

VCT News

Vintage Carriages Trust, Hawerth Station,
Hawerth, Keighley, Yorkshire, BD22 8NJ.

Registered as a Charity
No. 510776

Spring/Summer 1981

Editorial

This issue sees a change of page size from the traditional foolscap size to the international A4 size. If anyone is intending to type out an item for inclusion in future issues, it is still necessary to ensure a minimum of at least five spaces clear at both sides so that, if we are able to use it without any "cutting", it will fit within the horizontal limits of the stencil which are the same as Foolscap. Incidentally, the editorial typewriter has "Pica", spacing which allows 74 characters on a line within the horizontal limits - this paragraph has been limited to 72 to allow for any adjustment on the duplicator.

The Winter issue seemed to be appreciated, by what I hear, and I hope you will find this issue to be of interest.

EGC.

AT LAST! Charitable Status achieved.

We are pleased to announce that the Trust is now a Registered Charity, Number 510776.

This confers certain advantages, including in the areas of tax liability and Four Year Covenants (of which more later). We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our Honorary Auditor, Mr. Richard Coulson for so successfully guiding us towards this end.

MWC.

"Sir Berkeley" and "Bellerophon".

Charitable status leaves the way clear to investigate the next stages concerning these locomotives - subject, of course, to the formal confirmation of the Trust in General Meeting. The K. & W.V.R.P.S. Council has agreed to sell "Bellerophon" to the Trust for a nominal one pound, subject to a clause that V.C.T. would use its best endeavours to sell the locomotive back to the W.V.R. in the event of V.C.T. ceasing to exist. A price for "Sir Berkeley" has yet to be agreed: as the owner of the locomotive has made it very clear that his wishes are that it should remain on Worth Valley metals, an amicable and mutually acceptable arrangement should readily be reached.

The Science Museum is sending the appropriate forms to us for possible Department of Education and Science Grant Aid towards the purchase and restoration of these two locomotives. After the extended correspondence in the "Letters to the Editor" columns of "Push and Pull", some five people have now offered financial assistance towards "Bellerophon", including a major sum from one of our senior members. We are, of course, extremely grateful for these offers which (after confirmation by the Trust as a whole that we should proceed with these projects) we would take up, where appropriate and acceptable, as Four Year Covenants: these give a major tax benefit without extra expense to the Donor, subject only to him/her being a UK tax payer.

We would ask you to consider seriously what assistance you can give to both of these projects ("Sir Berkely" and "Bellerophon"), not only by

way of financial contribution but also in particular by way of practical work. We will be in touch with you after the course of these projects becomes more certain: however, there is absolutely no reason why you should not complete a Four Year Covenant Form in favour of V.C.T. now (if you pay United Kingdom Income Tax), to help with the present programme of more coach restoration and preservation.

The Secretary is in the process of organising the necessary Covenant Forms: if there isn't one enclosed with this edition of "VCT News", please write to him, c/o Haworth Station, for one. You may, of course, pay your annual subscription (currently £1.50 each year) by Four Year Covenant: but while about it you may like to augment the figure to include a substantial donation towards Trust funds. The advantage is, of course, that Income Tax may be recovered by the Trust, which has the effect of increasing the sum donated by some 42.9% (with the present tax rates) at no extra cost to the Covenantor. Put another way, every £100 you give to the Trust under a Four Year Covenant is worth very nearly £143 to the Trust. (Paying by Bankers' Standing Order is preferable but not essential).

MWC.

Shop.

The Spring Enthusiasts' Weekend produced total V.C.T. sales of £720, of which just over half was at our stall erected on Oxenhope platform. This compares with £736 for the corresponding weekend the previous year and £523 the year before that.

If this very useful income is to be maintained, we need to make sure that our shop on platform 4 at Keighley Station is open as often as is possible. If you are able to help here, please contact Malcolm Loukes - his address is 43, Carr Bank Lane, Sheffield, S11 7FB, and his telephone number is Sheffield (0742) 304547. Of course, if you are already on, or wish to join, the Worth Valley Stations Roster, you should contact the WV Rostering Officer, Mr. G. Lewthwaite either c/o Haworth Station or by telephoning him on Leeds (0532) 637042.

It's worth remembering that there is only one major British Rail "do" this year - at Crewe on Saturday June 6th: after that, nothing until the Worth Valley Autumn Steam Gala. Hence the urgent need to get that shop OPEN! So, your assistance, please! - particularly mid-week during summer: some "expenses" may be available.

MWC.

Annual Dinner ?

A suggested venue is the Indian Restaurant in Cavendish Street, Keighley (formerly the Imperial Restaurant) - sometime in the Autumn. A private room is available, as is a good Indian and a restricted English menu, at "middle of the road" prices. Any views for or against, or suggesting alternative locations, to the Secretary please.

MWC.

Rolling Stock News

First Class Met. No. 509

The failure of the contractor who is producing the replacement corner post to actually complete this has resulted in disappointingly slow progress. This corner post represents the "critical path" of this project. Work which has been done includes further cleaning-up of interior trim and removing paint from the coach exterior.

MWC.

Nine Compartment Met. Coach No. 465.

Work has been progressing quite well on, and in, this coach recently.

All the exterior woodwork is now sound, painted and very presentable

ready for a day's filming at the end of April. It is then intended to renew the final two or three exterior panels which, on close inspection, tend to spoil the appearance of the vehicle. The coach will be painted and varnished, probably in June, to complete the external bodywork.

Work on the inside has also been progressing well. A joiner has recently rebuilt a large part of the structure in the Keighley end compartment which had been extensively damaged by water over the years. The bulkheads and new ceiling panels have since been painted and some trim and the seats re-fitted. This will very shortly give a total of five compartments restored to the Metropolitan Railway style, work on the sixth is about 50% complete and, if all goes well, should be finished by the Summer. Meanwhile a start has been made on the seventh compartment and the joiner is well advanced in rebuilding part of the structure in the eighth.

So, taking into account the considerable amount of work carried out on the outside of the coach and the number of compartments restored and nearly restored, it can be happily said, at long last, that the restoration is well past the half way stage.

M.S.

Chatham coach S3554S.

This coach is at present available for traffic and was used for the Santa Specials and the Super Train specials for this year.

A V.C.T. volunteer (Graham Bentley) has recently spent quite a lot of time and effort tidying up the interior which was beginning to look a bit shabby. For example, some blinds were torn and hanging off the mountings, blind covers and droplight straps were missing and various surfaces needed cleaning. The interior is now respectable once more and no doubt the effort will be greatly appreciated by everyone.

However, the exterior is poor at the moment and work to rectify this will probably start in June. This will include repairs to the matchboarding and droplights, a lot of rubbing down (any volunteers?) and then re-painting in the BR(S) green as mentioned in the last edition of VCT News. The opportunity will also be taken to re-paint the interior ceilings while the vehicle is out of traffic.

M.S.

G.N.R. six-wheeler

Spectacular progress has been made - (mainly contracted-out) following the notes in the previous edition of VCT News.

Bulleid TSO E1469S

Awaiting possible visit to Carlisle C&W.

Met. Brake No. 427

"Spring cleaned", in service.

M.S.& L. four-wheeler.

Steady (volunteer) progress.

MWC.

The Midland Railway 6-wheeler remains at Oxenhope for the time being: meanwhile, I have been looking through back issues for information about the VCT's wagon: it was noted as coming to the end of its useful life in 1978. Wagons and vans don't seem to have the same glamorous appeal as coaches and locos, but theirs was a vital role in the early railway days (and indeed in modern times in the country's "hours of need"). Your editor would be interested to hear from any members who find goods trains, and the vehicles which made them up, of interest, particularly from the preservation angle.

EGC.

Whilst declaring an interest as a Vice-Chairman of this Body, I must confess that my active participation in its activities is limited to helping to maintain the Trust's operating coaches in such a condition and attending the occasional meeting. Like so many other members I am prevented through lack of free time from getting involved in the work of actual restoration and share the frustration of not being able to help in this rewarding task. It is from this position, therefore, that I feel able to comment on the V.C.T.'s position relative to carriage preservation in general.

In the fifteen years that I have been involved in railway preservation by far the greatest contribution to railway carriage preservation has been that made by the National Railway Museum. The rebirth of the Museum at York together with massive funding and consequent reorganisation, has already produced spectacular results. Also, the fact that the National Collection has the right to retain an example of every type of vehicle coming out of service, and that it has now more room to store them, should ensure that a truly representative collection is built up in the future. Moreover, the Museum's policy of using preserved stock rather than merely keeping it static display has produced such worthwhile events as the touring train of historic dining cars which commemorated the centenary of railway catering, in September, 1979.

Having said that, the remaining true carriage preservation scene is almost non-existent. This was very much brought home by the Rocket 150 event at Rainhill in May 1980. How much better it would have been for the locomotives involved to have been working trains of preserved stock, rather than the odd coach or two, or, as in most cases, merely a light engine drifting by. Of all the coaching stock in the cavalcade only four coaches were not from the National Collection - a Caledonian Railway coach from the Scottish R.P.S., a Pullman Car from Carnforth, and a GWR and an LMS example from the Severn Valley Railway. Of course, these were brought to Rainhill from their home depots by participating locomotives, thus other bodies were possibly precluded from exhibiting their stock if they had not been invited to send locomotives, but I feel that this was a true reflection of the "private" preservation scene. During the last few years I have been able to visit every established preservation site in England, Scotland and Wales, with the exception of Bressingham, Strathspey, Hereford, Market Bosworth, and the Gwili and Llangollen schemes. From the multiplicity of these visits I have come to the conclusion that there are two main causes why coach preservation is very much a poor relation in railway preservation as a whole:

- i) conflicting interests of coach preservation and operating a preserved line;
- ii) lack of undercover accommodation.

In the former case, it is much easier to purchase a modern vehicle and put it straight into use to earn money than to purchase a historic coach which first needs massive restoration work before it can enter revenue service. Many historic vehicles are also not of a suitable type for passenger use on preserved lines. Ease of maintenance and standardisation (two of the reasons why the modern vehicles were built in the first place) are other reasons for the popularity of the B.R. coaches relative to their older counterparts.

Once a railway is established one might expect the situation to change. Once a regular income from admission charges, or fares, is achieved, one might think that something might be done with the older vehicles, often purchased quite cheaply in the early days of the organisation when money was hard to come by and enthusiasm was at a high level. However, this is often not the case, and would appear to be due to the second factor - lack of undercover space and facilities. Building is very expensive and what little can be done is usually earmarked for housing the locomotives. How many preservation schemes have workshops or sheds? Often the locomotive fleet expands to fill the available space: as a result the lines of derelict carriage corpses continue to rot away quietly in overgrown sidings, presenting a not-so-very pretty sight to visitor and passenger alike.

I am quite often appalled, not so much at these lost causes, but at the condition of the operating stock on some lines: carriages which were obviously restored or superficially restored after purchase from B.R., but after several years in private hands are obviously in a far worse condition than when purchased. Again this, I am sure, is because of lack of facilities. Often the labour has been available in the past and produced a good restoration job, but when I return after a few years I see much regression, the worker/s having given up the battle with the elements. It is no accident that the locations which are able to display respectably preserved vehicles are the ones where organisers have not only given some thought to undercover facilities for restoration but also for protective housing afterwards. Outstanding amongst such organisations (which can be counted on the fingers of one hand) must be the Bluebell Railway. The Sea Containers, Ltd., project at Carnforth appears to have collected together a number of Pullman Cars and should ensure a safe future for them, albeit (for most of them) abroad. Apart from these few instances, however, I see very little hope, at the moment, for the considerable number of so-called preserved coaches at many locations up and down the country. It is one thing to boast of the size of your fleet or collection, quite another to keep ahead of decay.

Where does the V.C.T. stand in all this? I am glad to be able to say that it scores highly in my books for several reasons. Not only has the Trust shown itself capable of restoring coaches but also of keeping them that way. I am sure that this is largely due to its special relationship with the Keighley & Worth Valley Light Railway, which itself has undertaken restoration in its carriage workshop of its own historic coaches - the last remaining intact LMS 9-compartment second, and a Pullman Car - whilst also maintaining its operating fleet of more modern stock. But it is in the joint agreement with the V.C.T. that the Trust shall have guaranteed undercover accommodation on the railway that the Trust's strength lies. This has resulted in the successful restoration of the S.E.C.R. brake third and the Metropolitan brake, whilst currently restoration continues on the MS&LR 4-wheeler, the GNR 6-wheeler and the Metropolitan 7-compartment first and 9-compartment second coaches - all under cover. Each job is therefore able to progress steadily in workshop conditions.

The presence of restored examples in Worth Valley trains not only enhances the image of the railway as a whole, but also has resulted in them being in much demand by film and television companies. Moreover the fact that the V.C.T. is able to fund its restoration work by its own efforts, in the bookshop and at exhibitions and shows, means that it is not a burden on the railway financially.

The Trust has not succumbed to the temptation to purchase every old coach available and, as a result, has a manageable collection which to my mind represents a feasible restoration task in the future - but what of the future? The Trust's recent change to Charitable Status would appear to open up various possibilities which hopefully will be discussed in the newsletter and at the various meetings. One idea might be to provide finance for further covered storage to ensure that the whole existing fleet, when restored, together with any additions, can be guaranteed suitable housing - but that is for the Trust to decide.

-Peter Eastham.

MANY THANKS to those who have donated goods for sale at the shop, especially those who do so anonymously and haven't been thanked previously.

MWC.

Items for inclusion the next issue of VCT News will be gathered in towards the end of August. We have an interesting article from Glen Foxley which will appear in the next issue, which it is hoped to issue about mid-September.