

Left Hand Running

The January 2010 Newsletter of The British Train Society

www.britishtrainsociety.org

Chairman: Harry Raynis

Treasurer: George Rowland

Secretary: Ralph Transue

Train Show Chairman: Grant Harrison

Webmaster: Peter Carr

Newsletter: John Derler

Program Chairman: (open)

A View From The Footplate

Happy New Year! Even though we had no December meeting, the holiday open house here was a chance once again to get our families involved in our hobby. Their support is so very important and the open house and the June picnic give us the means to show them our appreciation.

I also want to thank all of you who came to the party for putting up with my very large dog Sam. I don't think he knocked any body over wagging that large tail of his, but he did manage to gobble up at least one unguarded plate of food from a coffee table. Sorry about that.

The news on Bernie Bossov is very good. The infection is nearly cleared up and he will begin rehab any day now. If you plan to visit him please give Bernice a call. She can tell you when he'll be in rehab or otherwise indisposed. If a visit's not possible, keep him in your hearts and prayers.

As you can see from the new Masthead above, Ralph Transue is acting Secretary and Peter Carr is Webmaster. I've got the helm, (That's Navy talk and it means I'm the Driver). George and John D. have continued in their previous positions. Grant Harrison has agreed to take on the job of Train Show Chairman. There is an item from him elsewhere in this newsletter. We need a Program Chairman to arrange for our monthly presentation topics and our occasional field trips. Let me know if you are interested.

Our program for this month's meeting will be a presentation on "One-

offers" by Don Buchanan. Please come out and join us. Harry

Calendar of Coming Events

January 16th, 1:30 pm
BTS Regular Meeting
Naperville (Harry Raynis, 1537 Warbler Dr.)

January 24th, 2:00 pm
European Train Enthusiasts
LaGrange Park (Public Library)

February 14th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

February 20th, 1:30 pm
BTS Regular Meeting
Highland Park (John Struthers, 780 Appletree Ln.)

March 6th & 7th, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
High Wheeler Train Show
Palatine (Harper College)

March 27th, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
All-American Train Show
LaGrange (Lyons Township High School)

Rule 71

By Martin Venn

The British Railways Rule book has hundreds of rules & Regulations to cover every situation. Many are written in blood. We had to have spot tests by "The Area Inspector", who visited the boxes several time a year. He would quiz us, both Signalmen and Signal Lads (Booking Boys), on the rules and regulations, to see how

much we knew. This always took place over a cup of tea. Most were great guys, having been booking boys and signalmen themselves. They knew all the tricks of the trade.

Probably one of the rules most broken was rule 71 which loosely said "Signal Lads must not operate the levers, bells, or other operating equipment." However, we signal lads did operate "levers, bells, etc." in most boxes, although maybe not at places where there was more than one signalmen. Waterloo had five signalmen, two booking boys and a box inspector to run their 312 mini-lever power box. The Southern Region was different from the other regions in that the District Control Office only advised us of traffic changes, problems, and out of course running. In other regions the signalmen were informed of the order to the run the traffic. I think that the reason for this was that we often had a better take on what was going on, and did not have a lot of time to talk to them, or ask their opinions. But we did keep each other updated. A good example of this would be that of Borough Market Junction signal box with it's 24-lever frame and 110 movements per hour. Borough Market Junction regulated the traffic flow between Waterloo Eastern, Cannon Street and London Bridge.

Raynes Park signal box was at milepost 9 from Waterloo. It is also the first true junction after leaving Waterloo. Just about every passenger train that left Waterloo on the Main Lines; (not the Windsor Lines), had to come to Raynes Park. Here the branch line to Epsom, Dorking and Chessington lines branches off. The Down Branch line dropped off on a steep grade. The Up Branch crossed under the four main lines west of the station, and then through sharp curves at 1 in 48 grade climbed into the Up Branch platform. It is an island platform, with the Up Local line on the other side.



The AM rush hour was one of our busiest times, with over 60 trains per hour. The most critical time was between 08:00 and 08:15. There was a critical move during this time. A train from Hampton Court arrived, and stopped to load passengers on the Up Local line. Another train on Up Branch from Effingham would approach on the Up Branch, and passed non-stop. Then crossed over to the Up Through, and ran non-stop to Waterloo. The trick was to keep the Effingham train moving. If it stopped, the waiting passengers on the platform, who knew it ran fast to Waterloo, would try to cram into an already packed train. Both motormen knew the moves and would try to keep the Effingham from stopping.

One morning, the signalmen who I was working with, who I shall call John and who was one of the best signalmen I knew, did something strange. He phoned down to the Up Platform, and told the porter to have the station master (who I will call Mr. T.) come up to box immediately. This was a first and I was quite surprised. But I said nothing.

Shortly after Mr. T arrived, looking smart in his uniform. He said to John "What's up"? John said "I have to go to the bathroom, it's all yours"! He then left and went into toilet just out side. I sat there shocked! I was completely flabbergasted! Normally I would run the box, calling to John any for guidance. The rule says that station masters should be able to run any signal box under their control. Few, if any, did or could.

The train describers for the Up Local, Up Through, as well as for the Down Through and Down Local lines, all buzzed letting us know that traffic was approaching. The block bells from Raynes Crossing on the Up Branch, asked “is the line clear for the Up Effingham.” The Up and Down Through home signals were reversed, so were in auto mode. The 07:50 Waterloo - Portsmouth Harbor was approaching on the Down Through at about 60 mph, and the 07:47 Waterloo - Teddington was slowing for a stop on the Down Local.

Mr. T. looked a bit shocked, and stared at the diagram, as the lights moved. He then looked at me and said “You run the frame; I will do the book” and “Don’t screw up!” I did both (run the frame and not screw up) with great pleasure. John was gone for about 15 minutes. I got the Effingham train through the station and crossing to the Up Through line without stopping and without delaying the Eastleigh train (pulled by a ‘Lord Nelson’ 4-6-0). Mr. T was relieved to see John reappear and he then went back to the safety of the platform.

John never said why he called the station master up to the box; nor did Mr. T. say anything either. John kept a straight face, and although we caught the same train to and from work when we were on the same shift, he never mentioned it. Some time latter a possible reason came to light, although I have no direct evidence. Each summer we had a fundraiser for the “Woking Children’s Home for Railwaymen” which took place on the Southern Railway sports ground, at Raynes Park. John and I helped out with it. The grounds included a bar in the social club. John and Mr. T went for a pint, and seemed to be very sociable, and I had the impression that it was not the first time. My guess is that they had a pint together on other occasions. And they probably talked the job over. Mr. T. may have said that it cannot be too difficult to

run the box; “after all, much of it is automated”. True, but the responsibility is still there for you have people’s lives in your hands. I wonder what the passengers would have thought if they knew that there lives were in the hands of an 18-year-old Signal Lad.

Modular Layout

Hello everyone, now that the holidays are over it is once again time to look towards late March and our participation in the All-American Train Show in LaGrange. Last year’s rebuild effort was a success and all of the modules ran very well, so for this year not much work should be required. If you have a module now would be a good time to find and inspect it.

Last year the running scheme seemed to work, with trains of the same relative vintage out on the mains at the same time. This year will work the same with the vintages being Pre-grouping, Big Four, BR steam, BR diesel, and Privatization. Be thinking about what train sets you want to run and if it has not been run since last March get in touch with Harry Raynis for some running time on his layout.

I will be getting in touch next month with those of you who have modules to determine transport to the show

Thank you very much for your time and with luck this should be another smooth show for the modules and club.

Grant H.

