

Sandtoft Scene

October 2020

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NEWS & VIEWS FROM
The Trolleybus Museum
AT SANDTOFT



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Front Cover Picture

London 1348 from May 2019 - open days will return

Photography



Photographs in this issue have been kindly provided by: Andy Thornton, Dave Chick, Digby Lidestone-Scott, Graham Bilbe, Helen Cross, Ian Brown, Jim Sambrooks and Vicky Wilson.

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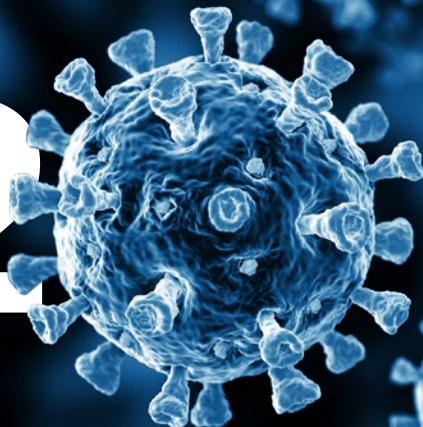
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Chairman's Report

From Ian Wilson



2020



...a year that no one could have foreseen!

To my surprise, I was elected as Chairman at the first Board meeting of the year in January 2020 following the AGM held in December 2019 at which three new Board members were elected.

In January, we were expecting a “normal” year and were looking forward to re-opening to the public at Easter as usual and with the new innovation of running the Saturday connecting bus services to Thorne instead of Epworth.

Plans were being formulated for a members visit in March to the 7 ¼” gauge Ise Valley Railway to see it in action before its closure and transfer to Sandtoft (due to the generosity of its proprietor – Francis Terry).

Then came March and “the Lockdown”! At the eleventh hour the visit to Ise Valley had to be cancelled and it became clear that our Museum (along with others all over the world) would not be reopening to the public in the foreseeable

future - and neither would it be possible for our volunteers to be on the premises as normal. The Museum had to be closed for all but essential maintenance.

By the middle of May it proved possible to allow volunteers back on the Museum premises (practicing strict social distancing) and this allowed some work to recommence, including Trolleybus testing and tentative plans were made for the reopening of the Museum to the public in July. Sadly, this proved not to be possible as it became abundantly clear that many of our customer facing staff fell in to the vulnerable category and staffing an open day was not going to be feasible.

A new target date was then set for the August Bank Holiday Weekend in the hope that matters would have improved by then, unfortunately, although potential staffing numbers had increased, there were still not enough available for us to operate

Chairman's Report...



The scene at Sandtoft during vehicle prep for (not) opening

the museum, particularly bearing in mind all the extra cleaning, visitor supervision, etc, that would be required. It was then very reluctantly decided to close the Museum to the public for the rest of 2020. With hindsight and the continuing rise in Covid 19 cases as I write this (in October 2020) I am positive this was the correct decision.

As you will all now be aware, due to social distancing legislation, it has not proved possible to hold the 2020 AGM this November, hence, reluctantly it has been postponed until sometime in 2021 when it is hoped that conditions will have improved and restrictions eased.

After all this negativity, has anything good happened at Sandtoft this year? Of course it has!

Volunteer numbers have remained buoyant with quite a number of new “working” members being recruited locally. Interestingly, several of these workers are not primarily interested in transport but being retired, enjoy using their old skills to

maintain and improve the Museum. The year has seen much hard work carried out to complete both bus shelters, to repair the Workshop structure, to commence in-house PAT testing and much, much more.

A full inspection of the overhead has been carried out and it has been passed out for use, albeit with a speed restriction on the “Back Straight” until renewal of several traction poles has been completed.

To replace our time-expired Ford “Cherry Picker”, a second-hand MEWP (Mobile Elevating Work Platform) has been acquired and several of our volunteers (old & new) have been trained up and certified to operate it. This piece of equipment has already proved its worth being used on both overhead & building maintenance.

At an early stage, the “new” Board decided that getting all our fleet undercover was one of its priorities. Although putting up a new depot



building is still one of our major aims, it seemed unwise to embark on the project this year due to the unknown future financial implications of the Covid crisis. As a stopgap measure, it has fortunately proved possible to find undercover accommodation at various other museums in the North of England and as a result, the number of vehicles stored outside has steadily decreased throughout the year.

A thorough audit of the Museum's fire extinguishers was carried out and as a result, almost all the old ones have been replaced with more modern foam-type extinguishers which can be used on almost all types of fire. Although initially an expensive exercise, over the lifetime of these new extinguishers, considerable cost savings are anticipated.

Significant work has been carried out on the Trolleyshop to provide a more spacious shopping environment for when we finally reopen to the public.

The transfer of the former Ise Valley Railway Track, Rolling Stock & ancillary equipment to Sandtoft has been completed necessitating many journeys back & forth and much back-breaking work from the removal teams loading & unloading it. Well done to all involved. Of course, that was the easy bit! Next, the route of the Railway will have to be decided and Planning Permission will have to be obtained for it and its buildings. Then we will be able to start laying the track and building an Engine Shed and Railway Stations.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members & volunteers for their help and support throughout this traumatic year. Let's look forward to a better 2021.

Please let me express the hope that you all keep in good health throughout the winter and that we can finally recommence running Trolleybuses again next spring.

Ian Wilson, Chairman

News from the *Virtual* Boardroom

Compiled by Jason Spencer

Covid-19 Continues...

Since our last report in June Covid 19 has continued to dominate Board discussions at its virtual meetings.

The Board was confident that it could introduce measures on site to make sure that our volunteers and visitors could be safe in the Museum if it was able to open. Unfortunately, our plans to open on the weekend on 25/26 July and over the August Bank Holiday weekend could not go ahead due to a shortage of volunteers. Under normal circumstances we would have had sufficient numbers to open but with the amount of additional work, equipment and supervision needed to be Covid safe we decided it was not viable to open to visitors at all during 2020.

Thankfully we have been able to see the return of a larger numbers of volunteers on site, subject to safe working practices, but track and trace record keeping has been a challenge as the rules and guidance have evolved. We are grateful that the majority of our volunteers have recognised that the Museum must operate in accordance with the prevailing law and guidance and therefore complied with measures we have had to put in place.

The Board has provisionally agreed dates for Museum opening in 2021, subject to regulations: these can be found on our website. We would again like to thank all its volunteers and members for their continued support and encouragement during the current extraordinary situation.





2020 AGM

The Board recently took the decision to postpone the 2020 AGM. We had originally hoped to use the function room at the Reindeer Inn as it would give us plenty of room to have a physical meeting and maintain social distancing. However, with the increase in the R number and the reintroduction of limits in the number of people meeting inside this option is no longer possible.

We aim to review the situation again in December to see if by then the current restrictions will allow us to hold a physical meeting. In the meantime, just in case we cannot, we are investigating the options for setting up a postal ballot or proxy vote system.

Offsite Storage

Those of you who follow the Museum on social media will have seen that recently a number of vehicles have moved into storage in other locations. The Board remains committed to making sure that our exhibits are not left outdoors during the winter, therefore since the last edition of Sandtoft Scene Lyon 1704 has moved to Accrington and Marseille 202 has gone to Keighley Bus Museum. We are pleased to confirm that with the help of volunteers and the BTS, Aachen 22 is now undercover.

Westgate

In September the Board made an in-principle decision to dispose of the premises the Museum owns at Westgate Road in Belton. The condition of the building has deteriorated, and a significant investment would be needed to make it safe and usable. The Board believes that in the longer term it is preferable to invest in the Museum site itself. Therefore income from the sale, and the money saved by not having to maintain and repair Westgate can be used to help fund the construction of the new depot and make repairs to the existing depot building and its doors.



Miniature Railway

The Board would like to express its gratitude to Graham Bilbe and his team of volunteers in loading, transporting and unloading the track, rolling stock and equipment for the Museum's new railway. The Board is currently looking at the detail of how the project to rebuild and operate the railway will be managed, if you would be interested in volunteering to support this please get in touch with Stewart David. Turn to pages 14-16 for a photo story with highlights from the move.



TM@S Receives £1,000 Grant

Through his previous employment with Spar, Mark Boulton, our Trolleyshop Manager, became aware of a new fund set up this year to help charity and community groups. On the Museum's behalf Mark submitted an application, which not only was shortlisted, but won us the top grant of £1,000 in July!

The scheme has been set up by A.F. Blakemore & Sons, a large family-owned firm in the retail and distribution sector set up in 1917. It's the largest division of Spar UK, owning 280 grocery stores and serving more than 950 in England and Wales. The company set up the Community Cashback Grant Scheme to help organisations in its operating area which have been affected by Covid; once an application is shortlisted, the public votes for the one of their choice in each region. The Trolleybus Museum was in the Week 4 round of voting and

was the clear first place winner in the North East Region.

Coincidentally, A.F. Blakemore is based in Willenhall, a place well known to trolleybus enthusiasts!

It goes without saying that the Board is extremely grateful to A.F. Blakemore & Sons for this grant and to Mark for making the application, as our Museum is facing a backlog of essential maintenance work at a time when our income has been severely reduced. Whilst we get notified of some grant funding opportunities by our sector partners others can slip under the radar, so if you hear of any schemes like this one please let John Francis (jfrancis@sandtoft.org) or Chas Allen (callen@sandtoft.org) know – we don't always meet the eligibility criteria but we do check them out!

Weekday Workers Report



Contributors: Jim Sambrooks and Digby Lidestone-Scott; with help from John Petch and John Whipham

Although we haven't opened this year, it doesn't mean work has stopped. Closure has given us an opportunity to catch up on numerous jobs. And the work will continue through winter, Covid rules permitting. The Wednesday Gang has now expanded itself to other weekdays as well, hence the change of title. We're very pleased to welcome Jeff Tune to the group.

Bus shelters

Of our two bus shelters, the more modern one, from Belton, situated by the cycle shop, hadn't carried full glazing since it was erected on site in 2007. Geoff Croft and Guy Vickery fitted four of the five missing panes but the fifth proved more difficult as the frame had warped, never mind, those men wouldn't be beaten and the glass was fitted after modifying the frame. Not to be put off, the two went on to replace a broken pane in the brown tram body, replacing plate glass with the laminated variety.

The cast iron shelter, from Lichfield, which had stood partly assembled for several years has seen much attention from Steve Lyndsey, Guy and Geoff; many of the assembly studs were broken off during dismantling, these have been drilled out and re-tapped where necessary, small parts have been shot blasted at Wilson's and prepared for fitting after painting by Mike Spilling. All that remains to finish the job is glazing although the roof is to be panelled temporarily due to our current financial situation.



Bus shelter progress



The newly painted workshop floor

Workshop

The pit walls and floor have been repainted by Mike Spilling following repairs - woe betide anybody that spills black oil on the white walls! Sunglasses now need to be worn when working beneath vehicles and carpet slippers so as not to dirty the clean floor. The entire workshop floor has since been painted in safety colours. Much rammel has been removed leaving plenty of space for more rammel to “grow” there.

Overhead track of the vehicle access doors has seen some attention and the doors can now be moved single handedly. The doors have been made more secure by covering up the gap between them when closed and stronger padlocks fitted, the corrugated sheets are receiving some long overdue attention. The lock to the pedestrian door has also been changed. But, as they say, locks only keep honest people out.

Clearing of the workshop led to making a start on the stores building, amongst the rammel found in there, under an old coat, was a frame thought to have been used for the annual barbecue. Removal of the cover revealed it to be a circular saw; well it could have been used for slicing the buns, testing of the motor proved it to be beyond repair so the whole contraption was scrapped.



...and the workshop pit

Overhead

Poles currently being prepared and painted by Steve Cox will replace others in a decayed state. Erecting them is going to be an expensive specialist job, but it has to be done as some existing poles are unsafe. Six traction poles have been removed from our stockpile and placed on the back road next to the poles which Andy Feather has identified to be replaced. Graham Kelsey used his JCB to bring the poles to the back straight from our pile of spares near the staff car park. He can do anything with that machine, short of making it sing.



Site

Our ride-on mower is now 11 years old and does a tremendous amount of work on our four-and-a-half acre site, and we also mow the grass at Burntwood. The grass needs cutting three times a fortnight during spring and summer, a task unseen by many and carried out by John “Wobbly” Whipham, Tony Ferris and Digby. The mower is serviced annually by Scunthorpe Lawnmowers and has never let us down (apart from a bent jockey-wheel this year, which was repaired by John Petch in our workshop).

We’ve kept John busy renewing faulty locks, hedge-cutting, ditch-clearing, and many other site works. Recent Wobbly projects include two flood-prevention schemes (one in front of the workshop doors, the other on the far side of the field), and the removal and disposal of the unsightly broken fence between the Museum site and Burntwood.

Currently he’s tidying up the slightly scruffy

area directly below the Museum entrance sign. He's excavated half a tonne of soil (at least) and replaced it with rubble, in readiness for resurfacing with concrete. This is an important area as first impressions set the tone for the whole Museum.

Len Smith and Dave Blyth have cleared much of the weeds growing in the roadway and pavements as well as sweeping up leaves and fitting new cabinets for fire extinguishers. Gerry Carroll continues his work painting various items of street furniture.

A Belisha beacon has been erected outside the prefab house opposite the one already in place, thanks to John Petch and Tony Walsh - unfortunately neither will flash.

Our much-expanded "Weekday Gang" has replaced the pedestrian door to the depot, previously an internal type door had been fitted and this had deteriorated, its place taken by a second-hand external type door showing number 90. An objection was raised to the number as strange people live at No.90 so the door was hung upside down and now shows number 06, even the letter box was reversed so stop the postman trapping his fingers, not that the postman goes anywhere near that door.



Belisha Beacon fitting



New play area

Buildings

The "Skeggy" building is no more. It's now the Family Room, complete with new soft-play area. As our customer base of people with a direct nostalgic attachment to trolleybuses shrinks, we need to attract more young families if the Museum is to thrive through the years ahead. The Family Room project has been undertaken by Gill Ferris and Ann Scott, who have taken the opportunity to give some of our archived pictures a welcome airing. After all, you're never too young to enjoy pictures of buses.

Sir Bob Ashton, assisted by Lady Pat and Steve Hobbs, has been occupied with the window displays in the Axholme Stores building.

Our new Shop Manager, Mark Boulton, is in the process of rebuilding the shop interior, creating a lot more display area. Mark has also created a new gate to the box wagon snap cabin and fitted guttering to same after many years of members being dripped on when entering and leaving said edifice.

Information Board

It's been a long time coming but we now have an information board for one of our two Sheffield tram bodies. Information boards can instantly identify nondescript buildings as important visitor attractions. Boards are now in place for the Hastings, the Old Bakery, the Cycle Shop, the Grey Fergie (tractor), the Prefab and the Family Room.



Vehicle Preservation Reports

Compiled by **Jim Sambrooks**

Dave Longstaff and Tony Walsh continue their work on **SYPT 2450** with assistance from Richard Barnes who now has enough drawings to construct another Electroline. The traction motor was lifted into place by Les Taylor using a fork lift loaned by A.E. Wilson & Sons.

John Petch has carried out a lot of finishing work on **RT3323** including the platform panelling and attempted to fit a front advert produced by Digby Scott.

Graham Rhodes, with help from Mike Hirst, has managed to coax **Douglas 52's** engine into starting, there are several timing marks on the fuel pump flywheel and we had it set on the wrong one! The seized solid rear brake cylinders have been persuaded out of their housings and Graham is trying to free off the pistons in their cylinders. The cab has been rewired and the bell, horn and semaphore indicators are now operational.



Doncaster 22's engine was returned after warranty work by Graham Green, thanks to Guy Vickery for hiring the van, a short road test has been successfully carried out.

Doncaster 94 has seen much work by Dave Stanfield and team, the top deck is almost complete and attention has turned to the lower deck, there's no stopping "Little Dave" when he gets started.



From the same fleet **375** has had its exterior adverts sign-written by Duncan Wedlock of Write Sign, Doncaster whose workmanship is highly recommended. What a difference that has made, turning an otherwise anonymous vehicle into one that will bring back memories to our local visitors. Duncan will next turn his skills to 94 and Cleethorpes 54.

Digby Scott has produced excellent copies of the interior adverts for 94, 375 and the RT.

Andy Fieldsend has applied yet more paint to **Cleethorpes 54**, and the workshop floor, although Nora cleaned off the latter as he went on having heeded the words above. Len, assisted by Bruce Lake has carried out more work on the low voltage wiring.



Foreign vehicle **1704** has gone to Accrington for its holidays; wouldn't you like a holiday in Accrington? Another foreigner, **202** has since moved to Keighley for covered storage. **Aachen 22** has moved into our depot after too many years in outside storage.

The Blue (Leyland) tractor now has working brakes following attention from our Engineering Director, Ian Wilson.

Our solitary ratchet strap was found to be in poor condition and a new one purchased, at the same time John Petch mentioned the problem to his neighbour who works for BCA in Kirk Sandall. The neighbour asked his boss if he could have some straps for the Museum, she replied that he could take what he wanted for the Museum. Then the penny dropped, car transporters, Kirk Sandall. "Is your boss called Bex?" I asked and she was. I thanked Kieran Proctor's wife for her kind donation.

Away from site, Mark Boulton reports good progress on **Felix 40** (Dinky Villa) as does Jason Lilley on **Sheffield 1357** which will emerge, after repaint, in its previous identity as Sheffield 227.

*That newly painted workshop floor
will never stay clean at this rate*





The Ise Valley Railway



...on the Move



As previously mentioned in these pages, Francis and Rachel Terry have kindly donated their miniature railway to the museum. Over the summer Graham Bilbe has led a team of volunteers to get it moved from Northamptonshire. Here are some photos illustrating the hard work. More information on the history and plans for the railway in a future edition of Scene.





*Hoping to see you again
at the Museum in 2021!*

