The Easterly

Summer 2010

The newsletter of Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri
Welsh Highland Railway Society
Grŵp Siroedd Ddwyreiniol
East Anglian Group



Garratt No. 87 looking rather splendid in its new livery, awaiting the 'off' from Hafod y Llyn on 2nd May (R Watson)

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Chairman's Notes

Being a railway enthusiast I often come across railway related stuff while out and about with my job and I have compiled a short collection of notes which I hope to repeat from time to time in this news letter.
I have just been looking at the Welsh Highland website and was amazed to see that the Afon Glaslyn had burst its banks and flooded the fields around the new station at Pont Croesor. The railway is OK but I imagine that customers joining the train here are likely to be few and far between.

Our intrepid EAG volunteers have been doing sterling work at Mill Green and their latest escapades involved use of a Mag Drill on steel plate that will be fixed to one of the wagons. The rolling stock will form part of a vital collection of vehicles for maintaining the railways, and financial support or volunteer help is always welcome.

The SuperPower Weekend is back on this year and I highly recommend it. There will be a brand new loco there too - go and see it! There is, of course, the main Society's AGM on Saturday evening to look forward to.

Just a reminder to those members who haven't renewed their EAG subscription, your contribution is vital to our effort in supporting the Welsh Highland Railway - The best Narrow Gauge railway in the World!

I wish you all well, and look forward to seeing you all at our meeting in October.

Best wishes

Mark Neilson
Chairman

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E.A.G. Meeting Reports

Thursday 18th March – Kim Winter – *Sandstone Steam Railway*

Kim made a welcome return to the Group on the 18th with an excellent presentation.
Members will remember Kim's previous talk on the topic of the preserved World War 1 Hunslet 4-6-0T (HE1215/1916), so by special request he started the talk by showing some previously unseen movie footage depicting trench railways of the First World War. We saw 20 h.p. Simplexes on a variety of duties, including a train of Hudson bogies conveying wounded soldiers, with another carrying German P.O.W.s. There were several shots of Hunslet 4-6-0s, including an excellent sequence where a Hunslet 4-6-0 ascended a gradient with a lengthy train, banked in the rear by a familiar Baldwin 4-6-0. There were tantalising glimpses of a Dick Kerr petrol electric, one of which went to Dinas on trial after the War, and I believe a Baldwin 2-6-2 similar to those used on the Penrhyn in the 1920s.

The second part concerned the long-lived Beira Railway "Lawley" 4-4-0s, and the Sandstone Steam Railway, a marvellous South African preservation enterprise set up by Wilf Mole during the 1990s. The Sandstone railway is set amongst 100,000 hectares of very productive estate land just to the north-east of Lesotho. Kim went there in 2008 as part of a family holiday and wrote in advance to ask whether he could visit. He was surprised to be told that not only could he see the exhibits, but the Sandstone Railway would also steam a locomotive for him in return for a contribution towards the cost of the coal!

Kim was given the choice of either one of the excellent little "Lawley" (Class NG6) 4-4-0s, or the chunky Kerr Stuart Class NG4 4-6-2T. Unfortunately, the Lawleys, Kim's first choice, cannot climb the 1 in 20 gradient on the SSR unaided, so the locomotive used was the NG4.

As the locomotive was being prepared, Kim persuaded two of the workers to take him on a 'proving' trip around the system aboard the open-topped Wickham railcar. This enabled excellent photography of the railway installation, which in turn gave an appreciation of the sheer volume of preserved railway, agricultural and military equipment present at Sandstone. Kim later took a trip behind the NG4 in the Dining Car, with his wife and family in the train, and he later climbed on to the footplate – where he clearly enjoyed himself.

There were some interesting shots of restored militaria, including a Canadian Ford truck and a complete Sherman tank. One of the more bizarre highlights was the sight of a restored Bedwas & Machen AEC Regal III of 1950, complete with "Trethomas" destination blind!

Finally, Kim toured the 'derelicts' shed, a high quality structure containing some rather corroded NG15s and NGG16s. Knowing what has gone before, we can be assured that they will take to the rails once again in the not too distant future.

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Thursday 15th April – Tony Hollins - *The Railways of Eritrea*

We were pleased to welcome back Tony Hollins on 15th April with an excellent talk on the Eritrean Railway. Eritrea is a country in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Sudan , Ethiopia and Djibouti, with a coastline on the Red Sea. The capital is Asmara.

Eritrea was an Italian colony between 1869 and 1941 and the railway was constructed between 1887 and 1932 by the Italians. It originally connected the port of Massawa with Bishia near the Sudan border, and the gauge was to the Italian standard of 950 mm (3 ft $1^3/_8$ in), similar to many railways under construction in Italy at the same time. The line was largely destroyed by warfare in subsequent decades, but has been rebuilt between Massawa and Asmara partly as a job creation scheme for displaced guerilla fighters. Much of the rolling stock is original however, and this lends an unmistakable Italian feel to the operation. The railway authority has asked for funding to continue the original plan to extend the route to Tesseney, 45km from the border with Sudan, thus providing an opportunity for the Sudanese to use the Port of Massawa. Mining companies have also inquired about use of the railway, and possible improvements to its facilities.

The railway climbs from sea level at the port of Massawa to a summit at over 8,000 feet, before dropping to the present terminus at Asmara, some 120km from the port. From the film we could see that the line is well engineered, with some beautifully constructed viaducts and some 28 tunnels all lined in brick and masonry. In places there are precipitous drops from the edge of the railway's formation, so it is just as well that the permanent way is in good order!

The steam locomotives are very Italian in appearance, and comprise:
Class 202 0-4-0T shunters by Breda of Milan, 1927-37 – six in number, two in use
Class 440 0-4-4-0T Compound Mallets by Ansaldo of Genoa, 1915– one survivor
Class 442 0-4-4-0T Compound Mallets of massive appearance, again by Ansaldo of Genoa, 1938 – four in number, 3 in use
We viewed some wonderful Fiat railcars and a 4-wheel railcar of bubble-like appearance. My personal highlight was seeing one of the the Russian Ural lorries converted to rail operation. This, complete with steering wheel, was shunting a Mallet locomotive at the depot. I got the feeling Colonel Stephens would have approved!

Footnote: Tony wondered out loud if the FR Co. would be prepared to help the Eritrean Railways get back on their feet. Your editor contacted one of the FR Co. directors, and is pleased to report that the FR will indeed be pleased to help. Through Tony, the Eritrean Ambassador in London has been invited to contact Mike Hart at the Ffestiniog.

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Thursday May 20th 2010 - Martin Shrubsole - *By 610 to Victoria*

This was a highly interesting, if slightly unusual talk by Martin, with clues to its subject matter in the title and subtitle. The "610" referred to is not the time of a commuter train departing for a London terminal, but the track gauge of the Queensland Sugar Tramways - 610mm, or 2 feet. The subtitle was "....fit for purpose rail transport in Queensland". In line with this the first half concentrated on the economics of sugar cane growing in Queensland, putting the sugar tramways in context in this enormous industry.

To give some sense of the scale of these operations, here are some of the statistics quoted by Martin for the year 2007:

- There are 20 rail-served and 3 road-served sugar factories in Queensland
- 36 million tonnes of cane are handled each year in a season lasting only 20-26 weeks
- There are 3,000 route kilometres and 4,000 track kilometres in use (about 1,864 and 2,485 miles respectively)
- Some 250 diesel-hydraulic locomotives and 250,000 cane "bins" (wagons) are in use
- The average "haul" between field and factory is 35 km (22 miles); the maximum 119km (74 miles)
- The maximum weight of a train is 2,000 tonnes

The interesting thing is that 2' gauge tramways are *still seen* as the most flexible mode of transport in this, the second decade of the 21st century.

The fields are served by a mixture of spurs, pads and sidings off the main lines, which are themselves maintained to excellent standards – including the use of tamping machines similar to the KMX on the WHR. The terms "spurs" and "sidings" are perhaps self explanatory, but the word "pad" deserves further explanation. A "pad" is an area of hard standing out in the cane fields with a loop of 2' gauge track attached, but isolated from the main railway system. Cane wagons ("bins") are piggy-backed on road vehicles and are transported to these loops where they are re-railed to await later collection by another road vehicle. They are then taken to the "main line" railway, perhaps 14 miles away, for transport by diesel loco to the mills.

The whole ethos of the sugar cane tramways is that they meld together the needs of the growers, the harvesters and the mills. The talk rounded off by considering the tramways' locomotives, brake vans and track. Some of the locomotives are of the bogie type and would be the envy of the Welsh Highland Railway. However, as some of these are 9'6" wide, and still others are conversions from 4'8½" gauge, they would be too large for the bridges on our line. Brake vans are provided at the rear of trains and are mainly conversions from long-gone diesel locomotives. They are often radio operated from the cab.

There are several crossings on the level of the 3'6" gauge main lines, and these were shown in detail. We came away feeling that this is a truly vast and fascinating system.

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The WHR's *Upnor Castle* at Minffordd Yard, awaiting entry to Boston Lodge works for urgent attention to its gearbox. The FR's diesel *Moelwyn* is seen alongside, shunting a train of quarrymen's carriages (R Watson)

East Anglian Group Project News

The Lineside Clearance Train Project

Progress recently may seem to have been confined to dressing welds and improving the appearance of the wagons, but in reality much progress has been made in other areas. One of the spring assemblies for the central buffing gear has been fabricated by Roger Hornsby, and the square section bars purchased for the shafts fettled in preparation for welding. The chopper coupling side cheeks have been re-profiled to match the shafts and will be welded up shortly.

Stanchions for the vacuum hose dummies have been fabricated and trial fitted, and hoses cut to size and fitted between the two wagons. It's now looking like a real train!

Side plates have been fixed to the frames to carry the wagon numbers and identification transfers. The frames of both wagons have been painted black, the brake levers having yellow extremities. The axle box centres are also painted yellow – an EAG trademark – with the steps and wagon i.d. plates picked out in the same colour.

The coupling fabrications will be the next priority, following which we can think about buying the timber decking. However, cash is in short supply as we have to rely on members' donations. If you would like to contribute, please contact Richard Watson either by email richard.watson7@virgin.net or by phone on (07971)130829. Many thanks.



The two wagons were coupled – by hoses at least – on 3rd July. They are now beginning to look like a real train! (R Watson)



(Left) This style of coupling is planned for one end of the EAG wagons. This can be coupled to specialised stock such as the cherry picker and the Hiab crane. Safety chains will be provided to each side. (Right) standard "chopper" couplings similar to this one will be fitted to the outer ends of the wagons and will be compatible with existing RhE stock (R Watson)

Sign Manufacture

The sign making project has drawn to a close with the final running-in board, for Pont Croesor, dispatched to North Wales on the 15th May. It was erected at the terminus in good time for the re-opening. Our volunteer drivers, Nobby Clark and Malcolm Northfield, drove the sign from Cambridge to Dinas in a very large van, and took a detour via Mike Hadley's house in the West Midlands where they picked up a number of bench end castings. We are grateful to our drivers, and to the Society, for their help with providing transport.



Dolly lives! Here's our old friend Dolgarrog in the extension to the old loco shed at Boston Lodge on April 30th (R Watson)

EAG Visit to the Statfold Barn Railway 12.06.10

Eight EAG members and their friends descended on the Statfold Barn Railway on 12th June for a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

For those not familiar with the railway at Statfold, the enthusiast days are all-ticket affairs as the line is not normally open to the public. Ten locomotives were in steam, and hauled trains at frequent intervals, and in varying combinations, on the mixed gauge (2'0" and 2'6") railway. The line runs for about a mile and a half through fields, and an interesting range motive power was in use, including the former Harrogate Gas Works (and FR) 0-6-0ST *Harrogate*, a 750mm gauge 0-4-4-0 Mallet , Quarry Hunslet *Edward Sholto* and the famous *Trangkil No.4*. The writer had previously supposed that *Trangkil* was the same size as the Talyllyn's *Edward Thomas*, but in fact it is much larger. The rail-mounted Land Rover series IIa was also in use, fresh from its exploits at Porthmadog, where it took part in the "Quirks and Curiosities" Gala. The railway ran an interesting mixture of rolling stock, including mixed gauges in the same train (!)

Not surprisingly, some very interesting and complicated pointwork is in use including a three-gauge diamond crossing where 2'0" and 2'6" gauges cross the 4'8 ½" demonstration railway. There is also a fascinating bladeless point on the balloon loop, which ensures that the 2'0" gauge "third rail" swaps sides so that it is on the correct side again when the loop meets the point of divergence.



Your editor's favourite. Here's 1912 Fowler 0-4-2T *Saccharine*, outside the shed at Statfold on 12th June

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Treasurer's Tuppence Ha'Penny

I'm embarrassed that it seems to be a year or so since I last reported on the group's finances. Possibly my having taken on a bigger role as the main Society's Treasurer has deflected my attention. Nobody seems to have noticed, maybe nobody cares or maybe everybody thinks the money is in good hands "so why worry" – hopefully it is the latter!

Anyway, as at 30 June 2010 our books looked like this:

Income & Expenditure		
	income	expenditure
balance brought forward	£1,356.29	
Membership Fees	£103.00	
Donations	£1.00	
Meeting Admissions/costs	£116.00	£68.00
Sales	£25.50	£0.00
Sundry	£130.67	£100.00
Wagons	£75.11	£400.00
balance carried forward		£1,239.57

Balance Sheet		
General fund	£292.24	
Wagon Fund	£947.33	
		£1,239.57
Cash at bank	£1,239.57	
Cash on hand	£0.00	
		£1,239.57

We remain moderately flush although the wagon fund could always do with a little more. The cash flow is eased by members subbing the project with money as well as effort!

Ian King
13/7/2010

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Diary of Events – WHR & FR

July 31st - August 6th	FR	Kids Training Week
September 5th	FR	FRS Sponsored Walk - Blaenau to Tan-y-Bwlch
September 7th	FR	FRSL East Anglian Group meeting – The Kingdom of Fife – Bill Fraser
September 11th/12th	WHR	WHRS AGM Weekend – and **Superpower**
October 5th	FR	FRSL East Anglian Group Meeting - The last four years of British Steam - George Howe.
October 8th/9th/10th	FR	Heritage Weekend
October 16th/17th	FR	Gigabash Weekend
October 21st	**WHR**	**WHRS East Anglian Group Meeting - The Railway Heritage Trust - Andy Savage**
November 2nd	FR	FRSL East Anglian Group - Annual General Meeting
November 18th	**WHR**	**WHRS East Anglian Group Meeting - Bridges - John Sreeves**
December 9th	**WHR**	**WHRS East Anglian Group Meeting – Christmas Get Together**

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Lineside Clearance Train Days

We meet every four weeks or so at our restoration site at Mill Green. It's a great opportunity to do some serious work for the railway at a place near home, and to enjoy some light hearted banter! Come and see us, even if it's only to take a look. Please ask Richard for details.

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For Sale

We have the following items for sale, in aid of Group funds:

- A number of railway videos, at only £3 each, or 4 for £10.
- A selection of black and white prints of the "old" Welsh Highland Railway. 50p each.

Please contact Richard for further details.

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Please Support Your Group!

Your committee try their best to give value and interest to our members, and work hard to persuade interesting speakers to come to talk to us. However, the number of members attending seems to be dropping off and, much as we love to see you, the same faces seem to turn up every time! So please do come along and support us, and bring a friend if you can. If you find transport difficult, why not persuade your friend to bring you? They will be so inspired by what the Group is doing, they are certain to want to join us!

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EAG Meetings

The East Anglian Group meet at the Black Bull pub, 27 High Street, Balsham, near Cambridge CB21 4DJ. We gather on the third Thursday of the month during the meetings "season" (October to May inclusive). Good food is available in the bar. We generally get together after 6.30 p.m. for a pint and a "natter", and the meetings start at 8.00 p.m. There is usually a half-way break and we finish around 10.00 p.m.

The new meetings season starts on Thursday 21st October.

Thursday 21st October. Andy Savage makes a welcome return in his new role as Executive Director of **The Railway Heritage Trust.** Andy will be talking about the important work undertaken by the RHT, in supporting the conservation and restoration of historic railway buildings and structures owned by the Trust's sponsors.

Thursday 18th November. John Sreeves will be talking to us about **Bridges.** John is of course very well known as the key person involved in the construction and reconstruction of the bridges on Rheilffordd Eryri.

Thursday 9th December. Our traditional **Christmas Get Together** with members' slides and DVDs

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Mark's Rail Ramblings

I often come across railway related stuff when out and about and sometimes that I think is worth investigating and recording. This is an irregular collection of railway related flotsam, which I wish to share with you!

I have been working on a private water feature project at Wimbish, near Thaxted (photos of project available at meeting in October). Part of the work involved levelling and compacting hardcore materials on site. Part of the scheme replaces a tarmac tennis court, and here lay the railway interest. Under the layer of tarmac was a base of cinders overlaying large flint cobbles. Amongst the ashes I found various bit of loco paraphernalia , including gland packing, wadding and bits of metallic stuff. My thoughts turned to thinking how this material got here and where did it come from? Was it the Loco shed at Saffron Walden; was it from Thaxted station?

After consulting Ivor, the Farm Manager, I was informed that he and his Father collected two truck loads of ashes and cinders form Enfield Town Railway station!

I often visit the old Acrow site in Saffron Walden mainly to visit Rigeons the builders merchant's however my recent visit was to my wood briquette supplier; Reynolds Joinery (they took over the Rigeons timber joinery department). Around the back of their workshop are other buildings and businesses, accessed via a ramped road way. I took the van around the site as I was wanted to see the old works of ACC Galvanising (their current works is minuscule, compared to the old site.) On leaving the ramp to the rear of the site I found s.g. trackwork embedded in the concrete. The layout formed two sidings, one of which enters a building and I assume a set of points would have been close to where the link from the Bartlow - Saffron Walden branch came in. There used to be a Halt here, and I believe the concrete structure is still in situ, albeit overgrown. There are plans of the station and sidings in the Essex Archive. Just a thought... there's enough track there for a demonstration goods train....

Just the other day while at the office of my employer I spotted a large OS map spread out over the office wall. I think it was dated 1970. I was tracing the Bishops Stortford to Braintree line, and it appeared to show track still extant in Bishops Stortford, terminating roughly where the M11 is now. Further down the dismantled line, past Great Dunmow, I happened upon the Felstead Sugar beet factory. On the map it showed a large system of tracks. I wonder if there still there?

Next time on Marks rail ramblings - Stack of old chairs at Bartlow Junction, and more.

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The Way We Were.....flashback to 2nd April 2005, with the EAG crew casting envious glances at four orphaned RNAD wagons stored near our work base . One of these now works with the KMX Tamper, and the other three.....(R Watson)

Useful EAG Contacts

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