

Autocar

No.3

March 2009



The Newsletter of the
1903 North Eastern Railway
Petrol Electric Autocar Trust

The North Eastern Railway 1903

Petrol Electric Autocar Trust

Registered Charity No.1105829

Company Registration No.05171008

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Contributions

We welcome your comments, contributions, letters and suggestions. Please send all correspondence to the secretary, address above.

Front Cover: One of two archive pictures in this issue. This view was taken at Scarborough station, probably in 1904 when the autocar's were new and still causing much interest.

Photo: The Ken Hoole Study Centre

Comment

Welcome to our longest magazine yet! I apologise that there is an emphasis on text, but I am sure you will appreciate that these are exciting and formative times, and clarity of discussion and openness of debate is very important to us and, I am sure, to our members.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of Autocar, there have been some momentous events in recent months regarding the project. The HLF has indicated that it is supportive of the trust's objectives and further official funding is hoped for from the MLA's (Museums, Libraries and Archives) PRISM fund. This is encouraging news indeed and validates the hard work put into the trust so far by the trustees and the excellent support received from the members.

By way of introduction, and apology, I will be editing the magazine for the foreseeable future and it is to me that blame for its late appearance must fall. In my day job as the transport curator at Beamish life has become rather hectic as we, like other heritage attractions, manoeuvre ourselves to face the looming economic difficulties. I am pleased to report that Beamish wholly endorses the autocar project and looks forward to welcoming it onto the museum's metals.

Now an appeal, we always need material for this magazine (relevant photos and articles etc.) and I am particularly keen to receive and include letters (via the secretary please) from members. It would also be wonderful to receive any recollections from riding in (or sleeping in!) the autocars in service and after.

We have a website, www.electrictocarcar.co.uk, and we really need a web manager to maintain it. This wouldn't be an onerous job, but it is important to retain an online presence and to keep it as up to date as possible. Anyone who fancies supporting the trust by taking on this role can contact the chairman or secretary for further information.

Support the Trust!

Anyone able to distribute the trust's leaflets at his or her local heritage railway is invited to contact Stephen Middleton – details on the inside front cover.

Heritage Lottery Fund 'first round pass'!

The 1903 North Eastern Railway Petrol Electric Autocar Trust has achieved a 'first round pass' in its' application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. What does that mean? In the words of the HLF `

A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. However, a first-round pass does not guarantee the applicant will receive a grant although the chances of receiving a grant are high the second-round application will still be in competition for funding, and no money is set aside at this stage. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals.'

The Trust now has two years to raise the balance of funds, obtain firm quotes for the work required and to plan the working life of this unique vehicle once restoration is complete.

The North Eastern Railway built two petrol electric autocars in 1902, pioneering this means of propulsion. Until then, all trains were steam powered. The autocars had petrol engines driving an electric generator and could be said to be the 'grandfather' of today's passenger trains. These two autocar's entered service in 1904 and operated on the NER Scarborough to Filey and Hartlepool to West Hartlepool routes, moving to the Harrogate and Selby areas later in later years.

The sole survivor (No. 3170) was withdrawn in 1930 and taken off it's underframe, cut in half and rejoined to form a holiday home at Keldholme, between Helmsley and Pickering. In 2004, Trust chairman and vintage railway carriage restorer Stephen Middleton bought the body and placed it on an underframe. It was then painted in NER colours to give an impression of what it

looked like in service and was a guest at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's
NER 150 anniversary gala.

The Trust plans to restore the autocar together with a 1904 built North Eastern Railway autocoach (No. 3453) which the NER coach group at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway generously agreed to donate to the Trust. There are pictures of the autocar running with a similar carriage and the two together would carry sufficient passengers to justify a regular service on today's heritage railways. As well as providing a unique transport experience for passengers, the Trust hopes to use the autocar for educational purposes.

If the HLF grant is awarded at the second stage, this would be a significant £360,000 contribution to the £410,000 project, allowing rapid restoration. The next steps for the Trust are to develop comprehensive proposals for the restoration and operation of the autocar and raise balance funding. We would welcome any help members can offer, whether financial or by volunteering their time and skills to assist with this project.

The underframe question

By Stephen Milddleton

Once I had ownership of 3170's body I had to arrange removal as soon as possible. This urgency was compounded by the fact that the field was hard and dry yet as back end approached it would get muddy and access for cranes and lorries would be impossible.

An underframe of the correct length became available, sadly due to the fact that an unrestored LNER Coach Association carriage had been destroyed by fire at Carnforth. I bought the underframe but my good friend Wendy Anderson and I had to make the remaining body structure safe and tidy the surrounding site. With just one day this realistically meant bringing down the superstructure, picking up the burnt bits and roping them down on the underframe for safe transport. It was delivered to Priors Lane loading siding on the E&BASR where Marcus Woodcock, Roy Ingham and I salvaged what little good wood there was

and burnt the rest. Metal went in to the scrap bin. After a weekend's hard work we had an underframe clean and ready to roll once the body arrived.

The body was craned on with no drama and Wendy's bright orange straps secured the body to underframe for the short journey to Bolton Abbey. Since then the underframe has been a source of great debate, ranging from 'The Gresley bogie underframe it is on is quite adequate after all, it is strong and no-one really notices the bogies' to 'Let's cut down a DMU underframe and take advantage of the power motors underneath'.

Both were valid ideas but we felt that with such a special unique survivor we had to find a solution closer to the original. This decision was helped by the fact that the North Norfolk Railway had a metal underframe of the correct length, Fox pattern bogies and correct truss rods.



Above: The autocar with body strapped onto the underframe. Photo: Stephen Middleton

The NNR said that they would exchange underframes if the Trust paid for the crane runner top to be transferred. Brilliant! Right underframe and bogies! However one bogie is wrong. A heavy weight Fox pattern bogie was fitted at the engine end to carry the additional weight. A little detective work revealed where there was a heavy bogie and we have negotiated an exchange. Underframe and bogie swaps will take place once all funding is in place and we have the go ahead from the HLF to begin restoration.

Next time – the bogies...

Meet the autocar

Stephen Middleton

Several members attended a 'Meet the Autocar' session at Bolton Abbey Station, Saturday 8th November. The Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway kindly opened the Bolton Abbey station buffet where we enjoyed coffee and cakes before Stephen Middleton's presentation. He outlined the history of the autocar, how it was recovered and plans for the future. At that time we were all keeping our fingers crossed following a detailed application for Heritage Lottery Funds and so we are now delighted that we have passed the first hurdle.

We crossed the railway line to look around the autocar and it was only when we wanted to look inside that we came across a problem. The heavy rain had swollen the one door that opened. Poor Marcus bashed his head trying to enter through a hatch in the floor and it was Ian Douglas who finally broke in through a (plywood glazed) window and opened the door from the inside.

Members were impressed by the condition of the interior and came away feeling that restoration was indeed viable. There will be little improvement over the next year or so as we cannot begin until funding is in place (an HLF stipulation) but we need to hold an annual general meeting this year to explain progress etc.

AGM

The proposed date for the AGM is October 3rd 2009, at Embsay station. More details on this will follow but it is hoped that a large amount of progress can be reported and as many member as possible are urged to come along and meet the team (and the autocar!).



Above: Members inspect the interior of the Autocar, an experience all the more satisfying given the means of entry! Photo: Alan Lancaster



Above: One day members will be able to enjoy a similar site as the Autocar glides into service unencumbered with tarpaulins and boarded up windows!

Photo: Alan Lancaster



A venue for the future... The North Eastern Railway country station, as recreated at Beamish, The North of England Open Air Museum. Current plans should see a revival of passenger trains here, running along some 500 yards of line – a location and operation for which the autocar will be ideally suited.

Photo: Paul Jarman

Letters

Dear Marcus

Belated thanks for the excellent AUTOCAR No 2.

I was interested in your article on the power unit, not only for its content but also because it raised a memory. I was a Graduate Apprentice in the 50s with the firm (Reyrolle) with which JH Holmes Motors was merged. One part of the works at Hebburn was still designated Holmes Motors. The motor firm's principal claim to fame at that time was the Schrage motor, used in all the major printing presses of the day as well as the textile industries.

Few of us understood how it worked but scraping bearings for it was as arduous a task as for its less illustrious fellows! I am fully supportive of the Trustees decision on the option for the power unit, but equally pleased that they will take advice.

Looking forward to more news of the project

Clive Morris (Life Member).

Dear Stephen

It has taken this long to finish the film I started last November! Anyway for what it's worth I am sending you a couple of shots I took at Meet the Autocar, a slightly fuzzy internal view and an external one that shows her in all her glory. I left a few of the leaflets you gave me in the foyer of the B+B I was staying at in Haworth.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lancaster

Editor's note. Thanks Alan, for distributing leaflets. If anyone else can distribute leaflets contact Stephen Middleton on 01423 561965 for a supply.

Dear Mr Woodcock

First let me congratulate the editor (you?) on the first two issues of the "Autocar" Newsletters. I have found the content interesting, enjoyable, absorbing and informative.

I regret that I was unable to attend the "Meet the Autocar" session at Bolton Abbey on the 8th November; I was already committed to operating my petrol-engine 15" gauge locomotive of 1909 on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway that weekend for the benefit of visiting staff and volunteers from other small-gauge railways!

My loco is understood to be the world's oldest surviving internal-combustion-engined railway locomotive of any gauge or type, and I am now less than a year away from celebrating its centenary; one reason I am so interested in the Autocar is my presumption that it is the oldest surviving British i-c railcar, itself pre-dating my loco by some 6 years! The two vehicles are part of a very select company indeed!

I have previously debated with Stephen Middleton the issues of petrol v diesel motive power for the Autocar's restoration and the argument put forward by yourself in Newsletter No 2 is extremely cogent, particularly as all traces of its original mechanical, electrical and below body-structural components have long-since vanished (other than its engine, changed in 1944, my loco is virtually completely original, including gearboxes, wheels, frames, bodywork, controls etc – which makes such issues very different).

I therefore support the idea of a modern, compact, efficient, diesel generator unit for 3170, preferably accompanied by some physical indication of the nature and scale of (one of) its earlier power units – maybe by locating the modern unit" inside a replica of the original" (as you mention).

I am, however, far less happy regarding the proposals for trailer coach 3453. I would support Mr Wickens view that 3170 did not, and was not intended to, haul a trailer carriage in passenger service, If it had been, I am sure there would have been "jumper" connections at each end to facilitate coupled operation, yet

none are visible in any pictures I have seen of either 3170 or 3171.

Furthermore, the view of 3170 apparently hauling a trailer coach (cover of "Autocar" No 1) shows the brake compartment of the carriage closest to the railcar – surely it is the brake section (if any) which would have been adapted as a remote driving cab for such a trailer. If used purely as a trailer, without remote driving facilities, it would be necessary to "run round" at a termini, negating most of the potential benefit of a 2-car unit.

Whilst understanding the desire to create a commercially-viable "train", I fear that adapting 3453 in this way would divert attention and resources away from a very historically and archaeologically important railcar (3170) into a nice but "mundane" carriage (3453) – and one into a condition for which there seems to be no provable historical basis – creating a somewhat dangerous and historically –misleading situation – which would inevitably reflect on the interpretative value of 3170 itself.

If the HLF bid is indeed unavoidably dependent upon a second vehicle, then I suggest a better approach would be to use it to contrast the compartmentalised passenger facilities in the conventional carriage with the open-saloon "tramcar" type layout of 3170 – showing how a traditional railway sought to compete in 1903 with the now-commonplace electric tramcars by mimicking – or bettering – their layout. In this context it is perhaps relevant too that no original NER Tyneside electric passenger car survives – only the (very historic) Parcels Car 3267 – and 3170 must therefore act as a representative also of the large early NER Tyneside electric passenger fleet.

I look forward to the next issue of "Autocar", including regarding sourcing the underframe.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Bob Tebb (member no 20)

The trust replies:

Dear Dr Tebb

Thank you for your letter regarding the autocar and trailer, which I have forwarded to Stephen Middleton and his letter of response is attached. Could I also reply to a few points?

Firstly, please accept my apologies, by using the photo of 3170 at Poppleton Jct, towing the NER brake composite it was not my intention to deceive readers into thinking that 3170 was coupled to an autocoach, the photo was used to give an "impression" of what our completed project would look like.

We admit that there is no evidence (as yet) that either autocar ran with a trailer car, but the photograph does exist, which begs the question why did the LNER stage it if it was not the intention for the autocar to be used in this way? Also the autocar was re-engined with a 225hp unit, the original was 80hp giving a max speed of 30mph so why fit a larger engine using more fuel? It follows a 225hp engine would be capable of hauling two coaches at increased speed.

I understand your concerns about 3453, but it will only be coupled to 3170 when required and we may even be able to hire it out to other groups.

Yours sincerely,

Marcus Woodcock,

Dear Bob

Thank you for your letter and I am particularly interested in your views concerning the trailer car. Yes, we have no evidence that either petrol electric autocar was intended to pull another coach, let alone one that was fitted with a driving compartment capable of being used. It would be interesting to discover exactly what 3170 was doing pulling that coach. It seems to be shortly after the LNER repaint and installation of the new engine as it was used on the Harrogate

line in the early 1920s. Was there an intention of adding to passenger capacity by pulling a coach? Did it run in passenger service with another coach?

We HAVE to make the autocar a viable economic proposition once restored and as a single unit it would be difficult to maintain a service on most heritage railways. It simply will not carry enough passengers. DO we need to use it on timetabled services? Yes, to earn income for care and maintenance, to justify the care of host railway, and for the opportunity to interpret to public and passengers. (This latter point is very important to the HLF who has kindly approved our funding request at stage 1 level.)

We are lucky that an appropriate coach still exists and we can restore it. However I take your point that we have to be careful with the interpretation and I like your idea of contrasting the two intensive 3rd class methods of packing in passengers, open and compartment. Once again the autocar's design has become commonplace in most 21st century trains.

Resources will be concentrated on the restoration of 3170 and, having viewed the autocoach, I don't think it will be a particularly challenging job. (It looks a lot easier than many of my historic carriages!)

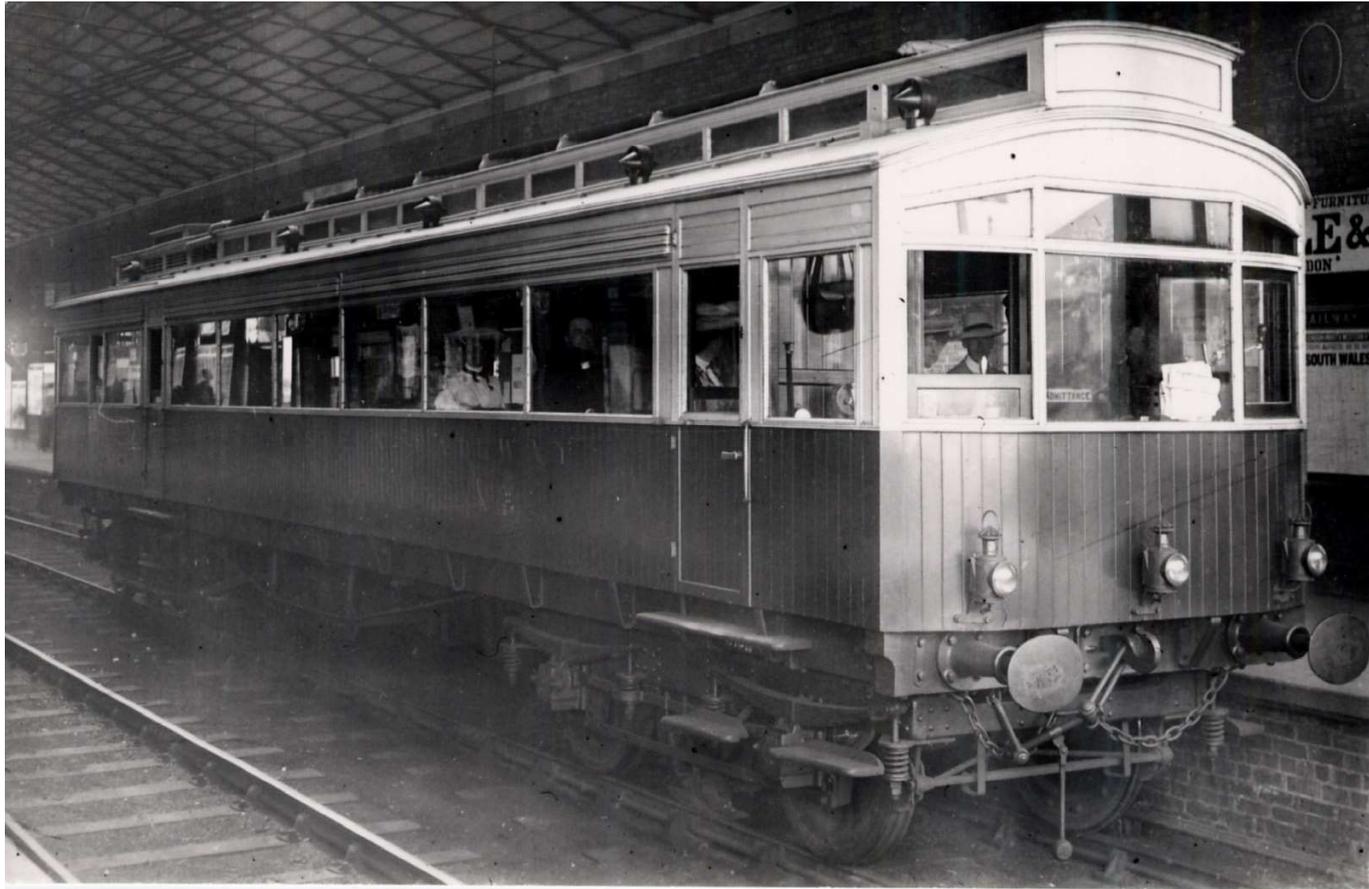
Kind regards

Stephen Middleton

Obituary

Member and supporter John Curtis died on 19th January and his funeral took place on Monday 26th January at St. Mary's Church, Scarborough. John was ill for several months following the discovery of a brain tumour and subsequent surgery. He attended 'Meet the Autocar' last November in a wheelchair and those who knew him were saddened to see how his health had suffered. However he retained his enthusiasm and vigour in his voice and he looked forward to working with us on this project. John's main work with heritage railways was with the LNER Coach Association and researching carriages from that company. Our sympathies go to his widow, Hilda.

Tail-lamp



Above: The second of two archive images in this issue of Autocar and also dating from around 1904. This time the scene is Filey, underneath the G. T. Andrews roof there – a hint of a scene that might one day be possible to recreate at Pickering on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway when plans to recreate the overall roof there come to fruition.

Photo: The Ken Hoole Study Centre