

AUTOCAR

North Eastern Railway 1903 Electric Autocar Trust

Newsletter No. 43 — Spring 2021



The North Eastern Railway 1903 Electric Autocar Trust

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Front Cover: <i>The passenger saloon, as of 22 April 2021, now with curtains and straps. (Alan Chandler)</i>

May 2021

Welcome to the 43rd issue of our newsletter.

I hope you and your families are all well. As I write this introduction, there are some signs of the situation improving. The [Embsay] railway has restarted running trains and we plan for the autocar to operate some services later this year. Fingers crossed that the worst of the pandemic is now behind us.

Inevitably, recent restrictions have inhibited our activities both personally and for the Trust. This newsletter is later than it was intended — until recently there was little to report and unfortunately some of us have had to deal with family emergencies.

Thankyou to those who replied to our email request from the last issue. We know it's not for everyone but it can be useful, especially at the moment.

We are pleased to welcome a new member of the team, John Carr, who will handle our sales and deal with publicity & marketing. John has an impressive track record and introduces himself and discusses his plans on page 14.

And in this issue we are able to return to the 'cousins' series, with two articles on other railcars, to set the autocar in a historical context.

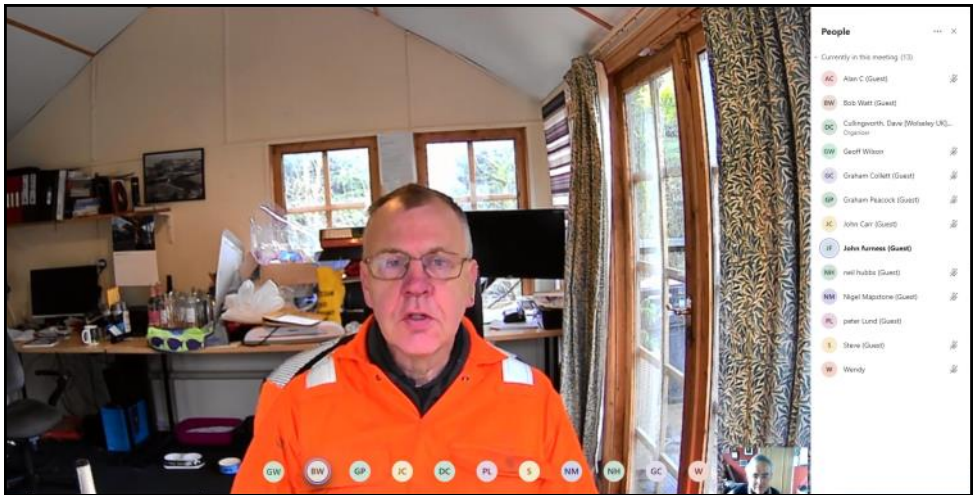
Stay safe and best wishes to you all.

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Chairman's notes

John Furness



Once the world gets back to something approaching normal, the autocar should have a reasonably busy summer. Apart from doing the whole service at Embsay in October, there will be days when it does either the first or last run of the day. But most exciting will be the driver experience courses. Yes, anyone can come and have half a day learning how to drive it. Of course apart from memories and photos, it qualifies you for precisely nothing. But with less than ten passed drivers in the world, this is truly classed as exotic traction. Give it a go.

If you would like to join a very exclusive club and drive the autocar, details will be on both our and Embsay's web-sites once public health restrictions permit us to operate these courses.

Embsay's online timetable is at

<https://www.embsayboltonabbeyrailway.org.uk/timetable/calendar> (Ed.)

Above: Screenshot from the AGM.

Secretarial Matters – May 2021

Dave Cullingworth

The postponed annual general meeting was eventually held on Saturday 21st January as a virtual meeting using Teams. Overcoming a few minor technical issues, the meeting was a success, with 14 participants present.

Two Trustees, Alan Chandler and myself, were both re-elected for another three year term.

We are pleased to announce that John Carr has agreed to take on the sales role and has some ideas on marketing online products. John has a wealth of experience over many years with various heritage organisations.

Neil Hubbs detailed planned running days for the autocar at the YDR during 2021. There were no plans to visit other railways due to the uncertainty on how these would operate this year. Very few railways were committing to special events or hiring in other locos.

We are hoping to hold a members' day in November, which will include a trip on the autocar and the Annual General Meeting.

Autocar Trust Vacancies:

Civil engineer, for leading a shed construction project.

Grant application lead, for the shed/museum.

Any **members of professions**, for technical advice when needed.

Volunteers/stewards, to assist with passenger PR work and staffing publicity/sales stands at exhibitions and/or when the autocar's 'on tour'.

Please contact us via the details given on the inside of the front cover.

Progress Report

Steve Hoather, pictures Alan Chandler

In the last newsletter (written in early November 2020) I reported our first test run as a two car unit, using the controls in the trailer cab. The various lockdowns and other Covid restrictions since then have hindered progress, not to mention cold weather, which makes wiring work in the carriage shed very difficult. But we have recently made such great progress that the power car is now finished, apart from one last item on my 'to do' list, which is to improve the access steps to the vehicle — because when we start regular running with the trailer at Embsay, the drivers will need to climb down onto the ballast at Bow Bridge as part of the run-round procedure.

There are big changes in the interior, as can be seen in the photos. The straps for standing passengers described in the last newsletter have now been fitted, so the ban on standing passengers (because there was nothing to hang on to) has now been lifted. Alan obtained and fitted three blinds for the windows behind the driver in the no. 2 end to solve the problem found when running



after dark on the Great Central when the driver could not see ahead because of reflections in the windscreen.



For some time, Colin Clift and his wife Kath have been working on curtains and poles for the saloon. These were fitted to the vehicle originally, and our experience in 2019 showed that (on the south side especially) they are very necessary because of the large area of glass in the saloon. The colour of the curtains matches the seat moquette and they are retained when not drawn by brass hooks made individually by Alan. Colin and Kath have decided to move house to Shropshire to be nearer their family – we wish them well and thank them for all their work on the project.



On the engineering front, Dave and I developed a wiring modification to overcome the problem with the DSD ('dead man's pedal') we had on October's test run, but still preserve the 'runaway protection' which prevents either the power car on its own or the twin set, running away without a driver if the brake has been mismanaged (there were several serious incidents on BR before this mod was fitted). I have now done this wiring modification and tested it statically, but it needs another test run before being finally 'signed off'.

Having completed the power car, our attention now turns to the trailer. The main task is to fit luggage racks and finish off the interior of the compartments. On the engineering front, I have fitted a switch on the handbrake linkage to sound an alarm if the driver tries to move the train with the handbrake applied (this is already fitted to the power car). The next job is to fit the guard's buzzer controls in the van, connect up the lighting etc. and finally finish the heating. We are hoping to get enough of this finished by the end of July to permit the vehicle to be used on the booked running days at Embsay from August onwards and provide extra seats. However, because the Thursday team is now down to three people (and we all have various holidays etc. booked), we have advised the railway not to commit to any reservations involving the trailer until nearer the time.

Whilst the power car was at Loughborough last year, Alan and I started looking at how to fit heaters under the seats in the trailer. This work took second priority when the power car returned, but during the latest lockdown Alan made a prototype heater housing in his workshop at home and by March it was ready for testing on the vehicle. The arrangement is shown in the photos on the next page and during testing we measured the temperatures at key points to ensure no one could get burnt and that no damage would be done to the surrounding seat. Everything was satisfactory, and we will arrange in due course for another 11 housings to be made, so that there will be one under each seat.



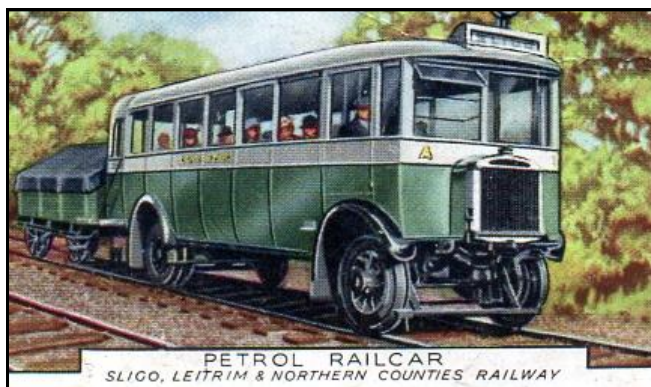


Trailer heating, above, in Alan's workshop and below, a unit installed under a seat.



Autocar 'Cousins': an Irish connection

Martin Cleaver



Cigarette cards have not been issued for many years but when the autocar was first in service, many manufacturers would issue them both to stiffen packets and as an added attraction*.

Many subjects were covered, including locos and trains. This card shows one of the Irish railcars used on their lines. The railcars were based on a road bus converted for railway use.

The reverse side's 'write-up' indicates this railcar travelled further than the autocar's regular journeys around either Hartlepool or Selby, though with Ireland's lower population density, this is not surprising. Like many railcars, their main advantage over steam trains was due to their low operating costs.

TRAINS OF THE WORLD SERIES OF 48. NO 8

PETROL RAILCAR
SLIGO, LEITRIM AND NORTHERN COUNTIES
RAILWAY, IRELAND

This petrol railcar, which is a converted road omnibus and hauls a luggage trailer, was first put into operation in 1935 between Enniskillen and Sligo, two important stations about forty-five miles apart. It has proved very much more economical and provides a quicker and more satisfactory service than the mixed passenger and goods trains which the Company used to run. Its maximum speed is 45 m.p.h. and it can climb the steepest gradients on the journey (1 in 50) in top gear without any undue strain on the engine.

ISSUED BY
GALLAHER LTD
VIRGINIA HOUSE, LONDON & BELFAST

* Now of course, cigarette advertising is banned and cigarette cards are collector's items. This card is reproduced by kind permission of the copyright holders and printed for its unique historical interest only.

Autocar 'Cousins': Barry Railway

Albyn Austin



Photo courtesy of Welsh Railways Research Circle.

The Barry Railway was one of the first to consider the use of steam 'Motor Cars', primarily for use on the Cardiff to Pontypridd line. On 4th February 1904, the relevant committee minutes noted that, 'The Locomotive Superintendent was instructed to get out a tracing of a Motor Car suitable for this Company's traffic and to submit it at the next meeting'.

John Hosgood, the Locomotive Superintendent from 1888 to 1905, wasted no time and submitted a detailed report on the 29th February. He described his visits to the Wolseley Motor Car Company at Birmingham and to the North Eastern Railway Company's works at York. The purpose of the first visit was to inspect an 80hp petrol engine used to power the railcar and the second visit, to see the railcar at work. The railcar had been the subject of experimental running for the previous 12 months while various engines had been tried. The Wolseley 80hp engine was the third to be tested after other previous failures.

A large portion of the railcar's length was taken up, in Hosgood's view, by extremely complicated and delicate machinery. The claims made for the railcar were that it had a maximum speed of 30 mph and that it could climb a 1 in 80 gradient at a speed of 20 mph. On this last claim, Hosgood was sceptical.

Hosgood concluded that a petrol driven railcar was not suitable for the Barry Railway because of its unreliability. The sensitivity of the machinery meant that the engine could fail if it was not carefully operated and that the person driving would have to be a highly trained specialist rather than 'an ordinary artisan'. His preference was rather for the steam railmotor being developed by the Great Western Railway which had been running successfully between Stonehouse and Chalford in Gloucestershire. The Barry Railway required a means of propulsion that could replace locomotive-hauled trains. In his view, however, petrol railcars were still at an experimental stage, with improvements continually being made and therefore it might suit the Company to defer the matter for a short while.

On this last point, the Board, known for its pioneering spirit, disagreed. On the 3rd March 1904, it was resolved that the Locomotive Superintendent, John Hosgood and the Manager, Richard Evans, provide designs for a suitable railcar and submit them to the next meeting. By June of the same year, tenders had been submitted and the Board accepted the submission of the North British Locomotive Co for two Motor Cars (steam railmotors) at a price of £2,400 each, with an option for a further two, if required, at the same price. NBL built the power units but the carriage units were constructed by R Y Pickering & Co of Wishaw.

Just under a year later, on 1st May 1905, the Motor Cars had been received and had commenced operations on the Cardiff to Pontypridd service that morning. It was not long however before problems began to emerge and the Company started to receive complaints from passengers.

Mr. Hosgood's fears proved well founded. The railcars were slower than the locomotive hauled service they replaced, often ran late and were often overcrowded. After a month the service reverted to the previous locomotive hauled service. The railcars were then used on an extra service from Barry to Llantwit and Southerndown Road on the Vale of Glamorgan line to Bridgend. They ran till 1914, when the steam units were removed and the cars converted to unpowered coaches, these surviving until 1951.

Me, the Autocar, Sales and Publicity

John Carr — Sales & Publicity Officer

Hello fellow 1903 Autocar Trust members. Whilst not a founding member of the Trust, I am a longstanding enthusiast for all things North Eastern, have a professional interest in innovation and a regard for the lesser known landmarks in the development of railways. My introduction to railway preservation was in the 1960s when my student spare time was spent at the Middleton Railway doing everything from working Wednesday freight trains, first as a guard then as driver, to P-Way maintenance on the line itself, then an increasing involvement as Publicity Officer (favourite AGM question, 'How do you manage to get the mags to print a story month after month when we've not actually changed anything?') and then Treasurer. I also represented the Middleton Railway Trust several times at the Association of Railway Preservation Societies, a valuable opportunity for networking and learning.

My career took me to Scotland where I became actively involved with the Scottish Railway Preservation Society at Springfield Yard, Falkirk, accompanying locos and coaches to various open days at BR and industrial premises, staffing sales stands, stewarding on the trains of historic coaches that were the birth of SRPS Railtours and being inveigled into taking on the role of Sales Officer (history is repeating itself).

I soon recognised that the majority of the footfall at Falkirk was not enthusiasts, it was 'pa, ma and the wains' of whom pa would be an enthusiast or mildly interested in railways, the others were accompanying persons, maybe with some juvenile interest but often not. You could sell the latter pencils (in those days!) but our previous stock in trade of enthusiasts books sold few from on site (and stock became grubby) but sold well via the post with various inducements to membership giving future discounts. Investment in railway themed tea towels, dusters and the (pre-franchise) Thomas books massively increased our turnover leading to another famous quote from the Treasurer, "Most of our reserves are in the form of teatowels, dusters and books in John Carr's loft" – that's actually a compliment from an accountant!

I then took on the role of Vice Chairman and wrote the business case for the abortive attempt to secure the scenic Devon Valley line when Dollar Mine closed, from which we learnt much about fundraising and developed strong

support from both local and central government tourist and development agencies. Although I then returned to West Yorkshire to take up senior roles in West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority and Metro, the SRPS with substantial government backing has gone from strength to strength with the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway.

I was an armchair preservationist for over 30 years as heavy involvement with a young family, bus deregulation, rail privatisation and keeping the Metro networks 'front of mind' – another neat quote from a market research company, "The spontaneous recognition of Metro's M in a red circle is a figure the Morrisons and McDonalds of the world would die for" - promotion (branding, publicity, advertising and public relations) and marketing (narrowly interpreted as sales) were under my wing for much of that period and as my working week was rarely less than 50 hours, family came before other interests.

Now I am a Trustee of the North Eastern Railway Association, open to all those interested in the Railways of the North East, past, present and, indeed, future. My role there is to broaden the membership and reduce the average age. I also see the potential for NERA to be an 'umbrella' for lesser known heritage activities. Which brings us to:

The Autocar

I had known of Stephen Middleton's Stately Trains for a long time and indeed, had been invited by the National Park Authority to give professional feedback (positive!) on studies they had done on expanding the role of railway heritage in the Dales. When Sales Officer at Middleton, I had 'discovered' 3453 next to the original Holbeck roundhouse and recommended (bearing in mind the unfortunate incident of arson destroying the Swansea and Mumbles car and trams) that we should not bid for it and await more modern vehicles coming on the market (I had in mind inspection saloons rather than suburban stock but Middleton eventually came up with their own repurposing solution)!

When I saw the progress made by the team on recreating an IC-engined railmotor (aka far more imaginatively as the autocar) I was smitten and committed myself to financial contributions. As was seen at Warley in 2019, the autocar virtually sells itself and it is fascinating that the NER adopted, what was for railways of the time, a fairly garish livery, more forceful than, but compatible with, the 1904 NER Tyneside EMUs. I have a paternalistic interest in 3453 and look forward to riding in it in full 'DMU' mode.

Sales through others

We have a striking vehicle in 3170 and on the sales side, our friends at *Rails of Sheffield* are offering the excellent DVD 'A Pioneer Restored' for £9.95 **plus post and packing** (a better offer for members of the Trust is available below!).

Rails are the exclusive retailer of three 00 versions of the 1903 autocars, we understand these are now in production at Heljan and expected in August/September - (<https://railsofsheffield.com/products/37125/heljan-rl3171-oo-gauge-north-eastern-railway-electric-autocar-no-3170-red-cream-1904-23->).

The Trust will benefit from a proportion of the sales receipts for the model of 3170 as it's restored (but not the other models of 3170 in LNER livery or 3171 in original livery). I understand that pre-orders are good and there is likely to be strong competition for the remaining models from the limited production run. Act now if you want one may be good advice! Fingers crossed that we might see 3453 (and other NER coaches too please!) in model form in the not too distant future!

Visitors to the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway will be able to purchase DVDs, our 'potted history' booklet and the attractive launch day postcards later in the summer, but it will always be better for any items stocked on behalf of the Trust to be purchased through our own sales organisation, details below.

Publicity

A bone to pick with the Trustees! I responded to an appeal to help with Sales! Not to worry, so long as the flow of information from the 'front-line' is rapid whenever we have news, the two roles sit naturally together.

Our own Sales:

Until we can travel freely again, I currently have limited stock, namely:

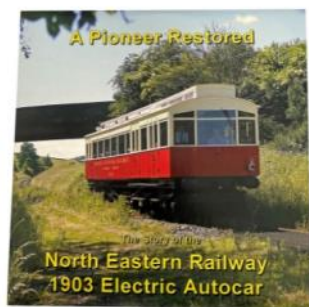
DVD 'A Pioneer Restored' just £9.95

'Autocar' A4 booklet only £4.50

DVD and booklet combined offer: £11.50

Large (A5) postcards (in packs of five only) at £2.50

*All post and packing free for members
(please quote your membership number with your order).*

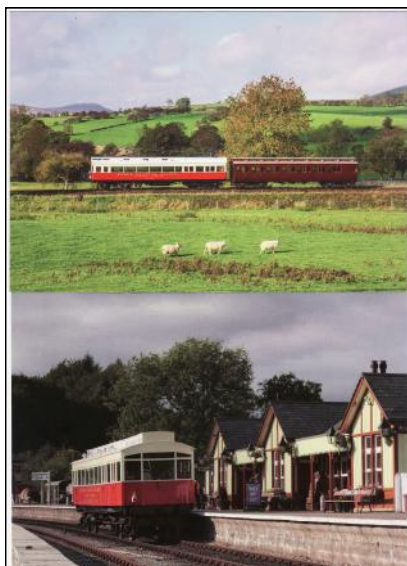


The 1903 Autocar

A North Eastern Railway Pioneer



The Story of an Edwardian Railcar



Clockwise from top left:

DVD

A4 guide/history

Two postcards, the top image from launch day, bottom image from brake testing just before the launch.

Until we have our own internet sales and payment facility, please order by sending an e-mail to autocar.marketing@carruk.net with payment by bank transfer to NER 1903 Electric (Autocar Trust) Sort code: 20-78-42, account number: 80984027.

A Marketing and Promotion Plan for the Future

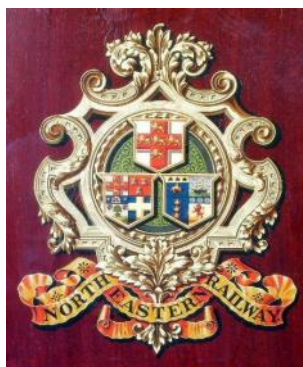
In outline, the steps I am working on, in order of priority are:

1. Arrange for an internet sales site, either wholly for the Trust or shared securely with others to minimise administrative effort.
2. Obtain a press release list and publicise Autocar Operating Days in 2021.
3. Consider staffing requirements. I'll be grateful if any members able to assist with the following will contact me (john@carruk.net):
 - Running Social Media sites (Facebook? Twitter? Instagram? Others??);
 - Selling at Embsay & Bolton Abbey Railway on operating days;
 - Setting up & staffing sales stands at shows or exhibitions the Trust attend;
 - Handling donations & sales of second-hand books & railway memorabilia;
 - Storing and supervising sales stock held in Yorkshire.
4. Consider additional sales items including:
 - Clothing for working volunteers and members;
 - Badges & other small items appealing to children & non-rail enthusiasts for casual sales in autocar and coach;
 - Christmas cards/ calendars/ note cards – offer of suitable photographs will be welcomed. There is a possibility of collaboration with other groups or royalty income from providing input to commercial publishers.
 - Sale of books of interest to members subject to publisher discounts and minimum order quantities.
5. Draw up programme of presentations and speakers that might be offered to societies, U3A etc.
5. Discuss additional fund-raising opportunities, for example:
 - Group hire for parties, team building meetings etc. (stationary or operating or both);
 - Sponsorship of items (e.g. prints in 3453 compartments, seats in 3170);

- Identifying opportunities to obtain grants for upkeep and development of the Trust's vehicles.

7. Develop proposals to participate in the 200th Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 2025 (I am already involved with the Advisory Group for the events around the bicentenary).

Comments welcome. If it looks ambitious, it's meant to be, there's little value in setting easy targets! I'm looking forward with working with Trustees and Committee colleagues to build on an already considerable story of achievement.



(Ed) *As we went to press, the dates currently being advertised by the railway are:*

July

5th, 12, 19th

August

2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd

September

6th, 8th, 13th, 15th, 20th, 22nd, 29th

November

7th, 14th, 21st

