



# Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.

## Southeast Chapter

### Newsletter No. 99 – February, 2007

#### RIDING THE RAILS IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND by Lyle Key

On Tuesday morning, September 19, 2006, my wife and I arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland after a flight from Atlanta. We had purchased Britrail passes before leaving the States, and I highly recommend them to anyone who wants to travel around Great Britain by rail. The passes must be purchased prior to departing for Great Britain, and if one elects to buy individual tickets after arriving in the UK, the fares can be very expensive. Since both of us are over 60, we were eligible to purchase 15-day senior passes good for first class passage. Several options are available, so you need to explore the best type of pass for your trip. Also, before leaving the States, I took time to read a book *Britain by Britrail*, which was loaded with useful information.

After taking a much-needed nap, we set out on our initial foray into downtown Edinburgh. One of our first stops was the train station where we made reservations for Friday's trip to Inverness and Kyle of Lochalsh. Advance reservations typically require a small reservation fee, but the advance bookings are free for passengers holding Britrail passes.

Our three days in Edinburgh gave us time to recover from our jet lag and an opportunity to see most of the sights we wanted to see. On Friday morning, we ate breakfast early and then caught a cab to Waverly Station. We located the correct platform very quickly and actually got there before our train backed in from the north.

Our ScotRail train arrived about five minutes before our scheduled departure time of 0840, and just as the reservation agent had told us, it was relatively short with just three cars. He had told us that most trains in Scotland were short, and that some of them wouldn't have first class sections. Our train to Inverness did have a first class section, but it was squeezed into the rear half of the last car. We had the forward facing seats at a table for four, and we soon would be joined by a couple from India. When our departure time arrived, I learned that in lieu of the "All Aboard" that's standard in the States, the British railroads use a shrill whistle to warn of a train's immediate departure. Another British custom became apparent as we progressed up the line. At all stations, passengers are admonished to "Mind the Gap" when boarding or detraining.

Lyle's wife Carolyn took this shot of him beside 2-6-0 Mogul type locomotive #62005 awaiting its departure from Ft. William, Scotland with *The Jacobite* steam train. This train makes the scenic trip to the port town of Mallaig and return on a regular basis from late May until mid-October. Harry Potter fans will recognize *The Jacobite* from its cameo appearances in the popular Harry Potter movies.



**Southeast Limited**



The scenic train ride from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh in Scotland even has a scenic conclusion since the train station in Kyle is close to the waterfront. This photo shows the rear end of a two car ScotRail train composed of two Diesel Multiple Units. In the background, one can see the Kyle Hotel, which offers views of Loch Alsh and the Isle of Skye.

According to my British friend Alan Monk, the ScotRail trains are Diesel Multiple Units (“DMU’s”) with an underfloor engine of around 350 to 400 horsepower on each car. The engines drive one truck on each car via a hydraulic transmission. The DMU’s typically operate in two or three car consists with “driving cabs” on either end. They are capable of speeds up to 100 mph, but our ScotRail trains never approached that speed

due to the hilly topography and the frequent curves on the lines we traversed.

We soon were crossing the imposing Firth of Forth Bridge, which is still an engineering marvel even though it was built over a seven-year period between 1883 and 1890. Unlike railroad bridges in the States, the huge structure that spans the Firth of Forth is being painted on a continuing basis. For the rest of the morning, we traversed rolling hills and pastoral countryside where we saw plenty of sheep and cows. An attendant made frequent passes through the first class section to offer us complementary tea or coffee and various snacks including Scottish shortbread. Our train pulled into Inverness on time at 1157, and I spotted the purple cars of the *Caledonian Sleeper Train* on a nearby storage track. (see picture facing page). The sleeper train uses Euston Station in London and provides overnight service to and from various cities in Scotland. It’s due into Inverness at 0807 on Fridays, and a note in the ScotRail timetable requests that passengers “Vacate cabins by 0840.”

Our connecting train to Kyle of Lochalsh wasn’t scheduled to depart until 1241, so we had plenty of time to have lunch in the station. Several years ago, I happened to watch a TV program in the “Great Railway Journeys” series that covered the trip from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh. It never occurred to me that I someday would have an opportunity to make that journey, so the prospect of boarding the train to Kyle was really quite exciting.

The territory traversed by the Kyle line is sparsely populated, so our connecting train was even shorter with just two cars and no first class section. We departed Inverness on time, and just west of town, we crossed the swing-bridge over the Caledonian Canal. The canal provides an inland passageway between the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean using several locks and various natural waterways including Loch Ness. Just as promised by “Great Railway Journeys,” the train ride from Inverness to Kyle was incredibly scenic. We passed through lots of unpopulated countryside with numerous waterways and some thickly wooded hills. On the west end of the line, we ran alongside picturesque Plockton Bay before ending our journey at Kyle. From the platform at the Kyle station, one has a beautiful panoramic view of Loch Alsh and the Isle of Skye across the water. After briefly exploring Kyle, we caught a taxi to our lodge on the Isle of Skye. On Saturday, we returned to Kyle and retraced our journey back to Inverness.

**SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS**

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On Sunday, we had time for a cruise on Loch Ness – no, we didn't see Nessie – before boarding a bus to Ft. William. There isn't a direct rail line between Inverness and Ft. William, and while one can make the trip via rail, the circuitous journey is pretty much an all-day affair. The bus takes a direct route, and the trip over the highway requires only two hours. It turned out to be quite an exciting ride, however, since the bus driver was undeterred by the heavy rain and curvy road! We arrived in Ft. William right on schedule.

Our Monday morning in Ft. William brought more rail-related excitement since we had reservations to ride *The Jacobite* steam train to the port town of Mallaig and return. The steam train is operated by the West Coast Railway Company, and it has gotten some invaluable exposure from its appearances in the Harry Potter films. In 2006, the steam train ran Mondays through Fridays from late May through mid-October with additional service on Sundays from late July 23 through August. It operates amid freights and regular passenger trains on the line to Mallaig, and the experience lies somewhere between regular service and an excursion train. Our car was right behind the tender of compact little 2-6-0 #62005, and I was told that the Mogul was one of FIVE steam locomotives available for use on the passenger train! The six passenger cars were all maroon, and our train looked like a ghost from the storied past of British railroading. Even though it was a Monday morning and Ft. William was off the beaten path in Scotland's Western Highlands, we were going to have a very full train.

The Mogul was a LNER Class K1 developed by Peppercorn from a Thompson design in the years following WW-II. As some indication of its size, the drivers have a diameter of 5 feet, 2 inches. Locomotive #62005 was the last K1 to be withdrawn from service, and it wasn't withdrawn until December of 1967. After it served six weeks as a stationary boiler, some thought was given to scrapping the locomotive and using its boiler on preserved K4 #3442, *The Grand Marquess*. Happily, #62005 was purchased by a locomotive preservation society and thus escaped the scrapper's torch.

At the scheduled time of 1020, the now familiar whistle announced our imminent departure, and #62005 rolled its train out of Ft. William. We passed Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Great Britain, and recalled from our tour books that many intrepid mountain climbers travel to Ft. William to undertake the challenging climb to Ben Nevis' summit at an elevation of 4,406 feet. Just west of Ft. William, we once again crossed the Caledonian Canal and observed a series of locks known as "Neptune's Staircase." The handsome little 2-6-0 had a tough climb ahead of it, and our seats in the front of the first "carriage" provided an ideal spot to listen to the steam locomotive work its way up the 2% grade to Glenfinnan. Just before reaching the Glenfinnan station, we crossed the curving Glenfinnan Viaduct with its 21 graceful arches. The imposing concrete viaduct has been immortalized by its cameo appearances in the Harry Potter movies. *The Jacobite* had a 20-minute stop at the Glenfinnan station, and after a meet with a regular eastbound passenger train, we resumed our westward trek toward Mallaig.

After a beautiful trip through the Western Highlands, we at length could see the Atlantic Ocean off to the left of the train. At 1225, we completed the 41-mile journey to Mallaig, and Carolyn and I beat the crowd to a wonderful little seafood restaurant. The waitresses were anxiously awaiting the hoard of passengers from the train, and the scene reminded me of the scene in Silverton, Colorado when the Durango & Silverton trains pull into town.

Since Mallaig does not have a wye, turntable, or loop track, #62005 would run around its train and return to Ft. William tender-first. We had learned that the weather in Scotland could change very quickly, but with the elusive sun shining brightly, I had visions of getting a nice photo of the steam locomotive awaiting its journey back to Ft. William. Much to my chagrin, the rear of the 2-6-0 was spotted alongside a high embankment on the sunny side of the track!

Our train departed promptly at the scheduled time of 1410. The sound effects weren't as good with the engine



**Not long before the September 25<sup>th</sup> departure of *The Jacobite* steam train, the Ft. William section of the *Caledonian Sleeper Train* arrived on its overnight run from London's Euston Station. The sleeper train offers overnight service between London and various cities in Scotland.**





At Glennfinnan station, the westbound *Jacobite* steam train waits for its meet with a regular eastbound passenger train. After the ScotRail DMU train cleared the switch on the west side of the station, the steam train would resume its journey to Mallaig.

on the other end of the train, but now I had good views of #62005 when it negotiated the numerous curves on the line. The return trip went smoothly, and we had an on time arrival in Ft. William at 1600.

On Tuesday morning, the 26<sup>th</sup>, we had to get up early to catch our 0725 train out of Ft. William. My wife had vetoed my proposal that we catch Monday night's *Caledonian Sleeper Train* to London, but it's just as well that she did since we would have missed more spectacular scenery in the Western Highlands. From Ft. William to Glasgow, we spent four hours running through mountainous countryside that predominately was populated by sheep. We also had great views of numerous lochs, including Loch Lomand, and several other waterways.

An hour out of Ft. William, we reached the remote station of Corrou, which is located on a barren summit at 1,347 feet elevation. To reach Corrou, our train had climbed a grade that ranged from 1.5% to 1.7% on its steepest segment. This would be the perfect place

to get away from it all since Corrou literally seems to be out in the middle of nowhere. After a few minutes, the Ft. William section of the *Caledonian Sleeper Train* arrived on its westbound journey, and with a clear track ahead, our train continued its run to Glasgow.

Our train was due to arrive at Glasgow's Queen Street Station at 1125, and our connecting train to York was due to leave Glasgow's Central Station at 1200. I was more than a little apprehensive about making this cross-town connection, but we pulled into Queen Street on schedule, and the dedicated transfer bus shuttled us over to Central Station in plenty of time to catch our train. Both of us agreed that we would miss the magnificent scenery we had seen in the Scottish Highlands, but after the relatively slow speeds dictated by the topography and curvature in the highlands; I was looking forward to a fast trip from Glasgow to York.

The GNER train that awaited us at Central Station was quite different from the short little ScotRail trains we had used to travel around Scotland. It had nine cars with a 6,000 horsepower Class 91 electric locomotive on the rear and a Mk IV Driving Van Trailer ("DVT") on the head end. British railroaders apparently think in terms of the "County End" of the consist, *i.e.*, the end of the train that's away from London, and the "London End." The DVT resembled an electric locomotive, but it essentially was a baggage car with a control cab that made it possible to operate the train from either end. The Class 91 electrics are capable of a top speed of 140 mph!

In contrast to the ScotRail trains that might have half of one car set aside for first class passengers, the first four cars on our GNER train were first class carriages! The fourth first class car had tables set with tableclothes

Since there are no facilities to turn *The Jacobite* steam train at Mallaig, the steam locomotive runs around its train and returns to Ft. William tender first. In this photo, the train awaits its departure from Mallaig with the Atlantic Ocean in the background. The 2-6-0 is partially hidden by a high embankment, but the picture does show the classic maroon "carriages" that blend in nicely with the steam locomotive.



and linen napkins for “restaurant service,” and the fifth car on the train would be open for the sale of snacks and beverages. Each carriage was emblazoned with a GNER crest and bore the slogan: “The Route of the *Flying Scotsman*.” We were welcomed aboard by an attractive young lady in a handsome uniform with a jaunty cap. She reminded me of the halcyon days of America’s post-war streamliners when some of our finest passenger trains had crews that included stewardesses or stewardess-nurses. One of my friends started his railroad career on Southern Railway, and he married a stewardess that he met while riding on the *New Royal Palm*.

As soon as we got settled in our seats, another young lady brought us complementary copies of *The [London] Times*. Then, immediately after our noon departure, the attendants brought around the “food trolley” with complementary tea, coffee, and snacks and other light food service. We were happy to see the “trolley” since our early departure from Ft. William had precluded partaking of the fine breakfast at our guesthouse. The terrain flattened out between Glasgow and Edinburgh, and south of Edinburgh, the “engine driver” really opened up his electric locomotive. My wife never has shared my enthusiasm for train travel, but even she had to acknowledge that it’s awfully enjoyable to be cruising through beautiful countryside at over 100 mph while reading *The Times* and snacking on tea and shortbread!

If I am ever lucky enough to win the lottery, I might elect to return to Scotland for a tour aboard the *Royal Scotsman*. You can check out this luxurious - and expensive - service at [www.royalscotsman.com](http://www.royalscotsman.com)

The Train Manager stopped by to show us where we crossed the border into England, and while the scenery was quite different from what we had seen in Scotland, we had a great view of the ocean on the left side of the train. Berwick-upon-Tweed was the first station in England, and it was in an especially beautiful setting where the River Tweed flows into the sea. As we rolled south along England’s east coast, the double track rail line passed through a region dominated by well-kept farms where sheep and cows were grazing quite peacefully.

Our train crew changed at Newcastle, and we had a pleasant ride down to York. The train arrived 14 minutes late due to a slow order between Glasgow and Edinburgh and a double stop at the station platform in Edinburgh. The late arrival in York posed no problem, but I was thankful that our train from Ft. William to Glasgow had run right on time in view of our tight cross-town connection in Glasgow.

We stayed in another Best Western hotel in York, and it was right across the street from York Minster. During WW-II, the Minster’s magnificent stained glass windows were removed and stored for safekeeping, but thankfully, the Luftwaffe never bombed the venerable church. There was plenty to see in York, and in retrospect, we probably should have stayed there for two days rather than just one. Given our limited time, I reluctantly opted to concentrate on the attractions downtown rather than attempting to rush through the nearby National Railway Museum. At 1555 on Wednesday, we departed York and had a fast run down to London’s King’s Cross Station where we arrived on schedule at 1805.

Lest I leave the impression that Great Britain is some sort of Camelot for passenger train aficionados, even their system is not without problems. The former head of GNER abruptly resigned toward the end of the summer and told *The Times* that GNER’s passenger operations could not be sustained indefinitely under the terms of the current franchise agreement. The operating companies such as GNER apparently bid on various franchises for ten-year terms, and GNER’s former leader lamented that lower than expected traffic growth and higher than expected costs for electric power had left the company in a precarious financial situation.

At 0730 on the morning after we arrived in London, a catenary support failed on the King’s Cross line and brought down a 25,000-volt overhead cable in Hornsey, North London. *The London Paper* that hit the streets that afternoon carried the following headline: “POWER CUT PLUNGES KING’S CROSS INTO CHAOS, 100,000 RAIL USERS LEFT STRANDED.” Needless to say, we were glad that we hadn’t planned to arrive in London on Thursday morning!

Finally, *The Times* reported on October 2<sup>nd</sup> that in order to relieve chronic overcrowding, South West Trains was tearing out thousands of seats and installing extra handholds. In an editorial ripping the proposed “solution”, *The Times* offered a parody of Liza Minnelli’s *Cabaret*: “What good is sitting alone in your train? Come, feel the people sway. Life is a grand commute, old chum – just don’t forget to spray.” We used several operating companies on our travels, but not South West Trains.



In any event, we spent four nights in London and got around the city on the Underground. Every morning, we purchased a one-day pass that provided unlimited travel within the central city for just 4 pounds 80 pence per person. That was a great bargain since a single one-way trip easily could cost 3 pounds.

On Sunday morning, we took a taxi to London's Paddington Station to catch the 1022 train to Oxford. Our train for that short trip was another DMU affair. There generally are fewer trains on Sundays in Great Britain, and the British railroads take advantage of the reduced frequencies to perform needed maintenance work. Our train was held for a few extra minutes at the junction of Didcot while a maintenance-of-way gang cleared the track. In addition to the big National Railway Museum at York, several smaller museums are scattered around the country. Leaving Didcot, we passed a museum operated by the Great Western Society.

Oxford was buzzing with activity, and we discovered that we happened to arrive on the same day that students were arriving for the fall term at the numerous local colleges. Our B&B was further out of town than we had expected, but that wasn't a big problem thanks to the marvelous public transportation system. Even with the reduced service on Sundays, transit buses still ran into the city center every 20 minutes! After touring Oxford on foot, we celebrated my 61<sup>st</sup> birthday at The Eagle and Child Pub where J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis used to hang out.

To Be Continued And Completed In Our Next Issue.

## **Southeast Chapter - Recap of recent meeting Minutes:**

The **January 11, 2007** meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Jim Smith. We reviewed the following Old Business items: 1) need to further review of our Chapter's Educational Outreach plans, 2) Jim Smith advised that he is still reviewing the C&OHS "Acclimation by Proclamation" election procedure and will report further at a later date, 3) Robert Van Nest advised that he and chapter member Lisa Paulger are continuing to catalogue Richard Dickinson's book collection. Once that is done they will look for an institution to donate the collection, 4) need to send in paperwork and sign up volunteers to staff the Chapter table at the Prime Osborn Convention Center Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> train show, 5) Election results: A total of 14 ballots were received; all of them voting for the nominated slate consisting of: Bill Howes - President, Jim Smith - Vice President, John Leynes - Treasurer and Art Towson - Secretary. Under New Business, we received the FL Dept. of State "Annual Report Notice" for processing. The program was a John Leynes DVD of an interview he conducted with SE Chapter member, Bill Howes and Teddy Washington (a well known Jacksonville musician) regarding the history of Pullman Company porters.

## **Announcements:**

**The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society's 2007 convention and annual meeting will be held in Salisbury, NC. It is near the North Carolina Transportation Museum located on the site of the Southern Railway's steam locomotive repair facility now simply called Spencer Shops. The convention will begin on Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup> and end with the annual breakfast meeting on Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. The annual banquet will be held in the Salisbury station. A ride on the Aberdeen, Carolina & Western is still in the planning stage. The Salisbury Holiday Inn will be our convention hotel. The R&LHS has a special rate of \$69.99 per room per night. You can make your reservation three ways: by calling 1-800-Holiday, by calling the Inn locally at (704) 637-3100, or via the web at [www.holiday-inn.com/salisburync](http://www.holiday-inn.com/salisburync). Remember to identify yourself as a R&LHS member by using code RLH. The closest airport is at Charlotte, NC and there will be a shuttle bus to the hotel. Amtrak has a station stop at Salisbury. Full details will soon be sent to the general membership, but you can make plans to attend now by making your reservation. See you there!**