

Left Hand Running

The November 2007 Newsletter of The British Train Society
Illinois

A View From The Footplate

The swapmeet that we held on October 20th was quite a lively occasion as it usually is. Eleven members were in attendance together with four guests that included two brothers, Tom and Andrew Cornillie who are interested in joining, Charlie Lewis who was handling the sale of John Hayman's model rail items on behalf of his widow Agnes, and Peter Wolfe who assisted Bernie with his voluminous offerings. The sale went well and now we have another year to work on our various appetites and surpluses. I would like to thank Harry for his help in preparing for this event.

We had a brief discussion on the Southland Model show and we have already received an application for participation in the show next year. The general consensus was that we should seriously consider it contingent on the necessary support from the South side residents.

Robin Ross gave a report on the Web site recently put in place. There is a high level of enthusiasm for this project and we owe a debt of thanks to Robin for his expeditious work and technical competence. I urge you all to think about contributions you can make to the site, written or visual and pass them on to Robin for consideration. If you have not been there yet it is www.britishtrainsociety.org. It is also appropriate to remind the membership that November is our election month. The two elected offices are Chairman and Treasurer. Any one interested in either of these positions should submit their names to Harry before the November meeting so a vote can be taken. In the event no one wishes to run the positions will remain occupied by the current incumbents.

A schedule of future meetings is attached but I would draw your attention to the December 8th Open House at my house from 4-7pm. The Holiday season will soon be on us, so be sure to put the date on your calendars and be sure to TELL Your Significant Other if you have one. Informal responses as to your attendance would be helpful in Lois's preparations.

Happy Modelling Don Buchanan

Calendar of Coming Events

November 10th & 11th
Trainfest Milwaukee (Wisconsin State Fair Park)

November 11th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

November 17th, 1:30 pm
BTS Regular Meeting
Highland Park (John Struthers)

December 9th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

The Next Meeting

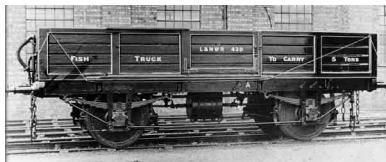
The next regular meeting of the British Train Society will be at John Struthers' home in Highland Park on November 17th. The program will be a presentation by Grant Harrison about contemporary locomotive maintenance. Don't miss it!



Fishy, Fishy, in the Brook

Because Great Britain is surrounded by the sea, fish has always been an important part of the British diet. Fresh fish is extremely perishable and begins to rot quickly unless preserved by salting, pickling, smoking or freezing. The advent of railways in the nineteenth century allowed fresh fish to be carried farther away from the ports, opening up new markets. By the late 1940s about a million tons of fish were landed annually at British ports, 75% of which was carried by rail to metropolitan areas. That is about 2000 tons of fish on the rails every day.

The most productive fishing grounds around Britain were in the North Sea and so the bulk of fish for the home market was landed at east coast ports. Not surprising, therefore, that the LNER and its predecessor companies led in the design of railway vehicles for fish traffic.



At first fish was carried in barrels or boxes on open goods

wagons [fish trucks]; these later evolved into ventilated vans with slatted sides, finally becoming insulated box vans. They came in 4-wheel, 6-wheel and bogie versions. Many early fish trucks were built by converting obsolete coaching stock. Later, fish vans were usually built new as such. The fish was cooled by ice or dry ice, layered directly on the fish, therefore British fish vans usually did not have ice-bunkers as was common with North American and continental refrigerator cars [although there were exceptions]. To prevent spoilage, fish traffic was usually operated as special fast freight trains or the vans attached to



passenger trains. For this reason, most fish vans had automatic brakes and sometimes also were equipped with through pipes for steam heating of the passenger carriages.

Longer wheelbases and larger wheels were also frequent hallmarks of the fish-carrying vehicles. The design of fish vans culminated in 1949 with an LNER design later known as the Blue Spot fish van, for the large blue circles painted on them denoting wheels, roller bearings and pneumatic buffers suited for higher speed running.

But fish traffic on the rails was declining, a victim of better roads and mechanical refrigeration. In 1964 British Railways exited the business. The remaining fish vans were converted for parcels traffic or went into various BR internal uses.

What does this mean for the railway modeler? For one; fish vans [several] will probably not look out of place on your layout – fish traffic is appropriate for pre-grouping through the nationalization eras. For two; it gives you the opportunity to hang some box vans on the end of your passenger train. For three; you probably have too many coal wagons, anyhow – a few fish vans will help balance your rolling stock fleet.

Models of various fish vans are available in all the popular scales from N to No. 1 in ready-to-run or kit form. So get yours today!

Fishy, fishy, in the brook
Come up here and take a look
You can ride in this fine van
For your trip from sea to pan

