably because there was no attempt to look after it; it has been tacitly agreed that the Gresley Observation coach must leave (despite a potential most railways would exploit); the condition of "Lorna" leaves a lot to be desired, and its future is uncertain. So, apart from the SECR matchboard, we are left with just the Gresley BSK and the Gresley buffet. If the condition of the buffet is allowed to deteriorate then no doubt that will no longer be wanted on Worth Valley metals. If we are not careful, then, we are likely to be reduced to one main line coach from the great age of British steam (and that will not be through the efforts of the Worth Valley).

I think it is also worth saying that of those six coaches, the Gresley BSK is the one most suited to the local railway scene. It would be very regrettable if the railway reached the stage of having half a dozen engines depicting the 1930s and yet was unable to turn out a train to match it - both from the aesthetic point of view and from the point of view of historical accuracy in filming.

I hope that VCT members will show their determination in attempting to retain such a splendid coach as the BSK, and perhaps, that more members will show active interest in other coaches such as the buffet (before it is too late).

For me the final disappointment of the November 10th meeting was the lack of support for the BSK by our own chairman; all the more surprising in view of the effort he once put into restoring the GNR 6-wheeler.

David R. Smith

The VCT Chairman, Robin Higgins, replies to the above as follows:

If we look at Worth Rail's priorities in approximate order of importance for continued existence they would be something like this:

- 1) Annual payments to BR for the railway. Rates, insurance, electricity, gas, water, oil, coal.
- 2) Maintenance of track, working locos, WORKING coaches.
- 3) Renewal of track.
- 4) Maintenance of bridges, fences, stations.
- 5) Provision of sheds for locos and stock.
- 6) Picnic areas etc.

Then, way down on the list comes non-working locos and coaches. Only items 1) are fully paid for. Items 2-5 get a percentage of the money that ought to be spent. This obviously means that Worth Rail has no money to spend on non-working coaches.

Looking at the Gresley Society, it would appear that the only work they have done is negative, i.e. removing panels from the coach and letting the weather in. After some 12 years existence, they haven't got much money either. They have members who say they would work on the stock if it were nearer London, but the committee are unwilling to move.

In 1965 when I was restoring the GN 6 wheeler, two Gresley Society members used to come working on their BSK at intervals (if I remember correctly) of one or two days per month. Their intention was to restore the BSK to varnished teak. However, by that time, even small teak panels suitable for the GN were difficult to come by. Consequently, some teak veneered plywood panels had to be used on our 6 wheeler.

Gresley coaches were built with matching teak panels. Therefore, to "restore" it even to the standard of the GN with its various shades of teak, would be as un-authentic as painting 41241 in red livery! Anticipating that the BSK would deteriorate faster than the two Gresley stalwarts were able to restore it, I wrote to their secretary, advising him of the position, offering to help, suggesting that a postwar painted teak livery be applied. All to no avail. Money was poured down the drain by the Gresley Society on a professional job which, instead of using single panels, butt-jointed two together with polyfilla! No further comment necessary.

In 1965 I had visions of us running nice little branch trains with 6 whorled coaches, and Midland clerestories. Alas, too many hours shunting Haworth and Oxenhope yards, working ballast trains on midweek evenings etc, etc have left me old and embittered (do I hear strains of violins?).

Seriously, though, if the "City of Wells", I&Y Saddle tanks fund, 4MT society, VCT members etc all downed tools and merely worked on their own pet projects, the railway would gring to a halt, because they are Worth Valley operating staff with different hats on. It would be nice to have all the coaches (and locos) restored but this is an impractical pipe dream. Buying the coaches was the easy part.

The VCT has its own coaches to look after, and logically you should look after your own first.

Robin Higgins.

(The above are Robin's personal opinions, not current VCT policy. Further correspondence on this thorny topic would be welcome. Editor).

IN THE BLACK

Since the first stage of the Chatham project was completed expenditure has been limited to purchases of stock for Keighley shop. Trading has been very healthy over the past 8 months. Purchases have amounted to some £600, income to £1300. The bank balance has risen from £1350 at the end of April to £2350 at the end of November.

Many thanks to the team at Keighley and those members who have attended exhibitions with our sales stand. We are now in the position where the restoration of two vehicles using mainly professional labour should be possible over the next six to twelve months.

Gordon Massey.

WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY → FUTURE COACH POLICY

Minutes of meeting held at Haworth Con Club on Sat 10.11.73.

Present: Malham(chair), Massey(Secretary), Goodall, Hilton, Eastham, England, Smith, Griffin, Greenwood, Cope, Bradley, Smyth, Kilburn, Roberts, Higgins, Adams.

1. Noted Zena has departed for good.
2. Agreed there was little we could do with Obs. GM to write to Gresley Soc. asking them to move it - hopefully within 3 months - and to point out deterioration.
3. IF Railbuses operate from Oxenhope shed 2 coaches would have to move. Recommend first Sales BG then Gresley Obs to Kly - WHEN/IF NECESSARY. One coach could also go to Haworth in place of DRB.
4. Hoped that next year we can extend white shed to cover 3 more bogies. Will provide maintenance area and storage for restored items.
5. General point made that spending a lot of money on coaches will be difficult -cult to justify. Budget next year (£1000 approx) will only cover maintenance and repaint of service stock.
6. VCT projects will inevitably direct labour away from other Railway projects although naturally they only work on old coaches because they want to do so.
7. View of C.&W. that WVR labour is too limited to take on restration tasks.
8. Mets - Considered the 2 in service do to much running for age and they are under-maintained to the point of danger. Certainly due for lifting. However they are high-capacity & C.&W. would like them to be retained. To be taken out of service next year and given long slow overhaul.
9. Desirable to purchase BS to replace No 12 also additional SLO would be useful making total of 14 operating coaches incl 2 Mets & 3 TSOs.
10. TBSL (The new Buffet thingy)- fixed fittings on worth in view of extensive work required. Catering Dept to assess what they wish to do with it bearing in mind that it must see intensive use in service to justify high expenditure. If it is kept consider disposal on one other operating coach eg No 13.
11. Gresley BSK - VCT in advance stages of negotiation with Gresley Soc re restoration of this vehicle - estimated that over 1000 would be spent & cash is available. WVR would be asked to provide shed space whilst exterior and roof attended to. Appreciated by VCT that no prospect of permanent cover in foreseeable future. Notwithstanding these proposals feeling of meeting (9-4 majority) that this coach should be told to leave second to obs.
12. Lorna. Departure would be viewed with regret. Mr Baker and Bishop should be asked to conclude agreement or preferably arrange outright purchase. Recommend up to £1500 be offered - raise money by loans - RSG and mates will underwrite. If price higher our men to report back.
13. Recommend Mr Watkinson be instructed to remove LMS coach before 1st March.
14. Lawson Saloon. Recommend we should raise no objection to any proposals to take elsewhere but would be sorry to see it go. If it stays we would aim to keep it under cover.
15. Horwich Hilton. Remain where it is. B.K. Hilton to paint.
16. Sleeping Cars. No action.
17. Sales BGs. Move wooden bodied one to Kly for long term storage. try to paint next year.
18. S & T Stores Van. S & T to paint please.
19. NER Saloon II73. J Cox to be asked to state future restoration plans.
20. MSLR Comp. VCT have movement to Bradford in hand.
21. Lorna's Saloon. If package deal with Fulman we may have to keep it - otherwise we would prefer to see it go.
22. MR 6 wheeler. VCT long-term project
23. GNR 6 wheeler. Try to get under cover- either green shed if it considered to be a worthwhile display item or otherwise into stone shed.
24. 1st class Met. To remain at Oakworth. GM/MWC to ascertain owner's future intentions. Whatever happens we must make good vandal damage.
25. Buffet. Seek views of catering dept on future use. C.&W. unable to offer labour for any repaint or renewals.

The meeting closed late, very late

G. Massey
Ad Hoc Secretary
11.11.73.