



FRIENDS OF DARLINGTON RAILWAY CENTRE AND MUSEUM

Newsletter

April 2010

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(Darlington Railway Centre and Museum)

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The current Friends' Newsletter editor writes: Vic Branfoot, the Newsletter Editor before me, kept his files and kindly sent them to me to add to the on-line back numbers. This is one and, if you are a member and have a printed copy, you may notice some differences- apart from this introduction of course.

I produce each issue of the Newsletter as a single document which is converted to PDF for printing. The PDFs are uploaded to the website as the online version untouched unless corrections are needed. Vic's approach was quite different- he produced each Newsletter item as a separate file and collated the print outs. I make no claim that his method was any worse (or better) than mine but it has necessitated some basic editing before his Newsletters can be presented here as single files. In the process I have assumed that these will probably be read on screen so I have ensured a fairly large minimum font size- should you wish to print this it could probably be read comfortably as an A5 sized booklet if your printer driver supports that. I have not included pages that have dated such as lists of "forthcoming" events now long past (I *could* do the same for my issues incidentally but those pages take up little actual file space and I already have the PDFs to print from so basically I can't be bothered to re-edit them). Finally Vic uses Microsoft® Word where I use Open Office and the process of importing the files can go awry.

Really finally the website and contact details above have been updated reflecting the current make-up of the Committee.

Timothy Ruffle

Editorial and AGM Report

Following the 'realistic' but possibly gloomy notes and observations which accompanied the Notice of AGM and Agenda which I sent to Members last month, I am pleased to report that our potential problems in respect of unfilled posts did not materialise.

Members will recall that it looked as though the key positions of Speaker Secretary and Newsletter Editor could remain unfilled. I am delighted and relieved to say that two of our Members have volunteered to take-on these positions.

We are most grateful to Brian Denham for kindly agreeing to take over from Gillian Wetherell as Speaker Secretary and we are similarly grateful to Tim Ruffle for generously agreeing to add the Newsletter Editor portfolio to his role of Friends Webmaster. I am sure all Members will want to thank Brian and Tim for helping us in these major ways and to express the hope that they find their work interesting and fulfilling.

Brian and Tim are joining the Committee and I am pleased, also, to report that Derek Reeves – whose series of autobiographical articles describing his professional life on the railways has fascinated us all – has, since the AGM, been co-opted onto the Committee.

I think it may now reasonably be said that your Committee is now strong in both quantity and quality and there should be little or no need for any members of the Committee to take on more than one major role in order that the Friends may function fully and effectively.

In other respects, the AGM ran its course in much the uneventful way that would often – and pleasingly! - be the case ...

The Chairman gave an overview of the past year's activities and thanked members of the Committee for their hard work in difficult circumstances. He thanked in particular Gillian Wetherell who had done a terrific job as Speaker Secretary but was now standing down from that position. He reiterated his belief that a Friends organisation such as ours should seek to support its 'parent organisation' in practical ways rather than merely being 'a railway club'.

The Treasurer, John Carter, provided printouts of the year's audited accounts. He went through the figures and answered several questions. In his Membership Secretary's Report, Vic Branfoot provided printouts of this and last year's figures and thanked those members who had answered his plea to renew their membership subscriptions promptly. Only four memberships were having to be deleted because the members had not replied to Vic's letters. As of now, we have only one fewer membership than at the end of 2009 and he therefore felt able to look forward to the final membership figure for 2010 showing an INCREASE on the equivalent 2009 figure.

Don Whitfield then reported on archive and book-sale activity and was able to report that there had been a significant income from the sale of books and magazines which had been donated to the Friends. He was also delighted to report that the Honesty Box at North Road had not been abused!

All the above Reports were accepted by the meeting and, in addition to the changes mentioned above, all Committee members and post-holders were re-elected. The AGM was followed by a splendid presentation provided by Mr Chris Lloyd.

Please may I thank members for their kind and supportive remarks during my time as Editor? I have attempted to provide a Newsletter embracing a consistently-applied, uncomplicated and straight-forward format. However, I have been ever-mindful of my dearth of computing skills and, although I have enjoyed the creative aspect of overseeing the editorial content of the Newsletter, the Newsletter in overall terms has lacked the illustrations and physical flair provided by my predecessor and, I am sure, also by my successor. I wish Tim him well during his time in the Editor's chair.

As noted above, some of the following pages were printed two or three weeks ago in order to spread my workload during what is a busy month for me. That being the case, the following page-order is not quite as I would have wished it to be had I printed the following pages all in one sitting. I apologise for the slightly inappropriate order of some of the following pages.

News from the Museum

Museum Manager David Tetlow brings us up to date with recent and forthcoming developments

I hope that many of you have been taking advantage of the Friends' lecture programme this year. We have had some extremely interesting speakers and I should like to thank them for taking time to speak to us on every first Thursday of the month. I should also like to thank those Friends - especially Gillian Wetherell and Richard Wimbury – who have been involved with sourcing such fine quality speakers.

The improvements at the Museum continue with the completion of the new Edward Pease Memorial Room due to be opened by Captain Nigel Pease (Edward's Great Great Grandson) on the 7th April 2010. The Museum now has a dedicated space for some of our wonderful treasures and I would urge you to visit soon to take a look.

You will also soon receive our Events Programme for 2010. In it, you will notice that the Museum is hosting more events than ever before. The aim is to attract as much interest as we can and offer a diverse choice of activities for the citizens of Darlington and, indeed, the wider audience. You will notice that I have incorporated the Friends' Lecture Programme into the Events listings. Again, the intention is to 'spread the word' about Darlington and to engage people in their rail heritage.

2010 is also an exciting time for the Museum with a great range of events and temporary exhibitions. We will be hosting our second Roman Day to tie in with Darlington's other great heritage site, Piercebridge Roman Fort. Re-enactors will bring the Museum alive and a free bus service will take people to the Fort where Dr David Mason, Durham's County Archaeologist, will greet them.

2010 also sees a new exhibition about Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) who grew up in Croft-on-Tees. I am currently writing the text for the display focusing on his early life at Croft, his inspirations and, of course, the famous Alice books.

We look forward to seeing as many Friends as possible at the Museum during the coming months!

My colleagues and I send you our Best Wishes.

Thursday 3 December 2009

Christmas Get-together

The less-structured evening that is our Christmas Get-together can usually be relied upon to provide for a refreshing and enjoyable evening and the 2009 renewal proved to be no exception. Included in the evening was our Chairman, Richard Wimbury, showing a video which dealt with the last days of steam operation on the railways of Finland. Richard placed the video into context by providing some background information about the history of railways in that country.

Richard then provided a most interesting and wide-ranging railway-based quiz which he had compiled. Members will recall that this quiz – slightly tweaked by the Editor! – was reproduced in our January 2010 Newsletter.

Finally, excerpts from the most recent *Tornado* video were shown which showed her in full flight on some of her special workings.

Food and drink was very generously provided by the Museum and by the Committee and those present were most grateful for this. It was good to have David and Sarah from the Museum with us for the evening. They, and the good number of members who were present, thoroughly enjoyed their evening.

The Friends' Website

*Web-master **Tim Ruffle** describes a splendid new facility available to Members and potential new Members*

The Friends now have a website at www.friendsofdrcm.org. It's fairly basic at the moment but has reached a stage where it should be a useful 'one stop' source of up-to-date information to members and interested non-members. How much further it will develop remains to be seen.

The home page has introductions to the Friends, the Museum and the Study Centre as well as directions to the Museum including an interactive map. Other pages extol the benefits of joining the Friends, list the schedule of forthcoming talks (and will be updated to note any change or cancellation as soon as possible) and list links to other websites which may be of interest to members or passing surfers. The site has been designed with dial-up users in mind and should download quite quickly even for those who do not enjoy a broadband connection.

Do have a look. If you have any (constructive) comments your web-master will be interested and grateful to receive them. Should you be wondering how to get in touch with the web-master, contact details are on the website.

Thursday 4 February 2010

The Northern Belle – Cruising with LNER

Presented by Mr Sam Woods

Report by Vic Branfoot

A good-sized audience was treated to a copiously illustrated presentation provided by one of our members, Mr Sam Woods. It described the 1930s phenomenon of the special LNER cruise train, *The Northern Belle*. Sam observed that his research had been motivated by a letter to the Editor of *The Gresley Observer* commenting that not a great deal was known about *The Northern Belle*. However, through meticulous research, Sam had unearthed sufficient material to provide a most expansive presentation.

The Northern Belle was conceived in a letter to *The Times* in October 1932 in which the writer suggested that if luxury liners may provide cruises at sea why cannot a ‘luxury train’ provide similar excursions on land in the United Kingdom? Remarkably and fortuitously, the Editor of *The Times* was moved to write a lengthy Editorial in support of the idea. “It must have been a quiet news day,” observed Sam. Other letters of support soon appeared in *The Times* some of which noted that similar tourist trains already existed in Australia and South Africa. Sir Ralph Wedgewood, the LNER’s Chief General Manager, picked up on the idea and Edward Marsden was given the task of assembling a workable scheme.

One thing led to another at a speed which could not take place today and, after a remarkably short lead-time, the LNER provided the first two runnings of the ‘land cruise train’ *The Northern Belle* during June 1933. The initial suggested itinerary was based on a seven-day tour:

1. The train would leave King’s Cross at 11pm for an overnight journey to Edinburgh for the following day, thence to Aberdeen overnight.
2. To Ballater and Linn o’ Dee or Lossiemouth or Cruden Bay.
3. To Balloch, Loch Lomond, Fort William and Mallaig.
4. To the Borders, Newcastle and Barnard Castle.
5. To the Lakes and Saltburn.
6. To Whitby, Scarborough and York.
7. To Lincoln, Ely, Cambridge and returning to King’s Cross mid-evening.

From 1936, the tour was rationalised to the extent that the train ran directly between King’s Cross and Edinburgh and back with the tour fundamentally involving exploration of Scotland.

The initial suggestion of a fare of £14.00 (£24.00 First Class) was amended to a flat fare of £20.00 and it remained at £20.00 throughout the six-year life of *The Northern Belle*. Even after allowing for inflation during the last seventy years, it is remarkable that, following provision of the train, the staff and operating costs, the fare could be so low.

As far as the train itself was concerned, a rake of fourteen carriages was provided which, basically, consisted of ‘day carriages’ and ‘night carriages’ although two of the carriages were used round the clock. Sam described how, at certain points on the itinerary, complex

marshalling manoeuvres were necessary early or late in the day to disassemble and reassemble the train in readiness for the subsequent few hours. It will be understood, of course, that the 'unwanted' carriages would have to be taken directly to the next marshalling point whilst the 'live' portion of the train was taking its passengers on their journey.

Following his description of the preparation for the opening of *The Northern Belle* service, Sam described the route taken by the train during its seven-day tour. Everything was copiously illustrated in terms of the train, the locomotives and the places visited, the latter very often by way of 'then and now' pairs of photographs. Added spice was provided by way of illustrations of peripheral items such as advertisements, restaurant car menus and ... sanitary arrangements. It really was a fully-researched, most comprehensive and well-organised presentation!

It was significant that the latest date to appear on the illustrations shown by Sam was a restaurant car menu dated 1939. The outbreak of war caused the cessation of *The Northern Belle*. Alas, as with so many things, after wartime ceased *The Northern Belle* did not recommence operation. And so, with its 'permanent' fare of £20.00, *The Northern Belle* lasted for just the six years from 1933 until 1939.

Towards the end of his presentation, Sam provided a most interesting post-script: a brief illustrated description of *The Scouts Cruise* which ran on Easter Sundays starting in 1935 at a fare of six guineas. This ran from London to Fort William and on to the Scouts' Camp at Banavie.

Sam noted at the close of his presentation that the modern-day equivalents of the above cruise trains – the *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*, the *British Pullman*, the *Northern Belle* and the *Royal Scotsman* – provide day trips and longer tours to a standard which parallels that of the LNER cruises.

Sam suggests that any members requiring further information about the cruise trains of today might care to access www.luxury-trains.co.uk

Assisted by his projectionist Mr Richard Barber, Sam had provided us with a most interesting, informative and entertaining presentation and we thank them both. All present gave Sam and Richard a rousing and richly-deserved round of applause.

Thursday 4 March 2010

The Weardale Railway

Presented by Mr John Askwith

Report by Don Whitfield

John introduced his talk by describing installations on the Stockton & Darlington Railway between Darlington and Bishop Auckland which is where the Weardale branch line started. Of particular interest was part of the original 1825 station platform still to be found at Heighington although it is not in use today.

The Weardale Railway Trust is today owned by the USA group *IOWA PACIFIC* which also owns the Devon & Cornwall Railway. The Weardale Railway once operated as far westward as Wearhead although it now terminates at Eastgate some 18.5 miles from Bishop Auckland. A new 'eco-village' west of Eastgate is the destination of a possible new extension of the line.

Before the Weardale Railway was built, a horse-drawn coach, the Rob Roy, travelled from Cowshill, one mile north-west of Wearhead, presumably to Bishop Auckland. The coach was eventually sent to the National Railway Museum at York but, alas, it was subsequently consumed by woodworm.

The original Weardale Railway line served limestone quarries in the upper dale as well as operating a passenger service. It was opened in three stages, firstly in 1847 to Wolsingham, then in 1862 to Stanhope and finally in 1895 to Wearhead. The limestone was transported to blast furnaces at Witton Park and on Teesside. Towards the end of its life, the line was used to provide bulk-haul transport from the Blue Circle Cement Works at Eastgate.

The J2 locomotive class provided the staple diet of motive power on the line with stabling facilities being at Wearhead. The last trains to and from Wearhead ran in 1953. Today, the heritage passenger service runs from Wolsingham to Stanhope. Interestingly, during World War Two the 1825 Locomotion and the Derwent were stored away from possible air-raid bombing in the Newlands Loco Shed near Stanhope.

Illustrations which John showed included the station buildings of yesteryear at such as at Frosterley, Stanhope, St John's Chapel and Wearhead. Today, the station building at Stanhope is substantially refurbished and is most attractive. A footpath over-bridge at Escomb and the railway and road bridges at Witton Park were also shown.

During the reinstatement of the line as it is today, rails and track furniture came from Coxhoe Quarry, some 24 miles to the east. Volunteers have willingly and generously provided many hours of labour in order that we may have the line as it is today. 'Clients' of the Probation Service has also provided many further hours of productive work. Also, a Junior Volunteer Group has helped with much of the lighter work.

Recent happenings in the Events Field close by Stanhope Station include such as classic car rallies and World War Two re-enactments. Also, a private film-crew shot an Apache Indian attack on a train near Stanhope. During February this year, a London to Stanhope rail tour and a Spitfire Rail Tour from Crewe – carrying some 500 passengers – visited the line.

Mr Askwith provided an interesting and entertaining evening which was much enjoyed and appreciated by the members and guests who were present.

Thursday 1 April 2010

Building the First Main Line

Presented by Mr Chris Lloyd

Report by Gillian Wetherell

Chris Lloyd, who is the Deputy Editor and Political Editor of the *Northern Echo*, completed our AGM evening with a talk entitled *Building the First Main Line*. Chris is also a well-known local historian and writes a weekly historical article in the *Northern Echo*. This evening's presentation was a preview of a book he is writing on the subject.

The rail line was the result of previous plans to build a canal system in the area to transport coal from the numerous mines in the region to the sea. Locally, there had been a proposal in 1767 by James Brindley to run a 33-mile canal from Winston to Stockton through Cockerton Docks with branches to Croft Bridge and another to Piercebridge. Because of prohibitive costs and problems with the River Tees, the idea was not developed until 1818. Then, a railway was proposed, led by Edward Pease and backed by Jonathan Backhouse, an important local banker.

In 1829, the Croft branch line was opened with passenger wagons, followed by trucks of coal, and there was a prediction at the celebratory grand luncheon, held at The Croft Spa Hotel, that in future it might be possible to go from Darlington to London in a day, stay over for such as a theatre visit and return the following day. The Great North of England Railway was formed to link the north east to York as the first stage. Work started during 1837 near Pilmore Hall, Jonathan Backhouse's mansion, now called Rockcliffe Hall and recently converted into a luxury hotel. During the excavations to build this line near Northallerton an ancient Roman burial mound was opened up and two Roman Sarcophagi were found, one of which is still in the grounds of Rockcliffe Hall.

At this time Hurworth was a weavers' village, as water drawn from the Rivers Skerne and Tees was good for bleaching. However, as trade in the linen business was declining many of the local men added to the numbers of incoming navvies who arrived from all over the country to work on this big new rail project, preparing the land along the route and building a skewed bridge across the Tees at Croft - skewed because of problems with the river bed in that area. A previous small skewed bridge had been built at Haggerleases, Cockfield Fell. Skewed bridges on complicated river crossing sites employed 'toilet roll technology'. The strength of a toilet roll comes from being a continuous spiral, and so brick bridges were built on this principle and the Croft Bridge was to be on the south side of the station, which was behind what is now The Comet public house.

The navvies and locals employed in these building projects were rowdy and regularly went on strike, as well as being drunk and disorderly and generally menacing to the local population. Soon the local gaol at Northallerton was overflowing with boisterous rail workers. The work they were doing was dangerous, and factions formed amongst the workforce which fought each other. Nevertheless, gradually the track was completed. The bridge is 471 feet long and 58 feet tall from the bed of the river, and it was one of the largest of its kind in the country. Building took some time due to delays in receiving timber for the top and the rails finally arrived in November 1840.

The opening of the bridge to traffic took place on 1st January 1841 when the resident engineer for the bridge, Thomas Ridley, woke at 2.00a.m. and laid the remaining ballast with his own hands. At 5.00a.m. three engines attached to 64 wagons of coals came along and crossed the bridge, followed three hours later by another three engines and 101 heavily laden wagons followed by another of the same size and weight. All crossed the bridge without incident.

In the first days after the bridge had been ceremonially opened on 4th January 1841 to mineral traffic, the Stockton and Darlington Railway used Tory Class locomotives: no. 26 Pilot, no. 27 Witton Castle, no. 15 Tory and no. 24 Magnet. The first two pulled the train from Darlington to York and the second two pulled it back to Darlington. Of these locomotives, Magnet was the oldest, it having been built by Timothy Hackworth in Shildon in 1835. However, the sole survivor of the Tory class is Derwent, which is now on display at Darlington Railway Centre & Museum.

The GNER was, it seems, “one of the worst managed undertakings in the kingdom”, and another company, The Newcastle and Darlington Junction Railway, was formed to complete the northern half of the route. When it was finally opened on 18th June 1844, you could travel the length of England by rail – from Gateshead and over the Tees Bridge into London and out of the other side of the capital to Southampton.

Today the straight and flat section of the line through the Vale of York is still one of the fastest on the East Coast Main Line. Of course, with the engines and carriages mingling with the treetops, a train crossing the lofty Tees Bridge is still a mightily impressive sight as it speeds along the western boundary of the Rockcliffe estate, before disappearing into the cutting where so many navies had lost their lives.

Life on the Railways in the North-Easter Region: 1939-1984

Back to Darlington ... and the joy of locomotives! Derek Reeves continues his fascinating professional autobiography.

Early in 1965, rumours of a reorganisation again circulated, and, sure enough, we learned that a Divisional Maintenance Engineer's Organisation would be set up in each of several Divisions. They would be set up with a Divisional Manager who would have a Divisional Operations Manager, Divisional Maintenance Engineer, and a Divisional Commercial Manager, with supporting personnel sections. The North Eastern and Eastern Regions were to be combined with the HQ at York.

The Divisional Mechanical Engineer would have a Traction Maintenance Engineer, C&W Engineer, Outdoor Machinery Engineer and a Personal Assistant. HQ jobs such as the Outdoor C&W Engineer would go, and the work would be undertaken by the DME and his staff. All the jobs in the divisions would be advertised, and displaced staff would be considered first. I applied for Traction Engineer Middlesbrough, which was the next grade up to the one I was on (£2335 p.a.). I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the post under the Divisional Mechanical Engineer Middlesbrough, Mr Jefferson, who had been Motive Power Superintendent.

I started on 3 May 1965 and moved back to Darlington in August 1965. The job description was to deputise for the DME and be responsible for the maintenance of all traction units allocated to or working in the Middlesbrough Division. Oh what a joy to be back on locomotives again, whilst being saddened a little by the coming demise of steam!

The Division had locomotive sheds at West Auckland, Darlington, Thornaby and West Hartlepool, a Diesel Railcar Depot at Darlington and various wagon repair sidings and examiners dotted about the area.

Darlington loco shed still had a breakdown gang with a 45-ton steam crane. The DME's office was at Middlesbrough Station in a building with the Divisional Manager and all his staff.

The first big job that arose was the recovery of a Class 40 diesel-electric loco which was on its side at Preston Loop. This accident had happened just before I arrived, and Jack Wandless, who had been Assistant Motive Power Superintendent and who was to be my assistant under the new organisation, had already cleared the line of the other train involved and the vehicles behind the loco on its side, thus leaving the recovery until a later weekend.

The position and weight of the locomotive was such that, even with two 75-ton cranes, it was not possible to lift the whole loco up from where it lay and rerail it between the cranes. The plan was to roll the loco upright and then lift the body off the bogies and place it between the cranes on packing, and then lift each bogie out, place them on the rails, and then lift the body up and run the bogies underneath and then lower the body onto the bogies.

As Jack Wandless had done all the initial work and was a breakdown expert, I agreed he would finish the job and I would be present as an observer but take no part in the actual job.

We had full possession of the line, and with the Gateshead 75-ton steam crane and the York 75-ton steam crane at the south end and an early start on Sunday morning, by 17:00 the job had gone perfectly and the loco was complete and ready to be towed away for repair. I learned a lot that day about breakdown work that stood me in good stead for the rest of my

career. One can learn the safety limits for cranes from books, but real breakdown work only comes with practice.

Mr Jefferson was one of the 'Old School' Railwaymen. He knew his job and lived an unhurried life with all of us rushing about to keep the railway going. Every day at 12:30, he left for Dinsdale Golf Club for lunch, returning at 14:30. Nobody – but nobody - would disturb him until at least 15:30 (not even the Chief Clerk) whilst he slept off his lunch. One day, something cropped up which only he could give a decision on at about 14:40 and HQ wanted an immediate answer. The Chief Clerk came to me and asked what we were going to do. I said he should go in and see Mr Jefferson. He point-blank refused, so I went in. I woke Mr J and apologised for disturbing him, and said we must have an answer now. So after a gruff 'Go on then', I started, and after a short while his eyes shut, and I stopped and restarted at the exact place where I had stopped, and this went on through the conversation until I came to the end, which was my suggestion of how we should reply. Another gruff 'Yes, I agree', and I came out and gave the answer to the Chief Clark. Really, I felt that I got on well with Mr J, if I accepted his oddities.

In those days, we went into the office on Saturday mornings, and I had just arrived at 09:00 when Control called: the Darlington 45-ton crane had toppled over onto its side at Darlington South. It was lifting a derailed engineer's wagon on the down slow, so it was clear of the main line and trains were still running. However, the supervisor had been injured and was taken to Darlington Hospital.

Jack Wandless was on holiday, so I was on my own. I rang Thornaby and asked them to send their Chief Maintenance Foreman, Jimmy Dean, who was their breakdown expert. Then I got the office car and was off to Darlington. When I arrived at the site I found the crane completely on its side with the jib right out in the field next to the line. The crane driver was not injured, and he had managed to get most of the fire out of the boiler. He said the supervisor had injured his back jumping out of the way of the falling crane. The local AME had gone with him to the hospital and would tell his family, so he was being looked after.

The next problem was how to recover the crane. I quickly found out that on the next day, because of engineering work north of Darlington, the Sunday trains were being diverted at Northallerton via Eaglescliffe to Ferryhill, so we could have full possession of the site. I arranged for the Gateshead 75-ton crane to be at the north end and the York 75-ton crane at the south end. I also arranged for an 08:00 start and for Jimmy Dean to be there.

The first thing I decided to do was to deal with the jib, which was sticking up at 90° to the crane body. The first plan was to remove the large pivot bolt so that we could lift the jib separately off the crane. There was no way we could move the bolt, and I did not want to cut the jib off with an oxyacetylene torch, so we tied a wire rope to the top of the jib and coupled it at the other end to the locomotive with the York crane. We moved everybody well out of the way in case the rope broke and the rope ends flew around. I told the driver to pull very gently, and to everyone's surprise, we were able to pull the jib round almost to its at-rest position.

The next job was to position the cranes as close as possible to use both to roll the crane into the upright position. We had just about got them positioned and set up when Mr Jefferson turned up on his way to Dinsdale. He said: "I see you are getting on quite well. You know where to find me if you need me" and off he went. The rolling over went quite successfully: I had already learned that when two cranes are operating together, one man takes the whistle

and is in charge. So I positioned the two crane foremen where I could see them and they could see me. I took the whistle and was able to control the lift with hand signals - left hand Gateshead; right hand York - and she came up beautifully.

All we had to do was put her on the rails to finish the job about 14:00. The crane was put in Darlington South ready to go to works and repair, and Jack Wandless saw it all bent on his way back on Sunday night and he wanted to know what I had done to his beloved crane.

The resultant enquiry about the incident found that the supervisor had been told there were 10-tons in the wagon, when really there were more than 20 tons, and he had packed the crane outriggers over a large buried drain pipe which had collapsed when the load came on.

Incidents like this were, of course, quite rare, and most of the breakdown work was minor derailments in yards or sidings, and these were dealt with by the Breakdown Foreman.

We were running down steam and introducing diesels, which were all going to be based at Thornaby Depot which had been built quite recently with dieselisation in mind. This meant that Darlington, West Hartlepool and West Auckland steam sheds would close down ultimately by 1968, leaving the DMUs at Darlington Diesel Depot and all the diesel locos at Thornaby. The Darlington 45-ton breakdown train was transferred to Thornaby. These arrangements had to be organised with smooth changeovers so that there would be no disruption to traffic.

Towards the end of 1966, it was announced that the Newcastle and Middlesbrough Divisions would be merged to form one large division which would comprise all of the railway from a point just north of Thirsk to Marshall Meadows just north of Berwick, and west to Petteral Junction near Carlisle. This would take place at the beginning of 1967. All staff would be eligible to apply for jobs in the new Division Office which would be located in Irving House on Newcastle Station. The current DME in Newcastle would be remaining in charge, as Mr Jefferson would be retiring. This gentleman was Mr Allan Clothier, who was really a Western Region man, but he had accepted that the LNER had some good ideas as well. He was a brilliant engineer and it was a pleasure to work for him. His organisation was: Traction Maintenance Engineer, Traction Running Engineer, Carriage and Wagon Engineer, Outdoor Machinery Engineer and Chief Clerk.

To be continued