

# **The designation and display of British railway heritage in the post-war decades**

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## **Abstract**

This PhD thesis details the ways in which objects which were deemed to represent Britain's railway heritage were designated as important and subsequently displayed or stored by the state-owned British Railways, and its' Parent organisation (until 1962) the British Transport Commission, in the post-war decades. I focus particularly on the period between nationalisation in 1948 and the opening of the National Railway Museum in 1975, when responsibility for the preservation of historic railway objects passed to the Department of Education and Science (with the exception of paper records, which became the responsibility of the Public Records Office from 1972). In this period, the British Transport Historical Records Office was established in West London (with branches in York and Edinburgh), whilst a series of temporary exhibitions of railway history at the Shareholder's Meeting Room in Euston in the 1950s were followed by the establishment of new transport museums at Clapham, South London in 1961 and at Swindon in 1962. Attempts by the British Transport Commission to preserve and display aspects of Britain's railway history - and particularly, from 1951, those of its Curator of Historic Relics John Scholes and its Archivist Leonard Johnson - intersected with the increasing enthusiasm for railways amongst the general population, exemplified by the advent of new societies catering for this interest in addition to those established prior to the war, and also for the growing popularity of transport history as a subject of scholarly interest. This in turn took place in the context of increasing technological change on the network, notably the closure of thousands of miles of railway lines (often rural branch lines) and the abolition of steam locomotives in favour of diesel or electric power. This thesis shows that railway enthusiasts, through the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics from 1958 onwards, played an active role in advising the Transport Commission on the preservation of railway heritage, notably the selection of historic locomotives to be saved for posterity.

This thesis considers in detail the work of the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee in 1948-1949 and of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics between 1958 and 1968, and also the

interrelated activities and museum displays of the Curator and Archivist of Historic Relics at the British Transport Commission (later the British Railways Board) between 1951 and 1974 (1972 in the case of the Archivist), including the museum displays at the Railway Museum in York, the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon and the Museum of British Transport at Clapham.



Figure 1. The interior of the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, 1966.

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[http://www.nrm.org.uk/ourcollection/photo?group=British%20Transport%20Commission&objid=1996-7038\\_BTF\\_9617](http://www.nrm.org.uk/ourcollection/photo?group=British%20Transport%20Commission&objid=1996-7038_BTF_9617)

“The train at Pershore station was waiting that Sunday night  
Gas light on the platform, in my carriage electric light,  
Gas light on frosty evergreens, electric on Empire wood,  
The Victorian world and the present in a moment’s neighbourhood.”  
*From Pershore Station, or a Liverish Journey First Class by John Betjeman*

## **Acknowledgements**

“You’d have quite a crowd of people parading around the Luxembourg Garden if you really wanted to honor all of the new bus progenitor’s”

Latour, B. (1996:2)

As with buses, so with railways- or at least, with theses about them. There are many people who have kindly assisted me in completing this thesis- including some, beavered away in the bowels of the earth beneath archives up and down the land, whom I have never met, let alone know the names of. I will endeavour to thank as many people as I can in this section, though I feel that I must apologise in advance for any omissions.

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## **Contents**

<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>23</b>
2.1 The cultural impact of railways.....	23
2.2 Museums of transport.....	35
2.3 Histories and Practices of collecting.....	42
2.4 Technological Enthusiasm.....	48
2.5 Object subjectivities: conceptualisations of the object within the social sciences.....	55
2.6 Conclusion.....	63
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>65</b>
3.1 Piecing the fragments together.....	72
3.2 Actor-Network Queries: Finding the fragments in 2013-2016... 84	
<b>Chapter 4: “There is an intense and perfectly articulate interest in locomotive matters”: Nationalised beginnings, 1947-1951</b> .....	<b>91</b>
4.1. The nature of British railway preservation in December 1947.. 94	
4.2. “No one is ashamed to have worked for the Southern Railway”: corporate pride in the dying days of the Big Four.....	97
4.3. Plans for a British Railway Centre.....	101
4.4 Geographical tensions in the BTC’s early railway preservation policy.....	109
4.5 “He has not succeeded in completing his full terms of reference”: G.R. Smith’s Relics and Records reports of 1949.....	114
4.6 “We had our backs against the wall at this time”: W.O. Skeat and enthusiastic interventions in locomotive preservation, 1948-9.....	126
4.7 Conclusion.....	148

**Chapter 5: “Difficulties should be overcome in the national interest”: forming the Departments of Historic Relics and Records, 1951-1958**..... 150

5.1 *The Preservation of Relics and Records*..... 150

5.2. After the report: establishment of the Relics and Records organisations..... 160

5.3 The British Transport Historical Records Offices and those who used them..... 163

5.4 Exhibiting Britain’s railway history at the Festival of Britain, 1951..... 174

5.5 The exhibitions staged by the Department of Historic Relics during the 1950s..... 182

5.6. How railway preservation unfolded ‘on the ground’: The Scottish Region and the preservation of Gordon Highlander..... 190

5.7 “The ball is put right back in the Region’s court but they have to improvise as before for a racquet”: continuing problems of storage, display and decision making for the BTC’s historic relics..... 203

5.8 Conclusion..... 210

**Chapter 6: “We would be very lucky to get some locomotives preserved in any shape or form”: establishing and running the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, 1958-1962**..... 212

6.1 Growing public Concern over BTC policy, 1957-1958..... 215

6.2 Forming the Consultative Panel..... 223

6.3. Organising and running the Consultative Panel..... 228

6.4 The locomotive listing process, 1958-1960..... 233

6.5 Amendments to the list 1960-1961 .....	253
6.6 ‘Railway preservation is not within our terms of reference’: Relationships between the Consultative Panel, the BTC and other railway enthusiast groups .....	263
6.7 Conclusion .....	279
<b>Chapter 7 “The sight hits you hard in the solar plexus”: Britain’s Transport Museums in the 1960s .....</b>	<b>281</b>
7.1 Establishing a regional network of museums .....	287
7.2 Thinking regionally about the railway, within and beyond the railway literature .....	294
7.3 “A noble zoo”: The Museum of British Transport, Clapham .....	299
7.4 “An interim statement”: <i>Transport Preserved</i> by Bryan Morgan .....	313
7.5 Displaying the Railway Age at Clapham and beyond .....	320
7.6 Organised chaos or “rearguard action”? Running the Museum of British Transport .....	325
7.7 Sparrows but no strippers: Quotidian and carnivalesque life at Clapham .....	337
7.8 “You are never likely to forget it”: the Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon .....	343
7.9 <i>Progress?</i> The Great Western Railway Museum as a site of post- industrial protest and melancholia .....	351
7.10 “There is no tourist attraction”: Swindon’s financial and spatial struggles .....	357
7.11 “Modesty clings to it still”: The Railway Museum, York .....	362
7.12 The 1960s: Uncertain times for Britain’s Railway Museums .....	373
7.13 Transport Museums and enthusiasts .....	380
7.14 Conclusion .....	384
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>403</b>

### **List of figures**

1. The Interior of the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, 1966, from National Railway Museum website.....	3
2. A trolley full of boxes at the National Railway Museum.....	79
3. The glass wall dividing museum and archive at the National Railway Museum.....	88
4. Cuthbert Grasemann (1 <sup>st</sup> December 1890- 23 <sup>rd</sup> July 1961), Southern Railway/British Railways Southern Region Chief Publicity Officer 1930-1951.....	97
5. G. Royde Smith's scrap book.....	116
6. William Oswald Skeat (9 <sup>th</sup> August 1904-21 <sup>st</sup> December 1993), photograph taken on 14 <sup>th</sup> May 1959.....	126
7. John Neville Maskelyne (1892-1960), President of the Stephenson Locomotive Society 1925-1960.....	129
8. <i>Gordon Highlander</i> , pictured in 1964.....	203
9. Alfred John (Jack) Boston (8 <sup>th</sup> November 1908-August 1992), the first Chairman of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (1958-1970), photograph taken in June 1962.....	228
10. Bernard Walsh, the first Secretary of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics.....	230
11. List showing the 27 locomotives scheduled for preservation in 1960 with annotation showing those added by the BTC.....	234
12. Locomotive No. 58926, preserved by the Webb Coal Tank Preservation Fund in 1959.....	237
13. List of locomotive types recommended for preservation by W.O. Skeat, 27th December 1958.....	238
14. Letter (Scottish Region copy shown) from David McKenna, Assistant General Manager of BR Southern Region, to J.H. Brebner, Public Relations Adviser at the BTC, on 15th June 1960 and photograph of King Arthur Class No. 777 <i>Sir Lamiel</i> on 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2015.....	259
15. Cigarette box presented to John Scholes at the Consultative Panel's 10th anniversary dinner, 19 <sup>th</sup> October 1968.....	265

16. Promotional leaflet for the Museum of British Transport Clapham, dated September 1964.....	281
17. Diagrammatic maps from <i>The Glasgow Museum of Transport: Scottish Railway Locomotives</i> .....	293
18. Invitation to the Private View of the opening of the Large Exhibits Section at the Museum of British Transport, Tuesday 28th May 1963.....	299
19. Interior of the Museum of British Transport, Clapham, from <i>British Railway Museums</i> by Peter Williams.....	310
20. Image of John Scholes within the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, presented to him on the occasion of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics' tenth anniversary dinner, 19th October 1968.....	328
21. Illustrations from <i>British Transport Museum Clapham: Visual Observations of Second Year Graphic Design students</i> .....	339
22. Poster for an exhibition of drawings by students of the Graphic Design Department, St Martin's School of Art, held at Clapham between June and October 1969.....	340
23. Littlewoods fashion photoshoot, Clapham Transport Museum, 1966....	341
24. Photograph of the Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon, from <i>British Railway Museums</i> by Peter Williams.....	348
25. <i>Progress</i> , British Railways poster using Terence Cuneo's artwork ( <i>North Star</i> is depicted in the background of the image).....	356
26. Photographs of York Railway Museum from Peter Williams' <i>British Railway Museums</i> .....	373

### **List of tables**

1. A list of the principal Archives and Libraries which I visited in my research, ordered by time spent there.....	69
2. A list of people with whom I conducted interviews or discussed my research.....	75
3. A list of locomotive classes selected for preservation by the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee on July 15th 1948.....	135
4. Selected descriptions of locomotives preserved by the BTC, prepared by W.O. Skeat in 1961.....	246

**Abbreviations**

ARPS- Association of Railway Preservation Societies

BRB- British Railways Board

BTC- British Transport Commission

GWR- Great Western Railway

JTH- Journal of Transport History

LMS- London, Midland and Scottish Railway

LNER- London and North Eastern Railway

LPTB- London Passenger Transport Board

NA- National Archives

NRM- National Railway Museum

PRO- Public Record Office

SLS- Stephenson Locomotive Society

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Simply put, this thesis is about official railway heritage in the post-war era, between the Transport Acts of 1947 and 1968- a period which covers the time between the nationalisation of the British railway network and the legislation which led ultimately to the establishment of the National Railway Museum (hereafter NRM) at York. This thesis is about the ways in which the state, through the organisational structure of British Railways, sought to designate items deemed to be of historical importance across the railway network- both those which were still in use, and those which had reached the end of their working lives- in order to preserve them for posterity. It also describes how a selection of these items was subsequently displayed in transport museums- more specifically, the Railway Museum at York, the Great Western Railway Museum in Swindon and the Museum of British Transport at Clapham.

Yet this thesis is not purely a descriptive history: in analysing the processes of post-Second World War railway preservation, I draw upon wider themes and a range of theoretical approaches. Fundamentally, this thesis reflects the relationship between technology and people. Sociologist Bruno Latour, in his study *Aramis, or the love of technology*, aimed to “turn a technological object into the central character of a narrative” (Latour 1996: VII) in order to explain the reciprocal relationships between technological objects and people. The “poor objects” (Latour 1996: VIII) featured in this thesis- railway locomotives, in particular- became inextricably intertwined with human lives; their inter-connected biographies arguably helped to frame the terms of the debates over post-war railway preservation. For example, as is explained in

Chapter 4, the London, Midland and Scottish locomotive Number 20002- a rare and near-chance survivor from the Victorian Age- became, for the enthusiasts W.O. Skeat and A.J. Boston, a test case for this company's attitudes to preservation in 1947, in the context of its imminent dissolution under the process of nationalisation. Ten years later, the public outcry caused by the destruction of three historic items which had supposedly been earmarked for preservation was a key catalyst behind the formation of the enthusiast-run Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (see Chapter 6), which played a key role in the state designation of preserved railway objects (particularly locomotives, carriages and signalling equipment) during the 1960s.

As is described in the literature review, this thesis also connects to a body of work which has described the relationship between railways and western culture, from the time of their invention to the present day. Much of this literature has tended to focus on the railway as a means of transport which, initially, altered the space through which it ran, and brought about a new and disorienting travel experience; later the railway journey is described as the focus of nostalgic reverie. The railway is seen as an agent of time-space convergence- in which the reduced travel time between places results in the reduction of the relative distance between them, and thus of time-space compression- a term famously coined by David Harvey (1989, 1990) to describe the psychological effects of shock and disorientation which this convergence causes. In Wolfgang Schivelbusch's influential work *The Railway Journey*, he suggests that:

The dialectic of this process states that this diminution of space (i.e., the shrinking of transport time) caused an expansion of the transport space by incorporating new areas into the transport network. The nation's contraction into a metropolis... conversely appeared as an expansion of the metropolis... the metropolis tended to incorporate the entire nation. (p. 35)

Schivelbusch goes on to describe the disorienting effect of railroad travel, which unlike its predecessor- travel by stagecoach- appeared to strike its way through the landscape. He famously described the panoramic nature of railway travel, by which one is separated from the space in which you are travelling- the landscape thus becomes a stage setting, a series of pictures and scenes conditioned by the carriage window. However, railway travel has also been seen to evoke feelings of nostalgia: Revill (2012: 56) suggests that "the rhythms of railway travel built nostalgia into the experience of train journeys long before railways became heritage".

Where my project differs from this research described is in its focus on railway equipment which, in most cases, no longer moves- or, indeed, facilitates the movement of other components within the railway system. As the title of my thesis suggests, I am referring here to expended mobility, and thus to static items which, in this form, have taken on a different cultural meaning. Retired from service with the nationalised railway organisation, steam locomotives and other objects often gained, or re-gained, the very sense of regional identity which British Railways had erased, and could also become the focus of a more localised cultural consciousness.

For example, as is related in Chapter 7, the Great Western Railway Museum, in Swindon- which opened in 1962- can be viewed as a symbol of

Swindon's civic identity, and became a focal point for protests about railway redundancies in the town. Similarly, the first Railway Museum in York (which was in a different location to the NRM), when faced with the threat of closure during the mid-1960s, was depicted, by enthusiasts and journalists, as a key signifier of the North-East's industrial history and of its role as the 'birthplace' of the railways, with the Stockton and Darlington Railway, opened in 1825, being the first public railway to use steam locomotives, and with the pioneering railway engineer George Stephenson, who designed the famous *Rocket* locomotive, hailing from a village near Newcastle. The cultural harnessing of railway objects in this manner can in itself be connected back to academic debates- which have taken place from the time period covered in this thesis up to the present day- about the role which the railway itself played in either strengthening regional identity (since several of the railway companies of the Victorian and Edwardian era covered a discrete geographical area, and served pre-existing transport needs) or, conversely, weakening it by connecting- as Schivelbusch suggests above- hitherto remote areas with the metropolis.

This thesis also seeks to place state-sponsored railway preservation within the broader cultural context of the post-war era. When describing the efforts of British Railways to preserve historic railway artefacts and paperwork, one must take into account the burgeoning interest in railway preservation more generally at this time. The Tallylyn Railway became the first to be preserved by volunteers in 1951, followed by the Ffestiniog Railway in 1955 and later the Middleton and Bluebell Railways in 1960. Railway preservation was in itself one manifestation of the increasing interest in railway enthusiasm at this time,

which also encompassed train spotting and the consumption of railway books and magazines (Carter (2008) suggests that railway literature was part of a more general publishing boom in this period). Railway preservation was also situated within the growth of what Raphael Samuel (1994:140), in his book *Theatres of Memory*, termed Resurrectionism - the “desperate desire to hold on to disappearing worlds” through retrieval projects and conservation. Samuel saw railway preservation as a key catalyst and constituent of this: writing in the 1990s, he suggested that “the preservation mania, which first appeared in reference to railways in the early 1950s, has now penetrated every department of national life” (Samuel 1994: 139).

This thesis seeks to explore the relationships between the British Transport Commission, and later the British Railways Board, and enthusiast groups, yet also points, in chapter 6, to some of the tensions between the representatives of longer-established enthusiast groups, who worked with the BTC through the framework of the Consultative Panel, and newer groups who sought to preserve locomotive types which had not been listed by the Panel.

### Thesis Structure

This thesis is arranged in chronological order; this was chosen in favour of a thematic approach as although a number of themes do emerge over the course of this thesis, the nature of the subject matter lends itself more readily to a chronological format since each occurrence and process is a development upon what has gone before.

Prior to the substantive empirical chapters, I conduct a literature review (chapter 2) which details the range of different literatures- both within and beyond the academic sphere- on which this thesis draws, comprising work on the relationships between the railway and British culture, literature about technology museums and their (in)effectiveness at displaying social history, research into enthusiasm- and specifically technological enthusiasm- and a range of literatures relating to the object and to material culture more broadly. This helps to contextualise the thesis in terms of the underlying epistemological reasoning upon which it is based. Following this, there follows a description of the methodology (chapter 3) employed in the thesis in order to gather information about railway heritage in the post war era, and a reflection upon my own positionality in relation to these methods. As per academic convention then, the literature review and methodology represent, respectively, the theoretical and empirical bases on which this thesis is built.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover the period from 1947 until 1957, which, in respect of historical relics and records- as they were then termed- was a period in which, generally speaking, policies and practices were established which lasted at least until the 1970s and the implementation of the 1968 Transport Act, and to some extent right up to the present day- although as the other chapters show, there were many 'forks in the road' following this. Britain's railway system was nationalised on 1st January 1948- under the terms of the 1947 Transport Act- with the so-called Big Four railway companies which had run the network since 1923 being abolished and services falling under the auspices of the Railways Executive, trading as British Railways (Northern Ireland's railway network fell under the separate aegis of the Ulster Transport

Authority). British Railways itself fell under the umbrella of the larger British Transport Commission (hereafter the BTC), and sat alongside the Docks and Inland Waterways, Hotels, London Transport and Road Transport Executives. According to Bryan Morgan (1963: 11; italics original), the Commission had, in respect of historic relics, two tasks at this time: “The first was to catalogue the relics which had come under the Commission’s care, and the second was to schedule for preservation not only these but the objects which might soon become relics.”

The first of these was of importance to the rescuing of historic items which might otherwise have been overlooked and perhaps ultimately destroyed, yet it was the second of these tasks, the scheduling of items which were still in use but which were of historic interest and therefore should be earmarked for preservation, which was novel at this time, and which established a pattern for preserving items which are still in use- a pattern which, in respect of transport preservation, is unique to railways- which has been followed up to the present day, by the Railway Heritage Committee (1996-2013) and Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board (2013-present).

Having briefly set the scene of British railway preservation up to 1947, which was somewhat patchy and unsystematic in its coverage- consisting for example of a handful of locomotives preserved primarily at plinths at stations or at the Railway Museum in York- Chapter 4 specifically focuses on the years 1947-1949, i.e. the period leading up to, during and immediately following nationalisation, in which a group of enthusiasts- who later organised themselves into the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee- campaigned,

with a relative degree of success, for the preservation of examples of elderly locomotive classes of which only a few examples remained. Meanwhile, as a response to discussions about the preservation of historic relics and records amongst the top management of the Big Four railways, G.R. Smith, the former Secretary of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway company, produced, with rather less success, a report detailing the then-current situation of relics and records and recommendations for their future storage and/or display. The perceived poor quality of this report led to the formation of a new seven man committee under the Chairmanship of BTC Deputy Secretary Sidney Taylor - comprising a representative from each Executive plus Taylor and BTC Publicity Officer Christian Barman - to consider the issue of historic relics and records- in particular what the differences were between relics and records, and how best, and by whom, they should be administered.

Chapter 5 picks up the narrative by detailing the findings of the Committee, and the organisational changes which resulted from them: namely the creation, in 1951, of the Department of Historic Relics, headed by John Scholes, and the appointment of an archivist, Leonard Johnson, who headed the British Transport Historic Records Office at Bayswater in West London. It details the differing fates of the two departments and the men in charge of them, with the relative success of the Records Office- and the subsequent establishment of additional, branch repositories in York and Edinburgh- contrasting with the difficulties faced by Scholes, who was forced to mount a series of smaller, temporary exhibitions at the Shareholder's Room at Euston Station due to difficulties in finding a suitable site for a permanent exhibition, and indeed in finding anywhere to store the locomotives which, having been

withdrawn from traffic, were put to one side in view of their historic importance. I also describe the ambiguous ways in which the railway was displayed at the Festival of Britain in 1951, where it was viewed, at one and the same time, as a technology belonging to the past yet also as part of Britain's dynamic industrial might. Displays which were about, and which sometimes featured, railway locomotives constructed for export were held up as example of Britain's industrial prowess, yet they scarcely concealed the fact that the nation's relevance on the world stage was rapidly diminishing.

I also illustrate how the preservation of railway relics unfolded 'on the ground' by using two examples from the Records of British Railways Scottish Region (Miscellaneous Books and Records and Locomotive and Rolling Stock Records subsections) at the National Records of Scotland, in Edinburgh. Here, a much more complete archival record of this period, in respect of the preservation of historic relics and records, exists than at any other archive that I visited during this research. These examples are the preservation of a former Caledonian Railway pillow cart located at Glasgow Central station, and also of the onetime Great North of Scotland Railway locomotive Gordon Highlander. These illustrate the almost incidental, detached role which Scholes played in these processes (although his isolation from the place at which these case studies took place did not help in these particular examples), and also the role which enthusiasts- both individuals and groups- played in the preservation of historic artefacts. It also shows the role of chance and miscommunication. Gordon Highlander was not the locomotive which was originally intended to be saved, and was only preserved following the destruction of its sister locomotive following what was termed a

'misunderstanding'. The locomotive's preservation occurred primarily due to the efforts of a number of enthusiasts and enthusiast groups, chief among them being John Emslie, who went on to co-found the Great North of Scotland Railway Association.

In chapter 6 I focus specifically on the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, a body of representatives from (often longer established) enthusiast societies which was set up in 1958 to advise the BTC on the preservation of historic transport items. I analyse the reasons for its establishment in 1958- which were comprised of both the specific outrage which arose following the scrapping of particular historic items, and also more general concerns about the BTC's policies and care of historic artefacts. I will then look at the way in which the Panel operated and its often uneasy relationship with other enthusiast groups and individuals, particularly those who publicly questioned the Commission's decisions (which were often made with the Panel's agreement). I also analyse the process by which the Panel, in partnership with the Commission, drew up a list of 27 additional locomotive types for preservation in the period between 1959 and 1961, which went on to form the backbone of the National Collection of preserved locomotives and perhaps represents the most important and lasting legacy of the Panel.

In chapter 7, I detail the establishment and running of two transport museums- the Museum of British Transport at Clapham and the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon during the 1960s- alongside the ongoing- yet increasingly (as it appeared) jeopardised- operation of the Railway Museum in York. The cultural geography of these museums- which

connected railway history to a mixture of national, regional or local forms of identity- is posited within the academic debates, at the time and up to the present day, about the social and cultural role of the railway as a technology which either sharpened or blunted regional differentiation- on the one hand throwing the differences between individual regions into sharp relief, yet on the other connecting these regions together and thus blurring geographical cultural differences and unifying nations and indeed continents.

The chapter goes on to detail the uncertainty surrounding these state-run transport museums at this time, as the British Railways Board (hereafter the BRB)- which inherited the three Museums after the breakup of the BTC in 1963- wanted to divest itself of the financial responsibility of running them, and unsuccessfully appealed to the government for assistance in this regard. This culminated in the passing of the 1968 Transport Act, which proposed the closure of the pre-existing museums at York and Clapham and the opening of a new museum at a different site in York. This plan led to further uncertainty, however, as it was vociferously opposed and challenged both in Parliament and outside it- by the Transport Trust (an organization which sought to pool financial resources for transport preservation), the Clapham Society and Lord Montagu, who had established the National Motor Museum at his estate at Beaulieu in Hampshire. The chapter concludes by briefly describing the efforts of private individuals to preserve railway machinery and closed lines, and particularly the phenomenon of railwayana- the collection of railway-related paraphernalia- which British Railways helped to fuel to some extent through its Collector's Corner shop at Euston, where all types of obsolete railway

equipment- from station signs through to brass buttons- was sold to the general public (see Bradley 2015).

Finally, in my conclusion I describe the ways in which the thesis has illuminated the interconnections and contradictions between the supposedly systematised, rationalised strategy of the BTC and the often individualised nature in which decisions pertaining to railway preservation (for example, the selection of particular locomotives for the National Collection) were taken, linking this to Latour's (1996: VIII) description of humanity's "passions and politics and pitiful calculations", which alter the biographies of technological objects. I refer to the archival sources by which one can trace these decisions and processes, linking them to the ghostly traces which Edensor (2005) has identified in ruined buildings. I also seek to challenge the seeming happy inevitability of the NRM's creation by pointing to some of the multiple alternative routes along which railway preservation could have travelled with only the minutest of alterations in the course of events.

Reflecting the relationship between technology and people, this thesis weaves together human and nonhuman biographies in order to relate the history of post-war railway preservation, whilst acknowledging the wider cultural milieu in which these processes took place. This approach connects the empirical history I am studying to a set of wider literatures, and it is to a review of these that I now turn.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In order to place the empirical histories of railway heritage designation and display between 1948 and 1968 within a wider theoretical context, my thesis blends literature from several hitherto largely discrete fields, whilst also departing from or challenging these works within the context of my research. These literatures comprise works which have studied the cultural impacts of railways; a body of literature which is specifically concerned with technology museums; research into the cultures of, and motivations behind, enthusiasm (and specifically technological enthusiasm); and a diverse array of literature which relates to the object and to material culture more broadly.

### **2.1 The cultural impact of railways**

The first strand of literature around which my thesis is built is analyses- from a variety of disciplinary and indeed non-academic standpoints- of railway culture, and the cultural effects of the railway on the communities through which it passes. In such analyses, the railway is often configured as an abstract entity which is as much a social as it is a technological enterprise. Whilst my research is predicated on a similar assumption, it differs from many of these works insofar as they often frame the railway in terms of its movement of people and goods (Bradley (2015) goes so far as to set out his book as an 'imagined journey'- thus inscribing the metaphor of travel into the structure of his work), and only fleetingly consider the commemoration of those obsolescent railway artefacts- which have either ceased to move or ceased to facilitate the movement of other components within the system- which are at the heart of my research. Furthermore, several of these works go into great depth about the constitutive role which the railways played in modernity, but

run out of steam when it comes to describing railways in what we might hesitantly term the postmodern age, when their pre-dominant role as the prime mover of goods and people was vastly diminished. They also tend to be written at relatively broad spatial and temporal scales. My research seeks to couple the work which has been carried out on the railway at this broader scale with the more intimate, object-focussed analyses detailed below.

George Revill (2012) analysed the cultural influence of railways on (predominantly) western societies from their inception to the present day, covering a range of topics which included the place of the railway within the landscape (how the railway has become naturalized as a landscape feature), conceptualisations of the railway journey (e.g. the way in which life itself may be conceptualised as a form of journey) and the ways in which the railway may be represented through other cultural discourses (such as the ecological representation of the railway as a living entity of trunk and branches). Revill's book is unique in its geographical, temporal and cultural breadth- yet it can be seen as part of a continuum of works which have, broadly speaking, nested railway technology within the cultural representations which it has generated, as a means to examine "how the railway altered perception, observation and experience of the environment" (Baker 2014: 135). This loosely coupled body of work began with Wolfgang Schivelbusch's influential *The Railway Journey* (1986; first published in 1977) and also spans works by John Stilgoe (1983), Michael Freeman (1999), Ian Carter (2001) and Simon Bradley (2015). David Ashford's (2013) book *London Underground: A Cultural Geography* provides an interesting counterpoint to these works since, though it is written in a similar style- immersing the transport technology at its heart within the slew of

cultural representations which it has generated- the fact that it is set within the inky blackness of a (partly) subterranean transport network renders the physical experience of travel and the traveller's place within the landscape- at the heart of Schivelbusch's work- more marginal, with the Underground framed as what Marc Auge described as a non-lieu, a non-place whose relationship to landscape can only be mediated through signs, maps and verbal messages<sup>1</sup>.

Schivelbusch, focussing on the 19th century, argued that the railway represented a commodified, impersonal form of travel, which metaphorically shrunk space through the reduction in journey time. He suggested that, unlike the stagecoach- its immediate predecessor as a form of long-distance travel- the railway was largely disconnected from the local landscapes through which it passed. As a result of this disconnection, coupled with the motion of the train and the layout of its carriages, Schivelbusch demonstrates that railway travel brought about new types of behaviour, and also new forms of physical and psychological shock, for travellers. Indeed, Schivelbusch asserts that those Parisians who migrated to the Mediterranean each winter were, in fact "no longer travelers- rather, as Ruskin puts it, they were human parcels who dispatched themselves to their destination by means of the railway, arriving as they left, untouched by the space traversed" (Schivelbusch 1986:39).

Meanwhile, the view from the train, and more particularly the mediating effect of the train window, which allows the traveller to be simultaneously connected to, yet also set at a representational remove from, the surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> 45% of the London Underground is in tunnels, yet it is this part with which Ashford primarily deals (Transport for London online); see also Dennis (2013) for an account of how the Metropolitan and District lines were configured, both physically and in terms of cultural representation, as more or less underground in the second half of the nineteenth century.

landscape, is labelled panoramic travel. Schivelbusch's concept of panoramic travel has, as Baker (2014) suggests, been very influential. Historians, sociologists and geographers have explored and expanded upon the idea that, rather than simply being a form of transport technology, the railway also "constitutes a technology of perception, one which travellers inhabited and which integrated with their perceiving bodies" (Baker 2014: 135). For example, Bishop (2002), Foster (2005) and Baker (2014), writing within different disciplinary contexts, utilised the concept of panoramic travel to varying degrees as a motif for describing the experiences of making particular railway journeys, namely- and respectively- the Alice Springs to Darwin rail corridor, the journey north from Cape Town, and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. Bishop (2002:309), in his paper on the then proposed Alice Springs to Darwin rail corridor (which opened in 2004), comments that the carriage window (on the Adelaide to Alice Springs section of line) "marks a divide, not just between inside and outside, but between the heroic past and a technological future vision for the Outback". Meanwhile, Foster describes the juxtaposition between South African train travel as both lived experience and as the focus of travel writing, noting that "although the train would seem to have estranged the traveller from the landscape by encouraging them to see it as a distantiated panorama, this was repeatedly countered in the Cape-Rand stories by the recurring motif of the corporeal effects of train travel" (2005: 305). Although the carriages of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which Baker studied, were open at the sides and the trains moved at a sedate pace- conditions which should perhaps have provided travellers with some sensual perception of the landscape beyond the train- he nevertheless suggests that

“motion induced transience seems to have diminished the connection between person and place” (Baker 2014: 138). In a related vein, Revill (2012:55) suggests, similarly to Foster (2005), that one is both connected to *and* set at a remove from the landscape when travelling by train- for, whilst the tracks may (mostly) be flat and the landscape may be framed by a carriage window, the corporeal experience of travelling by train can be a dramatic one, characterised as it is by a “rhythmical counterpoint of stillness and motion”. He developed this notion of rhythm in relation to the railway station, configuring it as “a place where multiple points of departure fulfil and generate desires, wants, needs and expectations” (Revill 2013:23).

John Stilgoe’s 1983 book *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* focussed on the way in which railways had altered the physical environment of the United States. He argues that the metropolitan corridor along which the railways ran represented a fourth distinctive environment alongside the rural, suburban and urban- whilst also suggesting that the railways “reoriented American thinking” (Stilgoe 1983: ix). Bishop has also used the metaphor of the corridor as the focus of his research, suggesting that “a corridor ‘gathers’ the elements of the landscape and culture, thereby creating new places, perspectives, meanings, and experiences” (2002:299). Stilgoe focuses on the environment created or served by the railroad- such as the terminal or the industrial zone- whilst also touching, often simultaneously, on the experience of travelling by train. Here he refers to the fleeting visions of smokestack industries which were witnessed by railroad passengers:

“For those Americans who passed through the industrial zone in the comfort of a Pullman car or commanded the great plants from citadel-like

offices, the zone hummed with enterprise. As more and more business executives shifted their headquarters from factories to downtown offices and their homes to distant suburbs, the industrial zone became a belt of throbbing factories crossed twice each day.” (Stilgoe 1983. 80).

In his book *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (1999) Michael Freeman depicts the railway as a cultural metaphor (within a specifically British context), releasing it (as he perceives) from the shackles of historical studies which have tended to focus more on the organisation of railway companies than on their wider social impact. He covers a variety of topics, from the relatively well-documented- such as the railways’ annihilation of space by time- through to the perhaps more obscure, such as the “engagement of the railway in the educational field” (Freeman 1999:195), demonstrating the permeation of the railway through all aspects of British social life.

Meanwhile, in *Railways and culture in Britain: The epitome of modernity* (2001) Ian Carter uses a series of British examples from the visual and literary arts to examine the “cultural representations of the modern steam railway in the country where it was born” (2001:3) - although he does include two European novels (Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* and Zola’s *La Bête Humaine*) “to establish what Britain misses by having no canonical railway novel” (2001: 27). Carter seeks to balance out scholarly accounts of the railway which have focussed more closely, according to him, on mechanical engineering and economic history rather than social issues or culture, and to inform those working within the umbrella of the humanities of the relationships between railways and culture. Each chapter is focussed around either one painting or book or a sub-genre of it, with the book divided into two parts. The first part

describes works which are inside (or which, in Carter's view, *should be* inside) the railway canon- namely J.M.W Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed: the Great Western Railway*, Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Emile Zola's *La Bête Humaine* and Arnold Bennet's *Accident*. *Rain, Steam and Speed* has also been analysed by Stephen Daniels (1993:126), who suggested that, like Turner's art, the railway broke "the traditional frame of visibility to co-ordinate features as part of a larger network of space and time"<sup>2</sup>.

The second part of the book looks 'beyond the canon' at crime and comic fiction, and finally at three illustrators and artists who- in Carter's view- link together these comic and visual conventions: Eric Ravillous, William Heath Robinson and Rowland Emmett. Carter concludes by linking the decline of the railway with that of modernism itself:

Modernity's archetypal object- with vast kinetic energy guided by inch-high wheel flanges, with History's direction controlled by fixed rails and complex control systems, with trains owned and operated by huge centralised capitalist joint stock companies employing the latest management techniques under close state surveillance- yields to a privately owned motor car that can be steered wheresoever (sic) the driver chooses. (Carter 2001:307).

Carter does not cover, to any great degree, what might be termed the non-visual arts: railway-inspired music or indeed the sounds of trains themselves. Sound is a perhaps neglected aspect of the railway's machine ensemble- due perhaps to its more ephemeral nature, descriptions of railway

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<sup>2</sup> Daniels provides an overview of the railway in nineteenth century paintings and prints in his catalogue entry in to *Train Spotting: Images of the railway in art* (1985).

sound are restricted to little more than a passing reference, for instance, to the clanking of coal wagons as their buffers collided, in the years before continuous brakes were universally adopted in the UK (Carter 2001:296; Bradley 2015: 4). However, Revill (2014) studies *El Tren Fantasma*, sound recordist Chris Watson's sonic journey across Mexico, in order to analyse the way in which sound can play a constitutive part in the perception of landscape. He suggests that sound- and particularly the train whistle- is a key element of the metropolitan corridor created by the railway and described by Stilgoe (1983) and Bishop (2002). In a similar vein, Leo Marx (1964: 29) famously suggested that the sudden blast of the train whistle has been one of the means by which many western authors have sought to posit the machine as a "sudden, shocking intruder upon a fantasy of idyllic satisfaction". For him, the intrusion of the train whistle within an idyllic country setting is emblematic of a technology which, as Schivelbusch was to elucidate eight years later, broke down the contrasts between rural and urban life, with the latter conquering the former to create a new world order. The *lack* of sound- and, specifically, of mechanical sound, within the railway exhibitions and museums described here can be seen as representative of the lack of mobility, and thus of both representative and physical power, of the exhibits they contain: for the stilled locomotive is also a voiceless one.

Simon Bradley (2015) has, in his work *The Railways: Nation, network and people*, explored the influence of railways upon British culture specifically- utilising, as he does so, a mantra which is quintessentially, if coincidentally, geographical in tone: "To travel through Britain equipped with a little knowledge of how its railways were built and operated is... to journey in time

as well as space” (p.6.). Bradley ‘s book, which “begins by following an imagined journey” (Bradley 2015: 6), transporting the reader somewhat inexplicably to the year 1862 (a year which appears to have no especial significance to railway history), covers all aspects of railway travel, from the experience of travelling itself through to its associated infrastructure, utilising a diverse range of cultural sources to illustrate the aspect of railway operation he is referring to- before concluding with a description of the broader topic of enthusiasm.

The works described above pull together a range of cultural artefacts- embracing the quotidian as much as the unusual- in order to illustrate their arguments, although some cast their net more widely than others. For example, Stilgoe (1983) and Freeman (1999) both use children’s toys as a means of illustrating the impact which the railway had on popular culture. Stilgoe argues that toys such as the Lionel Company’s reproduction of the *Transcontinental Limited* named train “spoke to a generation of boys as loudly as it spoke to a generation of grown men”. Meanwhile Revill argues that

We need to adopt an approach to culture which is able to recognize the wider cultural importance of the railway as it is embedded in everyday activities and objects in addition to those things more conventionally thought of as cultural. The cultural meanings of the railway therefore are evident as much in toys, timetables and Temperance Societies as they are in novels, poems, paintings and architecture. (Revill 2012: 14)

On the other hand, Carter (2001), in the first part of his book, chooses a handful of canonical works and analyses them in depth, and never moves too

far beyond traditional, or conventional, cultural representations, notably painting, literature and film.

As was suggested above, there has been perhaps a preoccupation with recording not only the corporeal experience of railway travel but also the effect which the advent of railway communication had on the cultural milieu of the communities through which it passed. This thesis, however, cuts across this to some extent by focussing on railway objects which are at the end of their working lives. Marian Aguiar (2011: 7) in *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility*, suggests that “colonial rhetoric presented the railway space as a means of amalgamating different religions and castes into a homogeneous nation”. She goes on to describe railway tracks as a ‘skeleton’ which “mapped territory and supported the corpus of the future nation” (Aguiar 2011:7), yet it was only because of its’ inherent mobility, only because individuals could move along this skeleton from one locality to another- bringing about the cultural mixing described above through the spreading of ideas and the forging of new relationships- that the railway was able to bind the nation of India together. Movement is also the pre-requisite for Revill’s argument that, although the railway “forged a conception of the modern nation based on connection and circulation”, it is not a “logical and impersonal doomsday machine”; Revill argues that railways can be better described as open systems, characterised by autonomous component parts. In his analysis of the (re) connection and (re)branding of Berlin’s municipal railway infrastructure after 1989, Samuel Merrill (2015) describes the ‘identities in transit’ of the U and S-Bahn Railways. He effectively ‘fixes’ the railway as a form of infrastructure, and thus as a landscape feature. However,

the role of Berlin's transport infrastructure in bringing the city together- representing, as he suggests, "one of the closest reflections of a shared identity... that Berlin and Berliners can ever expect to achieve" (Merrill 2015. 91) - is fundamentally tied to the fact that it has enabled movement across the city in a way that was not possible prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Railway preservation has not catalysed the same amount of theoretical reflection and cultural analysis reserved for the working railway. However, Sykes *et al.* (1997) have considered the role of railways within Britain's national heritage. They suggest that British railway history has been presented primarily as nostalgia, which "lingers fondly on a bygone era" (Sykes *et al.* 1997: 157), with less focus on an historical presentation of the past which shows "an awareness of transformation through time and the tensions between continuity and change" (Sykes *et al.* 1997: 157). For them this is an inherently bad thing: using the example of the NRM (i.e. the successor to the Museums described here) they argue that, whilst it has, in effect, attempted a shift to a more historical approach to the past through its South Hall (which is now called Station Hall, and has been redeveloped albeit in a somewhat similar vein to what went before)- which shows engines coupled to carriages in a context representative of a station- they argue that this has merely conjured the past as a 'spirit' of which the visitors are invited to uncritically partake. They suggest that

There are good grounds for arguing for an exhibition which engages more rigorously with aspects of social, cultural and economic history in relation to railways whilst exploring the problems of varying contemporary perspectives

and experiences and the difficulties and biases of historical reconstruction and interpretation. (Sykes *et al.* 1997: 170).

Although the railway has been linked on several occasions to personal memory- and, more particularly, to nostalgia- travel is often the prerequisite for remembrance. In a more recent paper, Jeremy Foster (2012) describes the French phenomenon of 'la mémoire du rail' and the way that this operates within the context of Jardins d' Éole, a park in Cour du Maroc, Paris built on a railway yard which was decommissioned in the 1990s. This phenomenon is linked to movement, with Foster tracing the development of 'la mémoire du rail' back to its roots in the post-railway alteration of French citizen's relationship to landscape; its transformation, in his words, of "the French national space into an enormous garden" (Foster 2012:76). Given the continuance of this phenomenon into the present, through the high-speed TGV system, he makes the perhaps contentious claim that "practically and politically, rail-based transportation is probably more integrated into daily life in France than in any other country" (Foster 2012:76). Meanwhile, Revill (2012: 56) suggests that "the rhythms of railway travel built nostalgia into the experience of train journeys long before railways became heritage". Here, travel by steam locomotives, which evocatively produce the "roaring, clanking, wheezing, drumming and screaming sounds" referenced by Revill (2012: 56), acts as a catalyst for nostalgic memory. Yet what emotions, and what cultural impacts, are evoked by what are sometimes termed the 'stuffed' steam locomotives, or by the decontextualized signs, benches, signals and other paraphernalia of the railway's machine ensemble, which are the stock in trade of transport museums?

## 2.2 Museums of transport

My thesis draws upon a body of literature which describes, reviews and critiques exhibitions of transport technology. In their book *Making Histories in Transport Museums*, Divall and Scott (2001) trace the development of transport museums- and of the display of transport exhibits within museums of technology- back to the nineteenth century, with the 1801 acquisition, by the Musée des Arts et Metiers in Paris, of Nicholas-Joseph Cugnot's 1770 steam wagon (commonly believed to be the world's first automobile), and the preservation of George Stephenson's *Rocket* at the Patent Museum in London (a forerunner of the Science Museum) in 1862. Dedicated transport museums started later; Jack Simmons (1970) - who traced the display of transport back further to the exhibition of royal coaches at museums in Madrid, Lisbon, Munich and Vienna- dates the earliest true transport museum to 1882, when a collection illustrating the development of Bavarian Railways was formed following an Industrial Exhibition held in Nuremburg- although this was opened to the public two years after a Railway Museum was opened at Hamar, in Norway, in 1897.

As is detailed in Chapter 4, the preservation and display of railway artefacts in Britain- the specific context of my research- was rather sparse and disorganised prior to the Second World War. Aside from the Science Museum's collections, displays of historical railway items could be found at the Railway Museum at York (opened by the London and North Eastern Railway in 1927) and the municipal museum collections of Hull and Newcastle, whilst nine historic locomotives and one carriage were displayed on plinths across the country, usually but not exclusively at railway stations

and with no overarching strategy guiding their placement (since all of these displays were the product of particular local initiatives). Meanwhile, a small number of locomotives and other items had been set aside for preservation by the Big Four railway companies, but this again was by no means a uniform process- whilst, for example, the Great Western Railway kept its own private museum at Paddington Station, the Southern Railway showed very little interest in preserving physical items (despite commissioning a book of its company history) until after the Second World War, prior to it being wound up as part of the nationalisation process.

My thesis covers a period of around thirty years following the Second World War, when railway preservation activity increased, being carried out by both enthusiast groups and the state-owned BTC. Though the two were closely entwined, I focus here on the activities of the latter- the temporary exhibitions of transport history held by John Scholes, the Curator of Historic Relics throughout the 1950s, the establishment of British Transport Historical Record Offices in London (1953) and York and Edinburgh (1955), the selection of rolling stock for preservation (in collaboration with the enthusiast-run Consultative Panel for the British Transport Relics) in 1960, and the opening of permanent transport museums in Clapham (the Museum of British Transport) (1961/1963) and Swindon (the Museum of the Great Western Railway) (1962) which ran alongside the continued operation of the museum at York. This took place in the context of rising public popularity in the study of both historic and- initially, at least- contemporary railways, both first-hand, through train-spotting and/or the increasing opportunities to volunteer at preserved railways or to assist locomotive preservation groups,

and through the consumption of books and magazines. Such interests can be situated with reference to what the historian Raphael Samuel termed resurrectionism: “an... ever-growing enthusiasm for the recovery of the national past” (Samuel 1994: 139) in the 1950s and 60s. The growing desire to preserve and exhibit railway artefacts in this era must be seen within the cultural milieu of the time, the ‘structure of feeling’, to use Raymond Williams’ term, of heightened enthusiasm for the preservation and recovery of the past as a whole, and the railway past in particular. As was suggested by Sykes *et al.* (1997) in their paper on railways in Britain’s national heritage, and is also hinted at by Carter in his later work on British railway enthusiasm (2008; see below), enthusiasm for the contemporary railway has gradually decreased- particularly with the end of steam traction- and has instead focussed on the preservation and celebration of the past. That this was, and is, a largely masculine phenomenon is mostly implicit within the literature of and about the time, although Taksa (2005) has documented the way in which the advent of diesel power blunted and redefined traditional notions of masculinity within the context of the Eveleigh railway workshops in New South Wales.

It has been suggested that transport museums- including the three documented in this thesis- have typically adopted an object-centric, formalist approach to their displays- characterised by what Divall and Scott term ‘serried rows’ of uncontextualised vehicles- and have not necessarily considered the wider social context within which these machines were built and operated. Divall and Scott state that, in Britain, “the shift to highly interpreted displays of social history (in transport museums) only began in the 1970s” (Divall and Scott 2001: 78) yet they also suggest that transport

museums have continued to lag behind their counterparts in other types of museum in this regard: “On the whole... transport museums (at least outside the communist bloc) followed some way behind other sorts of museum in dealing with social context, a sign perhaps of transport exhibitors’ professional and intellectual isolation ” (Divall and Scott 2001:81). The latter alludes to the disconnect between the academic discipline of transport history- itself no longer seen to be at the ‘cutting edge’ of scholarly research (Divall and Revill 2005)-and museological display suggested by Divall elsewhere, who commented that “few transport historians have got to grips with the peculiarities of museums and the ways they communicate to the public” (Divall 2003: 259).

For Divall and Scott, transport museums have continued to “consist of little more than trophies and icons” (Divall and Scott 2001: 29). Sykes *et al.* (1997: 160) made a similar assertion in relation to the NRM, suggesting that it has sought to “explain technological developments rather than present a social, economic and cultural history of railways”; as mentioned above they were also critical of the Museum’s more recent attempts to move away from this in the South Hall, which they saw as an uncritical, purely celebratory presentation of the past. Despite being co-written by the then Curator of the NRM, Andrew Scott, Divall and Scott’s *Making Histories in Transport Museums* (2001:87) agrees with this interpretation of the South Hall, which according to them “trades on deep-seated cultural assumptions to reflect back at visitors a particular mythical representation of the past”. Reviewing the then newly opened STEAM: The Museum of the Great Western Railway, Hoadley (2001: 765) notes that “most objects in the displays are contextualised, but

the 4-6-0 locomotive *Caerphilly Castle* is displayed as an icon”. He is critical of this, suggesting that “there is the danger that some visitors, gazing at the highly polished locomotive, will be left wondering “so what?”” (Hoadley 2001: 766). Even when social context has been provided, Divall and Scott (2001:29) suggest that “narratives about the past are usually presented as absolute truths”, hiding underlying assumptions, and they argue that visitors should be “helped to acquire the skills and knowledge to come to their own informed conclusions about the past, helping them to develop as democratic citizens”. To return to Hoadley’s review of STEAM, he commented that “speaking to visitors after their visit revealed that the museum had only reinforced their rose-tinted view of the Great Western (Railway): chocolate and cream carriages, copper-capped steam locomotives, and speeding to the west for holidays by the sea” (Hoadley 2001: 766).

Steven Lubar, in describing the creation of the *America on the Move* exhibition at the National Museum of American History- for which he was the Project Director- suggested that previously, transportation exhibitions had “displayed artifacts chosen for their technological interest” and were “devoid of any of the messy social or cultural stories that might have been told” about their objects (Lubar 2004: 19-20). By contrast, the team behind the creation of *America on the Move* wanted to “reach beyond the enthusiasts” (Lubar 2004: 20); Lubar even goes so far as to suggest that his team “were *not* doing a transportation exhibition. We were doing an exhibition that used transportation as a way to understand and present North American history.” (2004: 22; italics in original). More recently, Clark (2013) describes the way in which the history of motoring, as displayed at museums, might be peopled, as

she terms it, noting the necessity for a “dramatic curatorial shift... from the vehicle’s technological pedigree, to the engineer, factory worker, owner, driver, passenger, pedestrian, and road trauma victim” (Clark 2013: 279). However, the perceived failure of transport museums to provide a social context to their exhibits until the recent past contradicts the ethos of the museums described here- the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, for instance, certainly appears to have considered *itself* to be concerned with the display of social history, with Bryan Morgan (1963: 9) commenting in this museum’s guidebook that the history of what he terms the way men lived’ “is the only one that really matters”.

Museums of transport can reflect, or cut across, underlying cultural, and often political, ideologies- as Clark (2013) has noted, the question of whose story to tell within museum space is a controversial one. This can be seen, for example, in the cancellation of the proposed *Enola Gay* exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum, intended to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1995, as the decision to display only the nose section of the aeroplane was deemed by some groups- and particularly war veterans- to be a disrespectful and insufficiently celebratory way of marking this event (Mayr 1998)<sup>3</sup>. In a very different context, Gundler (2013) illustrated the extent to which the Motor Hall at the Deutsches Museum in Munich was influenced by Nazi Party ideology between 1933 and 1945. Whilst the links between the *displays* at the state-sponsored railway museums described here and political ideology are not necessarily explicit, the controversies over the closure and/or re-siting of

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<sup>3</sup> *Enola Gay* was the name of the aeroplane which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1945.

museums (notably concerns over the siting of the NRM at York, and the associated closure of the Museum of British Transport at Clapham) did play out in the political arena. This has continued to be the case up to the present day, as is demonstrated by the response to the possible closure of the NRM in June 2013, which led to a petition in the *York Press* and to the question of the Museum's future being raised in the House of Commons by Julian Sturdy, the MP for York Outer (ITV News, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013).

Transport museums can also reflect scaled notions of cultural identity- a concept which, in Chapter 7, is explored in greater detail in relation to the three museums featured in this thesis. As shall be explained there, the museum at Swindon was of importance in relation to regional identity, since, as Divall and Scott (2001: 17) suggest, the "Swindon of the 1960s was still largely a creation of the GWR". Yet transport museums can also reflect national culture and identity. Writing in a then-contemporary context, Divall and Scott (2001) argue that, in the NRM, the "trophies and icons in the (Great) Hall... help to sustain a sense of national identity based upon industrial excellence". They go on to suggest that "railway trains, skilfully built, and beautifully finished and presented, celebrate past industrial triumphs and thus contribute to a very particular sense of national identity in the present" (Divall and Scott: 2001: 87).

Sykes *et al.* (1998) portray the railways as a key part of our shared national past; specifically, they offer a dark view of British industrial decline, suggesting that "the passing of the 'Age of Steam' reads like the larger eclipse of a great industrial power" (Sykes *et al.* 1998: 162). They portray this decline as a process which has manifested itself- in subtly different ways- in each of the

three UK towns (Darlington, Swindon and York) which have a major railway museum: in York, for example, they suggest that:

The (post Black Friday) recession has made a large number of visitors redundant at the engineering works and BR's decision not to replace the Southern Region's old trains with ABB's Networkers jeopardises the continued existence of (train building firm) ABB and York's long history as a city of train-building (Sykes *et al.* 1998: 162)<sup>4</sup>.

### **2.3 Histories and practices of collection**

In addition to taking its lead from literature which specifically focuses upon the development of museums of technology- and on the strengths and weaknesses of these sites- my thesis also builds, more broadly, upon literature pertaining to the history and practice of collecting and the historical geography of collections. The relationship between collecting and museums is an intriguing one because, on the one hand, all museums are collections. In the Oxford English Dictionary definition, the term museum refers to both the building or institution in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are preserved and exhibited, and also to the collections which these buildings and institutions hold. On the other hand, however, not all collections of interesting objects are held in museums.

The Journal of the History of Collecting began in 1989, building, as the editorial to the first Issue suggests, upon a week long Symposium held in Oxford in 1983 focussing on the sixteenth and seventeenth century cabinets of curiosities, the proceedings of which were published as *The Origins of*

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<sup>4</sup> York's Holgate Road Carriage Works closed in 1996, reopening briefly between 1998 and 2002 before closing again.

Museums. As the title of the Symposium's proceedings suggest, there is an accepted, if far from clear-cut, lineage from the often privately owned cabinets of curiosities known as Wunderkammern of the Renaissance and Baroque era through to publically accessible museums which "ceased merely to mirror the world and came instead to play a role in shaping it" (Impey and MacGregor 1989: 2). There is also an implicit link here between the history of collecting and the development of the museum.

However, Susan Pearce has explored the cultures of collecting not just within, but also beyond the museum sphere in her book *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. She establishes her work as "an investigation into collecting as a set of things people do, as an aspect of individual and social practice which is important in public and private life... It is essentially an investigation into an aspect of human experience" (Pearce 1995: 4). Elsner and Cardinal (1994: 13, italics original), in introducing a set of essays on *The Cultures of Collecting*, seek to "ask whether collecting, as a cultural and behavioural phenomenon, can be adequately understood if one looks only at the official norms- the public art collections, the museums, the sacred stations of the Grand Tour". In their selection of essays they attempt to "probe more deeply into the nature of collecting by honouring the extremist as much as the conformist, by assessing the eccentric alongside the typical, and by juxtaposing the pathological with the normative". Private railway collecting, particularly in terms of the collection of train numbers by the trainspotter, and more recently the collection of physical railway material (often, as Carter (2008) suggests, by the same individuals), can in some ways be seen as the archetypal eccentric and perhaps pathological- collecting

practice, at least in the contemporary era. Whittaker (1995) and Carter (2008) have traced the denigration of trainspotting from being a mainstream hobby in the two decades or so after World War Two through to its more recent characterisation, by comedians and the mainstream media, as a strange activity pursued by socially inept outsiders. The term trainspotter has itself become shorthand for a person exhibiting unusual, even suspicious, character traits. Whittaker (1995: 12) suggests that “The trainspotter has become everyone’s favourite wally”, and even states that train spotting has become synonymous with criminal activity, arguing that “people have never forgotten that Michael Sams, the infamous kidnapper-murderer, was a quiet man whose hobby was trainspotting... Such things sink into the collective subconscious, and stay there”. During the post-war era, however, train spotting was seen as a more mainstream, socially acceptable activity, as more conformist than extremist, more typical than eccentric. This is evidenced by the large membership of the Ian Allan Locospotter’s Club (see chapter 4). The collection of objects, on an official basis, by the British Transport Commission and later the British Railways Board, was in some respects catalysed by the high level of interest in collecting train numbers at this time, which itself morphed into the preservation of the ‘real thing’ as branch line closures and the withdrawal of redundant steam technology continued apace.

Meanwhile the sell-off of historic items not deemed to be museum-worthy by British Railways, from the 1960s onwards, led to a new interest in collecting parts of the physical railway infrastructure, known as railwayana (see chapter 7), which, though less widely documented, has been met with similar opprobrium by the mainstream media. The Weasel column in The

Independent for example in 1996 described how “Those disturbed souls who so identify with the railway life that they desire the accoutrements may obtain BR caps for pounds 5 and whistles for [£?] pounds 4.50” (The Independent: online). In the first chapter of his book on railway enthusiasm (see below) Carter (2008) describes the ‘railway enthusiast’s lifeworld’ through the fictionalised account of a man whose house is crammed full of railway paraphernalia, creating a private collection of material. Whilst his account is greatly exaggerated to emphasise the extent to which this lifeworld could stretch (e.g. the number of societies one could join and magazines that you could read about the topic), there is no doubt that private or semi-private collections of material exist across the UK. Notably, the construction heir Sir William McAlpine has his own railway, open to the public on special occasions, at his estate at Fawley Hill in Buckinghamshire with one of the McAlpine company’s own locomotives and with architectural features salvaged from across the UK.

Museums do of course play a pivotal role in the culture, and indeed the history, of collecting: as Pearce (1994: 387) suggests, “museums and their material provide the point of reference against which the rest of the collecting system can operate”. Moreover, she argues that

Museums are the modernist heirs to the European tradition in the long term which has created an organically related sequence of holy repositories- deposition sites, temples, churches and royal treasures- in which collected material of abiding community significance can be stored and (usually) displayed.

The institutions and organisations referred to in this thesis appear to be conforming to this lineage to some extent; Simmons (1970: 22), in his survey *Transport Museums in Western Europe*, suggests that transport collections have their roots in the collections of royal coaches displayed in Madrid, Lisbon, Munich and Vienna, although he argues that “the systematic illustration of the history of transport has other and later origins”. In fact, the museums described here perhaps best fit into the trend which Pearce described as *Classic Modernist Collecting*, in which architecturally bold national museums espoused “a panoramic view into which eventually all aspects of human history and human relationship are fitted”, a view in which “hierarchy and knowledge are one” (Pearce 1995: 132); note Simmons’ use of the term “systematic” above. Certainly, the concept of an all-embracing classificatory and hierarchical system is one in which, as will be described in chapter 7, the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, with its associated evolutionary depiction of history from a the Age of Canals through to Railways and on to Roads, can be fitted, and the Museum became, in a sense, a national institution for the study of transport history (although it was intended to become part of a regional network of museums). That being said, it was not in a prominent position, nor housed in an impressive building: Nairn (1966: 192) described the museum as “a big shed, with the right kind of unselfconscious steel roof”. Nevertheless, it did become a shrine of sorts to the railway companies which had preceded the nationalised British Railways in running Britain’s railways and as Cossons (1968: 87) suggested, the site was a ‘mecca’, at which “almost anything which is capable of bearing those sacred initials of railway companies can be found somewhere”.

As with private collections, the nature of the collector in any given museum collection- or in this case the Curator- can be an important factor in the management and upkeep of the collection. This is demonstrated by historical geographer Charles Withers' work on John Walker's keepership of Edinburgh University's Natural History Museum between 1779 and 1803 (Withers 1991, 1993, 1995). Walker's tenure as the keeper of Edinburgh University's Natural History Museum was characterised by the development of its collections as "both a university resource and a nationally-useful display of natural knowledge" (Withers 1993: 65), and as both a useful and ornamental display. In this thesis, I similarly scrutinise John Scholes' term as Curator of Historic Relics at the British Transport Commission (later the British Railways Board) between 1951 and 1974, whilst recognising the interrelationships between humans and non-humans described elsewhere. However, whilst Scholes' tenure was, like that of John Walker at the Edinburgh University Natural History Museum, characterised by a building up of the collections in his care and by their display to the public at the Museum of British Transport in Clapham, the systematic description of the development of transport related in the Museum's guide book was not matched by the nature of the displays themselves, and also not in the running of the museum itself. As chapter 7 relates, a British Rail audit carried out after Clapham's closure adjudged that Scholes had taken improper care of his collections- and, partially as a result of this, the inventory of items in the Museum's care did not match the items physically located on site. Nevertheless, the museum can be seen, with hindsight, as the forerunner of

the National Railway Museum and of the National Collection of locomotives in its care.

## **2.4 Technological Enthusiasm**

This thesis details the close involvement of railway enthusiasts within the processes of official railway preservation and display in the post-war era, describing the role played by small committees of enthusiasts- particularly the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee in the late 1940s and the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics from 1958 onwards- in deciding which items should be selected for preservation by the BTC (later the BRB).

Ian Carter (2008) wrote a second book for the Manchester University Press' *Studies in Popular Culture* series, entitled *British railway enthusiasm*, which serves as a key source of reference here. He noted that this subject had hitherto been largely unstudied: "Almost no academic books, and precious few journal articles, examine activities which enthralled so many twentieth-century British men. Among academics no less than general commentators, cold contempt replaces engaged interest." (Carter 2008: 2).

As with his earlier work, *Railways and culture in Britain*, Carter frames his book around a series of broad themes or case studies, describing the British railway enthusiast's 'life-world', rather than adopting a chronological approach detailing the development of railway enthusiasm- or the railway fancy, as he terms it- in all its forms (including railway modelling, trainspotting and the operating of preserved locomotives and lines). However, the chronology adopted in the third chapter, 'Associated Life'- which looks at the

development of both full-size and model railway societies and the links between them- could be taken to be a potted history of railway enthusiasm as a whole. He traces the railway fancy from its beginning in learned societies- notably the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, formed in 1847- through societies which aimed to bridge the gap between those with an amateur interest in the subject and professionals (facilitating interaction between the two) such as the Railway Club, the Stephenson Locomotive Society (hereafter SLS) (both formed in 1909) and the Newcomen Society<sup>5</sup> (started in 1920), and on to the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (hereafter RCTS) begun in 1927, which arranged tours and talks for those with a purely amateur interest in the subject. This society surfed the trainspotting craze, as Carter terms it, which took place in post-war Britain and saw the establishment of the Ian Allan Locospotter's Club (formed in 1944) and the Locomotive Club of Great Britain (founded in 1949), along with a host of locally based railway societies (see also chapter 4).

Carter describes the railway preservation movement in chapter five. Whilst he refers to the early attempts to preserve steam locomotives prior to the Second World War- by the Science Museum and major railway companies- he uses this largely as a foundation from which to talk about the transition of railway enthusiasm from interest in the contemporary railway to concern for preserving the railway past, suggesting that “more and more *amateurs...* moved from spotting to preserving” (Carter 2008: 113, italics in original).. He describes the development of the railway preservation movement from the successful attempt to preserve the narrow gauge Tallylyn

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<sup>5</sup> This was named after Thomas Newcomen who had invented the first practical working steam engine in 1712.

Railway in mid-Wales in 1950 onwards. He does refer to the BTC's 1960 announcement that "27 steam engines would be marked for preservation, to join 44 already bound in aspic" (2008: 114), yet his main focus is on the railway preservation movement which was set up as a counterpoint to this (although one could argue that the subsequent attempts to privately preserve *locomotives*, rather than railways, were somewhat separate issues). For him, 1960 marked the point at which railway preservation took off, with the publication of this list and the formation of the Railway Preservation Society (which aimed to assist those seeking to reopen closed lines) marking the catalysts for this. By contrast, in this thesis (Chapter 6) I focus specifically on the selection process which lay behind the marking of these particular 27 steam engines for preservation, whilst remaining aware of the burgeoning railway preservation movement.

Carter goes on to broadly describe the nature of the preserved lines which exist today, describing the ways in which such lines publicise themselves and the shift "from enthusiasm towards tourism, from a social movement to a business" (2008: 120). He also relates the 'perpetual tension', in an etymological sense, between preservation and heritage at these railways, since the continued operation of steam technology requires modification and renewal, which runs contrary to the idea of merely saving an object from destruction encapsulated in the term preservation. It is suggested that this tension challenges the conflation of heritage with preservation both within the heritage literature (he cites Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry*, Patrick Wright's *On Living in an Old Country* and David Lowenthal's *The Heritage*

*Crusade and the Spoils of History* as examples of this) and the preserved lines themselves, which are organised through the Heritage Railway Association.

Carter concludes his book by predicting the end of railway enthusiasm, pointing to falling membership figures for railway societies, falling attendance at model railway exhibitions, and the rising average age of members. He suggests that “the British steam railway enthusiast’s lifeworld will fade like a badly fixed photograph” (Carter 2008: 286). Simon Bradley (2015: 550) has recently repeated this gloomy prognosis, suggesting that “After half a century of growth, the middle decade of the twenty-first century may mark the start of the inexorable decline of railway preservation”.

My thesis connects to recent work within cultural and historical Geography which has sought to document, and collaborate with, enthusiast groups, often focussing on organisations which seek to preserve historical objects. This has been driven, as Geoghegan (2014: 105) suggests, by “an interest in how ‘researchers’ working beyond the academy become interested in, and make sense of, the ‘materials’ of history, including obsolete technologies, personal archives, museum collections and modernist architecture”.

Much of the research in this area has looked at the ways in which the enthusiasts of today comprehend, celebrate and seek to conserve the past, and has sought to strengthen academic output by harnessing enthusiastic knowledges, which are themselves often based upon a professional background in their subject of interest. Geoghegan (2014: 107), following DeLyser (2014), argues in favour of a participatory historical geography, “extending the well-travelled paths of scholarship and forging ahead in fresh

directions". Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate (2013, 2015 and 2016) have studied, and worked with, the Twentieth Century Society- which aims to celebrate and protect Britain's architectural heritage built after 1914- accompanying and interviewing members of the Society before and after their architectural tours, and indeed organising their own tour of Edinburgh, in connection with the RGS-IBG Annual Conference (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2015). In so doing they trace the emotional geographies- and emotional attachment to place- evidenced within these tours (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2013) and, through the Twentieth Century Society's work to actively safeguard buildings of historic interest, they nest this organisation's activities within notions of civic engagement with place and civic geographies (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2015). More recently these authors have looked at the role of enthusiastic emotion within the work of this Society, the tensions and difficulties which such emotional enthusiasm can cause, and the way in which enthusiasm may be managed, or even denied, in order to further the aims of the Society (particularly as regards to its casework) (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2016).

The recent literature on enthusiasm within Historical and Cultural Geography draws upon a tradition of work on enthusiasm- and more broadly on fan studies- within sociology; enthusiasts were first defined by Bishop and Hoggett (1986:1) as "self-confessed amateurs who go about their activity in a highly professional manner". Relatedly, a key concept within this field is Stebbins' (1992) phrase "serious leisure", defined as "The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and

interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge” (Stebbins 1992: 3).

This concept strikes a chord here, since several of the enthusiasts who are described in this thesis effectively carved out a career within their hobby, rising through the ranks of particular enthusiast societies - to serve as vice-Presidents, Presidents and Chairmen- and/or writing texts which would become canonical in their chosen sub-field. As Carter (2008: 57) noted, individual enthusiasts are often members of more than one organisation; thus there is a “dense web of connections” between these organisations. For example, Jack Boston carved out a career within railway enthusiasm, serving consecutively as a member of the Stephenson Locomotive Society Council from 1939, and then as its Chairman from 1945 until 1958, its Vice-President from 1958 to 1961 and its President from 1961 until 1991, and he also served as Chairman of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics from 1958 until 1969 and with numerous other organisations including the National Railway Museum Advisory Panel and the Transport Trust (Greenwood 1992)<sup>6</sup>.

Where this thesis differs from much of the pre-existing work- within the sphere of cultural and historical geography- on enthusiasm, however, is in its retrospective application of these ideas within an historical context. Simply put, this thesis is about attempts to preserve the past *in the past itself*, whereas the enthusiasms which have been discussed by, for example, Geoghegan, Craggs, Neate and DeLyser have tended to focus upon

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<sup>6</sup> Revill’s work (1994, 2001) on railway careers and community, within the context of the Midland Railway at Derby, is also of relevance here (see chapter 6).

contemporary efforts to preserve the past- often past technologies- by groups and/or individuals (in the case of DeLyser and Greenstein (2015), by the individuals who wrote the paper)- whether this be in terms of the efforts of the Twentieth Century Society to preserve historic buildings (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2013, 2015), the work of the Telecommunications Heritage Group or of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society (Geoghegan 2009, 2013), or of the painstaking efforts to restore a rare car into working order (DeLyser and Greenstein 2015). Meanwhile Yarwood and Shaw (2010:432) have written in a contemporary context about model railway enthusiasm- which is largely about recreating aspects of the past at a miniature scale- situating this as part of a wider “network of production and consumption” which centres on the home.

In describing and analysing the enthusiasms of the past- rather than those of the present *for* the past- this thesis is in some ways aligned with papers by Baker (2013) and Toogood (2011) in the *Journal of Historical Geography*. However, the extent to which the individuals described in their work could be characterised as enthusiasts as such in the same way as those described above- rather than simply those with an amateur interest in their subject as a leisure pursuit- is perhaps debateable: the line between the enthusiast and the hobbyist is somewhat blurred and uncertain. Mark Toogood traces the inter-war histories of ornithological observation (represented by the British Trust for Ornithology) and amateur ethnography (represented by Mass Observation), relating the geographical, organisational and epistemological associations between the two, whilst Alan Baker analyses the history and geography of pigeon societies in Pas-de-Calais between 1870 and 1914, as

part of a wider study of leisure-related voluntary societies in nineteenth century provincial France.

Toogood's paper is much broader in its spatial scope yet is based partly around the biographies of key individuals within the groups which he studies- such as the prominent ornithologist Max Nicholson- whilst Baker's study has a regional focus, yet, perhaps due in part to the fragmented nature of his primary sources, is set to some extent at a descriptive remove from its subject, describing the club's organisation, membership and geographical distribution in broader brush strokes in the absence of first-hand accounts or publications by the groups which he is studying. Both papers, however, situate detailed analysis of their case studies within the context of what Baker (2013:1) terms "the political, religious, medical and militaristic ideologies that underpinned them and... the class and gender structures they reflected". I take a similar approach to Baker and Toogood, teasing out the underlying social, economic and political ideologies which lay behind the enthusiasm for railway preservation between 1948 and 1975. For example, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the desire to preserve the past, amongst those enthusiasts who made representations to the newly formed BTC and wrote letters to national newspapers, was driven in part by social and political concerns over the future of the railway network under nationalisation.

## **2.5 Object subjectivities: conceptualisations of the object within the social sciences**

My thesis also draws upon a diverse range of work which is loosely connected by its concern with technology and its relationship to people, whether this be the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour- who aimed, in

*Aramis, or the love of technology*, to “turn a technological object into the central character of a narrative” (Latour 1996: VII)- the concept of singularization, which refers to the removal of objects from the commodity sphere (Kopytoff 1986), or the idea of ‘object love’ which is identified by Geoghegan and Hess (2015) amongst the curators and conservators of the Science Museum’s stores.

In *Aramis* (1996) Bruno Latour blends and balances technical and social narratives in his investigation of a failed scheme for a driverless Parisian metro system after which the book was named, related through multiple narrative voices and blending in elements of the literary novel (Carter 2001). On the one hand, Latour suggests that “an object that is merely technological is a utopia” since it is impossible to “conceive of a technological object without taking into account the mass of human beings with all their passions and politics and pitiful calculations” (Latour 1996: VIII), whilst on the other he argues that the collective at the heart of his case study is “woven together out of speaking subjects, perhaps, but subjects to which poor objects, our inferior brothers, are attached at all points” (Latour 1996: VIII). He goes on to suggest that “the pertinent question is not whether it’s a matter of technology or society, but only what is the best sociotechnical compromise” (Latour 1996: 101). His book paints an intimate portrait of the *Aramis* project in order to formulate “a single explanation, for a single, unique case” (Latour 1996: 131). Technology is seen to have entered into a moral contract with humans, with each requiring the other in order to function coherently, offering “a continuous passage... between what humans inscribe in it and what it prescribes to humans” (Latour 1996: 213). *Aramis* is traced both through

interviews with the key human protagonists of the project and by analysis of technical and administrative documents; as Latour suggests, “Nothing has a bigger appetite for paper than a technology of steel and motor oil” (Latour 1996: 222).

A Latourian approach, in which technological objects are placed at the heart of a network consisting of human and non-human actors- and at the centre of the narrative-has been utilised within a different scholarly tradition, as students of material culture have sought to weave an historical narrative around an individual technological object, predicated on what Wilson (2008:237) describes as the “defining article of faith... that objects are three-dimensional historical documents”. Wilson traces the history of streamlined Locomotive CN4600, constructed in 1936 and now housed in the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa, from the research project which led to its construction through to its early years in service, in relation to Canadian national identity and the use of streamlining to suggest “speed, efficiency and a hopeful modernity”, without necessarily bringing about significant aerodynamic advantages (Wilson 2008:253). Taking a slightly different angle- based on the biography of a human rather than non-human actant- Maffei (2009:158) depicted several objects designed by Norman Bel Geddes in the 1930s- giving special attention to his redesign of the Chrysler Airflow car- similarly arguing that streamlining was as much about aesthetic appeal as it was engineering excellence and suggesting that Geddes ultimately employed the term as a “synonym for styling and novelty”. Meanwhile DeLyser and Greenstein (2015) trace the history both of one individual car,

and of the company which made it (Tatra), whilst also describing their own ultimately successful efforts to restore it.

These papers do not explicitly follow in the footsteps of Latour- despite following a similar methodology- but draw upon work about material culture and the study of things. Two key works in this field are Appadurai's (1986) edited collection *The Social Life of Things: commodities in cultural perspective* (particularly Igor Kopytoff's contribution 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process') and Ian Cook's (2004) paper 'Follow the thing: Papaya'.

Appadurai's call to focus "on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange" (1986: 3) has been taken up by scholars who have been, as DeLyser and Greenstein (2015: 257) suggest: "Following the social lives of commodities, tracing their mobilities from their origins to destinations in consumer's homes, and even through repurposing to ridding, or out-right disposal, following their uses or transformations along the way".

Within *The Social Life of Things*, Kopytoff (1986), in his essay 'The Cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', coined the concepts of the singular and the common, in which singularized objects are culturally protected from commodification, whether this be in terms of a particular type of item or an individual object. For Kopytoff (1986: 83), singularity "is confirmed... by intermittent forays into the commodity sphere, quickly followed by re-entries into the closed sphere of singular "art"". Singularization can be applied at the societal level- indeed Kopytoff (1986:73) suggests that "many of these prohibitions (from the commodity sphere) are the hand-work

of the state”- yet the construct is also an effective analytical tool at smaller social scales, as demonstrated by Epp and Price (2010:823) who traced the stories of individual tables within one family, thus uncovering “how contextual shifts and networks of object, spatial, and practice biographies propel and alter the uses of the table and how the table in turn alters key family identity practices”. Singularization has a useful descriptive power in the context of post-war railway preservation, since the process of saving particular locomotives entailed their protection from being commodified as scrap, and in the surviving correspondence the cultural value of individual locomotives is quite literally weighed up alongside their economic value as scrap metal.

DeLyser and Greenstein (2015) quote several papers, within and beyond Geography, which have sought to trace the social life of things. One of the most influential of these - with over 250 citations at the time of writing- has been Ian Cook's *Follow the thing: Papaya*, which traced the intimate biography of this fruit from farm to consumer, detailing the globalised social and economic networks of food production and consumption within which it is situated. In such a manner, following the social life- the biography- of a thing becomes a tool of radical geography, a means to de-fetishize commodities and expose economic inequality, and the staccato writing style and tone is, in its own way, as radical as the subject matter of the paper. This thesis is less politicised than Cook's paper; it uses the biography of things- in this case, things which have come to the end of one life, and have started another- as an indicator of their cultural value and how this has shifted over time. As was described above, in the context of transport museums the means of production, in respect of the technical features of particular locomotives and

their place of production, may in itself be fetishized, with the social systems in which their labours were situated, the day to day workings of the railway organisation of which they were once a part, being occluded- as Divall and Scott (2001) have suggested- by an emphasis on their technical characteristics and the differences between them.

DeLyser and Greenstein (2015) suggest that- as the term '*follow the thing*' perhaps implies- those who have sought to trace the social life of particular commodities are united by an interest in- and, moreover, an assumption of- the inherent mobility of objects. Indeed, Appadurai (1986:5; italics added) argued that "from a methodological point of view it is the *things-in-motion* that illuminate their human and social context". In this manner, it links to the 'mobilities turn': "work that shifts emphasis away from source or destination to the movements themselves" (DeLyser and Greenstein 2015: 257). In the context of this thesis, however, it is the *stillness* of the once mobile objects- both in terms of the rolling stock itself, and of the other objects which once formed part of the railway system- which is their defining characteristic. It is the fundamental lack of mobility in an object expressly designed to move that sets the objects considered in this thesis apart. Whilst the car described in DeLyser and Greenstein's paper is, before they restore it, a wreck which seems unlikely to ever move again, it is ultimately restored to working order: the story ends in its "return to glamour and glory" (p. 256). Meanwhile, Julie Cidell (2012: 234) has looked at mobility's pauses, asking "What happens when flows of objects that should be in motion become temporarily fixed, becoming part of the landscape?"- yet ultimately the shipping containers which

she studies “are still moving towards their final destination” (Cidell 2012: 243).

By contrast, the rolling stock described here will never work again, and the stilled locomotive perhaps basks in a different glory to that which is operational- as Wilson (2008: 239) notes in relation to the machines in the Locomotive Pavilion at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, these machines are “as definitively static as any artefact in the collection can be said to be. On confronting these impressive machines, the visitor does not experience movement or motive power of any kind.”

The rolling stock displayed at the museums in Clapham, Swindon and York, described here, was ‘trapped’- or ‘dormant’ as Wilson terms it- in contrast to the stock in today’s NRM, which is much freer owing to the Museum’s connection to the national network. Unlike Wilson, who is able to suggest that museological display is an apt continuation of the life of the locomotive in his case study, CN4600, since it only ever “*signified* exceptional steam locomotion” (Wilson 2008: 240, italics added), I suggest that, having been a part of a system which was characterised by movement, the objects being considered here take on a new cultural afterlife- as ciphers for particular ideas and ideals which they may not have been imbued with during their working lives. At the heart of this thesis lies the fundamental question of how we, as individuals and as a culture, conceptualise the items left behind after mobility ceases: how we come to terms with what architectural critic Ian Nairn (writing in relation to the Museum of British Transport in Clapham) called “all that mechanical energy halted into atmospheric stillness” (1966: 192).

The emotional connectivity between objects and people has been explored by Geoghegan and Hess (2015), who, in the context of the museum store rooms at Blythe House, deploy the term 'object-love' - first used by Sharon Macdonald- in order to join together work on the materiality of objects with that concerned with the affective geographies of love. It is the materiality of objects- and specifically the assemblage of a collection of these objects within the storeroom-which creates the conditions for the 'object love' described by Geoghegan and Hess to develop. They argue (Geoghegan and Hess 2015: 452) that "love is one of the key components that shape the storeroom through the ways in which love is experienced by curators and conservators, and nurtured between people and things." Within the often formal correspondence and meeting minutes which form the raw material of this thesis, I suggest that a similar 'object love' exists between the enthusiasts and curators in this paper and the objects which they helped to preserve and/or were responsible for following this preservation. Ultimately it is, to paraphrase the title of Denis Dunstone's (2007) book, for the love of trains, that enthusiasts chose- and continue to choose- to devote their spare time and their expertise to preserving and restoring railway artefacts. Meanwhile, as Geoghegan and Hess (2015:458) suggest, "curators and conservators exhibit a strong emotional attachment to their collections". John Scholes- the Curator of Historical Relics at the BTC (later the BRB) between 1951 and 1974 and a key figure in this thesis- demonstrated this; when asked to name a favourite item in his collection he refused, and was quoted as saying (Clapham Observer, April 27<sup>th</sup> 1973): "I like all the exhibits; I collected them".

Although he is not referenced by Geoghegan and Hess, we can perhaps relate their notion of 'object love' back to Latour, who suggested that Aramis failed to come into being because it was unloved. Giving Aramis its own voice, he writes: "You didn't love me. You loved me as an idea. You loved me as long as I was vague... you didn't even agree as to whether I am possible in principle, whether my essence does or does not imply my existence." (Latour 1996: 294).

Thus, in Latour's view, Aramis failed to come into existence because it was not 'loved' enough by the human actors who proposed the scheme; here objects ceased to exist if they were not 'loved' enough to be preserved. Whilst the BTC supposedly preserved locomotives on the grounds of their technological characteristics, because of their place within the development of the steam locomotive, love effectively motivated many of the preservation efforts which took place beyond this, whilst, as detailed in Chapter 6, it could be suggested that the Consultative Panel themselves took steps to ensure that their favourite machines were preserved, with the official, technical explanations perhaps acting as a screen for personal choice- although this cannot be decisively surmised from the archival sources which are available.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

To conclude, this literature review has described a number of different academic fields from which this thesis draws, yet also departs from within the context of this research. My thesis aims to place my particular case study- the preservation of historic railway artefacts and archival material by the state-owned transport operator (initially the BTC, later the BRB) in the post-war era- within the wider context of increasing enthusiasm for the preservation of

the past at this time, while also framing it with reference to the wider significance of the railway within British culture. However, I aim to balance this broader approach with a more intimate object-focussed analysis, tracing the biographies of individual objects within the over-arching processes of designation and display which operated at this time in order to demonstrate how these processes and procedures operated in practice.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

“Archive Fever comes on at night, long after the archive has shut for the day. Typically, the fever... starts in the early hours of the morning, in the bed of a cheap hotel, where the historian cannot get to sleep....” (Steedman 2001: 17)

“Your anxiety is more precise, and more prosaic. It’s about PT S2/1/1, which only arrived from the stacks that afternoon, which is enormous, and which you will never get through tomorrow.” (Steedman 2001: 18)

I have primarily used archival research in order to describe the official designation and display of British railway heritage in the post-war decades, visiting ten libraries or archives (see table 1), and it is this aspect of my research which I will predominantly be describing here. As Steedman implies, the process of archival research can be an emotional experience; far away from home, with only a short time available to complete the work and sometimes having had very little sleep, the process takes on an emotive charge beyond the deceptively simple collection and collation of information and narrative. Without wishing to navel-gaze at too much length, memories of my own research, and associated travel to and from the archives- which are in themselves now becoming a fragmented archive of memory- call forth a rollercoaster of experiences, from the shrill call of the Song Thrush one cold, early February morning as I went to catch the bus on the first stage of a lengthy journey to Edinburgh to visit the National Records of Scotland, to the near- damage or destruction of some correspondence at the NRM in York, as my anxiety made itself known, bursting bloodily forth out of my nose. There was the thrill of being able to look up from the paperwork relating to the

preservation of a QI Class locomotive, to see the actual locomotive beneath me in the NRM. On the other hand, however, there was the sheer tedium of reviewing my notes whilst eating substandard food in a substandard pub, or McDonalds, or in an identikit hotel room. Or, indeed, the boredom of the four hour round trip to and from the National Archives from my family home in Essex, including more than an hour on the District Line from Tower Hill to Kew Gardens and back again. The simple pleasure of listening to Fleetwood Mac on Bristol Harbourside, en route to the Bristol Record Office in the rain. The misjudged affection and the heartbreak. That dark moment when I considered, half-seriously, jumping off Edinburgh's North Bridge (as it transpired, visiting the archives in Edinburgh on my birthday was rather detrimental to my mental health, and I went rather off the rails).

This self-indulgent reflection is included here to emphasise the humanity, and thus the fallibility, of the researcher who collected the data which is at the heart of this thesis. Though I tried my best, and have had extensive instruction, mistakes and omissions have almost certainly been made; far from a rational, detached collector of data, I was usually tired, distracted and on at least my second coffee of the day, with designs on a third. Much the same could be said of the writing process of course- writing this now I have several anxieties which are distracting me from writing whatever it is I'm trying to say- yet this at least has the safety net of being checked, whereas the archival research does not. If I misconstrued or misunderstood or overlooked something in the archive, it will stay that way in my research.

It should perhaps be noted that my research, akin to perhaps all, or most, research to a greater or lesser extent, originates from a personal interest in

the subject area. Simply put, I like trains. Whilst I am perhaps not the most ardent enthusiast, I do attend steam railway galas, volunteer on a preserved railway line and have photographs of trains on my walls. This thesis, then, has deeper roots than simply a research proposal penned in around 2012-13, but can be traced right back to when my interest began: specifically back to the late 1990s (circa 1998) and walks with my grandma and her dog Lucy (both now sadly deceased) across a patch of ground called the Manor, near Grays in Essex, from where, beyond the Buddleia, I could see stabled Class 90s and witness the passing of Class 310 and 312 Electric Multiple Units (long since recycled into baked bean cans) on the London, Tilbury and Southend line. It is relevant, I think, to point out that this is more or less entirely my own research proposal; the sheer subjectivity at the heart of this thesis cannot go unacknowledged. That being said, this is not a 'pet' project- I knew little about this particular topic before I started the thesis, and, as so often happens, the end outcome took on a rather different form to that which I had originally envisaged.

I enjoyed my archival research, on occasion finding myself laughing or crying along to the grain of the paperwork. The negative archival experiences described above arose more from a sense of loneliness and isolation, and that limited time to get through PT S2/1/1, to use Steedman's example, than from any fundamental disillusionment with the process of archival research. In terms of the writing process meanwhile, the PhD, and the office in which I have written it, have at times felt like an emotional crutch- quite simply, once you are at your desk, in the flow of writing a chapter, things, life, simply *makes* sense in a way that it scarcely ever does elsewhere. My thesis can thus to

some extent be aligned with Woodyer and Geoghegan's (2012: 211) call for a (re)enchanted geography, a 'new enchanted academic stance' attuned to the "surprise and the positive energy which our everyday realities can afford"- although it could perhaps be suggested that disenchantment, or at least the appearance of it, does not always imply straightforward negativity. Here I have marshalled my enchantment for, and fascination with, the subject matter, and with the archival documents which formed the source material for my thesis, into a conventional academic- and indeed, reasoned and occasionally critical, writing style. Thus the analytical processes which I have applied in my thesis may make me appear disenchanted and distant. However, if I didn't have an underlying enchantment for my subject- if I didn't have, in other words, a fundamentally irrational love of trains- this particular thesis, at least, would almost certainly have never have been started, and quite probably have never been finished.

**Table 1: A list of the principal Archives and Libraries which I visited in my research, ordered by time spent there**

<b>Archive/Library Visited</b>	<b>Approximate number of working days spent there</b>	<b>A summary of the material which I analysed at the site</b>
National Archives, Kew	20-30	Principally files from AN/111 'British Railways Board: Public Relations and Publicity Department: Correspondence and Papers', relating to the preservation of historic items (both by the Board itself and in relation to the preservation of items by enthusiast groups), the running of the museums at York, Clapham and Swindon and the establishment of the new transport museum at York (which became the National Railway Museum). Also files of relevance from other categories, e.g. in relation to the British Transport Historical Records Office (AN 104).

National Railway Museum (Search Engine), York	15-20	Correspondence and Meeting Minutes of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (five boxes of paperwork); also catalogues of exhibits at the York Railway Museum and guides for historic railway exhibitions of the 1950s. Secondary material.
National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh	4	Various files relating to the preservation of historic relics in Scotland, including several sets of correspondence between John Scholes and the Scottish Region's Publicity Department, and correspondence relating to the campaign to preserve the locomotive <i>Gordon Highlander</i> .
The Transport Trust, London	4	Meeting minutes and newsletters of the Transport Trust from 1964 through to the early 1970s; manuscript for (uncompleted) work on <i>The early years of the Transport Trust</i> by founding Chairman Ron Wilsdon.
University of Leicester, Wilson Library	4	Museum guidebooks, Pamphlet commemorating ten years of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics. Secondary material.
Bristol Record Office	3-4	Information relating to locomotive 2818 (which formed part of Bristol Museum's collections from 1967 until 1975). This formed the basis for a presentation at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in September 2015.

British Library, London	3	Local and national newspaper articles relating to the opening (and subsequent closing) of the Museum of British Transport at Clapham; local newspaper articles relating to the opening of the Great Western Railway Museum in Swindon.
York Minster Library	2	The National Railway Museum's first guidebook (1975); secondary material.
Birmingham Library	1	Information from newspapers, books etc. relating to the acquisition of locomotive No. 46235 <i>City of Birmingham</i> by the Birmingham Museum of Science and Technology.
British Film Institute: Reuben Library, South Bank	1	Recordings of <i>The Railway Age</i> , a 1962 Granada TV series presented by Harold Perkin, then a Lecturer in History at Manchester University.

### **3.1 Piecing the fragments together**

“For many cultural-historical geographers, it is the fragments that contain the beauty, mystery and particular way of reading the archive that so enchants them.” (Mills 2013: 704)

The process of marshalling the archival documents which underpin this thesis has to some extent been much like that of assembling a jigsaw, in that it entails collecting interlinked yet spatially disparate pieces of information and narrative, or ‘fragments’- through photography and the taking of notes- and fitting them together to form a coherent image. In the context of this research, the rendering of the archive as fragment is an apt description at the broader scale, evoking the way that correspondence which has, due to its particular historical geography, been deposited in different places can be fitted together to form a narrative. The ‘pieces’- if we are to continue this metaphor- are scattered in archives and/or libraries across the country (see Table 1) – but the largest number were found in the National Archives in London, the National Railway Museum in York and the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh.

At the scale of the individual archive, however, the paperwork was often comprehensive and had been placed into some form of order, and was therefore not characterised by the lacunae in coverage and chronology by which Mills in part defined the archive-as-fragment. For instance, the meeting minutes or correspondence of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (held at the National Railway Museum) was ordered chronologically and appeared to cover every meeting of the Panel. In other

cases, however, the pieces are missing altogether, or perhaps never even existed in the first place. Whilst archives are “often littered with holes and missing pages” (Mills 2013: 703), it can also be unclear whether the reasoning behind particular decisions- for example the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics’ decision to exclude the LNER K3 Class locomotive (previously earmarked for preservation) from its 1960 list of locomotives to be preserved, leading to all of these locomotives being scrapped- were ever committed to paper.

As Withers (2002: 305) has noted, there are differences between individual archives; whilst they have been viewed as sites of power- often governmental power- in the form of the “classical archive”, which is a “situated expression of political and intellectual authority”- they may also be “the result of contingency, of the haphazard accumulation of ‘stuff’”. My research was carried out at both these more ‘classical’ archives and also through my own accumulation of items; I essentially created my own archive-cum-library (a phrase which I will seek to justify below) through the acquisition of printed material from a variety of sources, a process which De Lyser (2014:209) has termed autoethnography: “collecting and contributing to the archive ourselves”. Furthermore, whilst the majority of my research entailed the collection of textual sources in archives, I also interviewed or spoke to six people who are relevant to my area of research (see Table 2), largely because they had a high level of knowledge (albeit often second hand) of the practices which I am describing in my thesis. I thus in effect created an informal archive of ‘insider’ knowledge. Alongside Sarah Norville, who is the Corporate

Information and Enquiries Officer at the Science Museum Group (see below), these individuals have to some extent become the custodians of an archive, and a history, which is still emerging- although they should by no means be considered to be a homogenous group. Whilst the majority of these discussions are not referenced elsewhere, they did help me to formulate and develop my ideas and the general structure of the thesis.

**Table 2. List of people with whom I conducted interviews or discussed my research**

<b>Name of person interviewed</b>	<b>Date and location of interview</b>	<b>Relevant Position or role</b>	<b>Approximate duration</b>
Dieter Hopkin*	16/08/14: Homemade café, Nottingham	Head of Library and Archive Collections at the National Railway Museum, 1994-2004; consultant editor on Denis Dunstone's (2007) book <i>For the Love of Trains: The Story of British Tram and Railway Preservation</i>	1 hour
Rob Shorland-Ball	23/10/14: Mr Shorland-Ball's house, York	Deputy Head and Projects Development Director, National Railway Museum, 1987-1994.	1 hour

Andy King	06/11/14: K Shed, Bristol Harbourside	Senior Collections Officer: Industrial and Maritime History at Bristol City Council.	45 minutes
Neil Butters	07/11/14: The Guildhall, Bath	Secretary of the Railway Heritage Committee, 1998- 2013; Member of Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board	30 minutes
Bob Ballard (recorded on Dictaphone)*	17/02/15: Fletcher Road, Beeston (via telephone)	Manager of Collector's Corner (a shop selling British Rail's unwanted or surplus items), 1971-1998	1 hour

Sir Neil Cossons*	05/02/16:  Fletcher Road,  Beeston (via  telephone)	Museums  Assistant, Great  Western Railway  Museum (1962-  circa.1964),  Curator of  Technology,  Bristol Museums  circa. 1964- 1967;  Director of the  Science Museum,  1986-2000	1 hour 30  minutes
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\* Denotes conversations/interviews which have been referenced in my research.

The archive has been seen, notably by Jacques Derrida, as a construct of social and institutional authority which permeates beyond the physical site of the archive itself (Withers 2002). The 'classic' archives used here- principally the British Library, The National Archives, the NRM's Search Engine and the National Records of Scotland- are in some respects sites of power and influence, as they are all public bodies (or part of a public body) reliant on government funding, albeit with subtly different legal statuses. Whereas The National Archives are an Executive Agency within the Ministry of Justice, the British Library is a Non-departmental public body, the NRM is part of a Non-departmental public body (the Science Museum Group) and the National

Records of Scotland is a non-ministerial government department. The National Archives and National Records of Scotland, given their legal status and their role as the official place of deposition for government records, are perhaps closer to the beating heart of power than the British Library or the NRM. These sites' connection to governmental power, to whatever degree, was manifested in their larger physical size, their stricter regulations, the staff uniforms (at the National Archives), and the fact that I was not permitted to actually see- and certainly not to enter- the archives at any of these places. The documents were wheeled out to the reading room on a trolley (see figure 2) and placed into a box and I was only allowed to see a certain number of documents at any one time- although at certain sites this seemed to vary day by day, depending on who was on duty at the time. Indeed, the exercise of archival power is enacted unevenly; I can picture in my mind's eye the faces of those National Archive workers who are strict (around whom I had to take care to make sure I *definitely* wasn't leaning on any paperwork), and those who are more lax. As is detailed below, many of the documents which I used in this thesis, located at the National Archives and National Records of Scotland, would not have been available for me to view as recently as ten years before I started this thesis, and some others, relating to the same processes described here but at a more recent time, are still not available for me to view today.



Figure 2. A trolley full of boxes at the National Railway Museum. These contained the Boston Archive, also known as the Clapham Papers. *Author.*

The files I viewed at the National Archives, NRM and National Records of Scotland were largely in the same format in which they were created by the BTC/BRB or by the Consultative Panel, and thus were as messy or as ordered as they were when they entered the archive; the archive itself was merely a store, in effect, and does not appear to have physically re-ordered the documents it inherited (although it is impossible to know this for certain)- however, they were allocated a number within the archives' own classification system. For example, the Boston Archive, i.e. the correspondence of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, was numbered sequentially when it entered the NRM in 1992, having been bequeathed by Alfred John Boston, Chair of the Panel between 1958 and 1969. Yet the individual content of the files and boxes was not, it seems, changed in itself; certainly, many of the files were difficult to read, with too

many pieces of paper placed onto rusting metal tags. Similarly, much of the 'Historic Relics'-related correspondence of Eric Merrill, the Controller of Public Relations and Publicity at the BRB from 1965 to circa. 1976- which I viewed at the National Archives- was merely re-numbered into the AN111 series denoting *British Railways Board: Public Relations and Publicity Department: Correspondence and Papers*- other than this it was essentially in the same condition as when it was placed on file by staff working under the Controller of Public Relations and Publicity- these staff, along with some of those individuals whom I mention in the thesis, are the largely hidden under-labourers who marshalled the material which I have used here. This arrangement occasionally caused some difficulty, since often more papers were placed in a file than the treasury tag which was used could physically hold, whilst sometimes larger, A3 size plans could not be unfolded without taking the tag off the file altogether (with the permission, of course, of archive staff).

At the other end of the spectrum, so to speak, I utilised a much less formal 'archive' in the form of the Transport Trust offices. This site, not a true 'archive' as such, is the place at which the administration of the Trust is carried out: in terms, for instance, of membership renewals, financial statements and event planning. The Trust, as a charity, is removed from the corridors of power; it focuses on recognising achievements and good practice in transport preservation through the presentation of awards, fundraising for particular preservation schemes, giving out grants, placing red plaques at sites of historical transport interest, and organising trips for its members. Its office

staff all work voluntarily, normally on Wednesdays only (with the biggest decisions taken at Board meetings roughly once a month), and the informality of the archive was matched by looser working hours and a trip to the nearby pub at lunchtime (productivity was somewhat lower in the afternoons). The paperwork of interest which I looked at in The Trust's offices, then located next to Waterloo station approaches, was hidden away on a shelf and consisted of Meeting Minutes from the early years of its existence (the Trust was founded in 1964), newsletters and a draft manuscript, entitled *Transport Trust- The early years*, which was written at an undisclosed time by founding Transport Trust Chairman Ron Wilsdon, who has now passed away<sup>7</sup>. Whilst this 'archive' is a much less formal space than the 'official' locations referred to above, the documents within had been chronologically ordered at least as carefully, or sometimes more carefully, in comparison to those which I located elsewhere, and they helped me to gain an insight into the uncertainty surrounding the transport museums at Clapham, York and Swindon, and the vociferous debates about the proposed closure of Clapham and York, with the concomitant creation of what was to become the NRM, under the 1968 Transport Act (the Trust was one of the principal opponents of Clapham's closure). Ron Wilsdon's memoir, meanwhile, provided some useful descriptions of Jack Boston and John Scholes, which enabled me to add biographical colour to my research.

To some extent I also constructed my own archive-cum-library, in a similar vein to DeLyser (2015), who, as part of her research, amassed a collection of

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<sup>7</sup> The offices of the Transport Trust have now moved to Hinchley Wood, near Esher in Surrey.

kitsch souvenirs which were part of the tourism boom relating to Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel *Ramona*. This was in essence the "haphazard accumulation of stuff" which, as, Withers (2002:305) has suggested, often characterises the creation of archives. I have collected a large amount of textual paraphernalia relating to the time period- magazines, books and pamphlets- over the course of my PhD, both from online sources- from Amazon in my case, rather than eBay as in DeLyser's case- and from physical sales, such as the trade stands which are associated with, yet separate from, Great Central Railwayana's auctions at Stoneleigh Park showground near Coventry, a railway bookshop near Pickering Station in North Yorkshire (the southern terminus of the preserved North Yorkshire Moors Railway), sales stands at an Open Day at the London Transport Museum's stores in Acton, West London (usually closed to the public), and the sale of books at a Railway Correspondence and Travel Society talk in Nottingham. Meanwhile I liaised with Tim Petchey, the Editor and Publisher of the *Railway Antiques Gazette*, to access back issues of this magazine, which he very kindly agreed to let me have for free. I collected these at the Stoneleigh Park auction.

I do not have the same amount of material that DeLyser has amassed, and it was mostly printed matter of use for reference value, for getting a grasp on the wider railway literature of the post-war era. Thus there is not much to be 'read off' from the materiality of these objects, when compared to the way in which DeLyser was able to assess the social impact which the purchase and ownership of the souvenirs in her collection had on the tourists who brought them. This would suggest that I have perhaps created a library rather than an

archive, yet I have also collected some catalogues of historical exhibitions of the 1950s and 60s, and a pamphlet written by a prominent member of an enthusiast group of the time, which are, in effect, primary source material. The pamphlet in particular, *The Story of 828* by John Thomas, has been used extensively in Chapter 6.

Indeed, the boundaries between primary and secondary material, and between the archive and the library, have been difficult to determine in the context of this thesis. This could be said to be something of a moot point in railway bibliography more generally: George Ottley's *A Bibliography of Railway History* supposedly covers only secondary material, yet he incorporates material dating back to the dawn of the railways, which could perhaps be described- and have certainly been used- as a primary source in respect of the cultural impact which railways have had on society. Given the distance of time between the first publication of Ottley's work and this thesis, and the fundamentally different aims of the work being produced by me and by him, some of the supposedly secondary sources which he lists- notably the BTC's *The Preservation of British Transport Relics* (1951) - have been used as primary source material here, as illustrations of the preservation policies of the Commission and of the railway literature of the time. The University of Nottingham's Library has itself been the source of many of these works. Meanwhile, at the Transport Trust, I found both meeting minutes- which were contemporaneous with the time period yet represented, in effect, translations of the original meeting (not every utterance was necessarily

included)- and also the recollections of Ron Wilsdon, which were more personal and had been written after a certain length of time.

### **3.2 Actor-Network Queries: Finding the fragments in 2013-2016**

The process of finding my jigsaw pieces, my archival fragments, required an actor-network of human and non-humans, to use the framework proposed by Bruno Latour and others operating within Science and Technology Studies during the 1980s. That is to say, this process was enacted through the more-or-less stable and more-or-less formal linkages- between humans and technology, in particular- which existed more or less exclusively at the precise historical moment I was enacting them.

Having initially thought about what I wanted to focus on in my thesis, I contacted Dieter Hopkin, who has extensive knowledge of this field. He was formerly the Head of the Library and Archive Collections at the NRM, the Consultant Editor for Denis Dunstone's (2007) book *For the love of trains: The story of British Tram and Railway Preservation*, and in 1987 wrote a Masters Dissertation, entitled *Railway Preservation: Railways, Museums and Enthusiasts*, which covered the same historical era described here. I also contacted Colin Divall, co-author (with ex-NRM Curator Andrew Scott) of the book *Making Histories in Transport Museums* and at that time Professor of Railway Studies at the University of York. Dieter Hopkin referred to the 'BTC Clapham Papers' in his email, whilst Colin Divall suggested that there was more work which could be done on post-war railway heritage designation. Having contacted the staff of Search Engine, which is the NRM's library and archive centre, I was informed that the 'Clapham Papers' are part of what are termed the

Corporate Collections, and was directed to Sarah Norville, who is the Corporate Information and Enquiries Officer at the Science Museum Group. She became my 'gatekeeper' for the project, whose permission was, in effect, required in order to access this material. The part of the Papers which I used was the meeting minutes, and associated correspondence, of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, referenced extensively in Chapter Six. Thus a chain of uncertain connections enabled me to access the material at the Archives, yet this was also a chain with a feedback loop, insofar as Dieter and Sarah know each other, and Dieter in fact was able to procure some relevant reading material for me from Sarah, having referred to it in our discussion in August 2014 (see Table 2).

The research at the National Archives, and at the National Records of Scotland, involved fewer human actors, being mediated instead primarily through the catalogue of the archive in question. As Latour has suggested, technology is implicated in a 'moral contract' with humans, in which each is reliant on the other. Technology can come to shape our experience, to take on an agency of its own. Here it was the electronic catalogue and the chip card which marshalled my research experience, offering a gateway to things which both were- or sometimes were not- accessible. It was simply by typing 'relics' into the search bar of the National Archives catalogue that I initially found items relevant to my research, later discovering that the AN111 series was particularly interesting to me- the catalogue guiding me to which files were particularly relevant. It even, on occasion, provided hints to files which I might like to look at: for instance the record for AN104- the British

Transport Historical Records Administrative Papers- has in its 'Related Papers' section a link to a file which contains photographs of the Porchester Road site where British Transport Historical Records was based from 1951 until 1977 (from 1972 to 1977 under the auspices of the Public Record Office). On the other hand, the 'Clapham Papers' which I viewed at the NRM were *ex-catalogue*, i.e. not available in digital format, and they have not been formally added onto the Collections Management System (*pers. correspondence* with Sarah Norville, 16/05/16). Instead, a list is made available to researchers who express an interest in this area (*pers. correspondence* with Sarah Norville, 16/05/16).

The relationship between the archive and the technological objects referred to in this thesis, particularly the locomotives, is a matter worthy of exploration. Increasingly, the notion of the archive is being theoretically extended to include objects; indeed Mills (2013: 704) suggests that "although we tend to think of archives as collections of written sources and texts that hold discursive meaning (correspondence, minutes, diaries, reports), it is often the objects, ephemera, memorabilia and tactile 'stuff' that is most memorable, desirable or illuminating."

Mills cites works by Peter Merriman (2005) - who uses sources such as postcards, board games and badges as historical data in his work on the Country Code- Adrian Evans (2008), who discusses eighteenth century household items and inventories, and Merle Pratchett's work on the historical-cultural geographies of taxidermy. As is detailed in the literature review, authors such as John Stilgoe, in *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the*

*American Scene* (1983), and Michael Freeman, in *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (1999), used a similarly diverse range of cultural sources- including games and toys- in order to illustrate their work. As mentioned above, this thesis has drawn to some extent on the ephemeral in the form of the miscellaneous books, pamphlets and magazines which I have brought from retail outlets over the course of my PhD, whilst I also encountered, at Search Engine, a cigarette box which had been presented to John Scholes, Curator of Historic Relics at the BRB, by the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics in 1968, on the occasion of their tenth anniversary dinner.

However, it is worth noting, in relation to objects, that the 'line' dividing where the museum ends and the archives begin- and what sorts of objects belong where- is rather fuzzy. At the NRM, the room for accessing the archives is merely a glass box situated above the museum itself (see figure 3). This layer of glass separates museum and archive, yet in the case of smaller objects in particular, the types of item considered in the two spaces can often be very similar. On one of my visits to Search Engine, two gentlemen were inspecting cash registers, which could easily have been museum exhibits, whilst the Warehouse section of the Museum, in which objects are stored with, generally, the bare minimum of explanation is similar in layout to an archive, albeit rather less ordered.

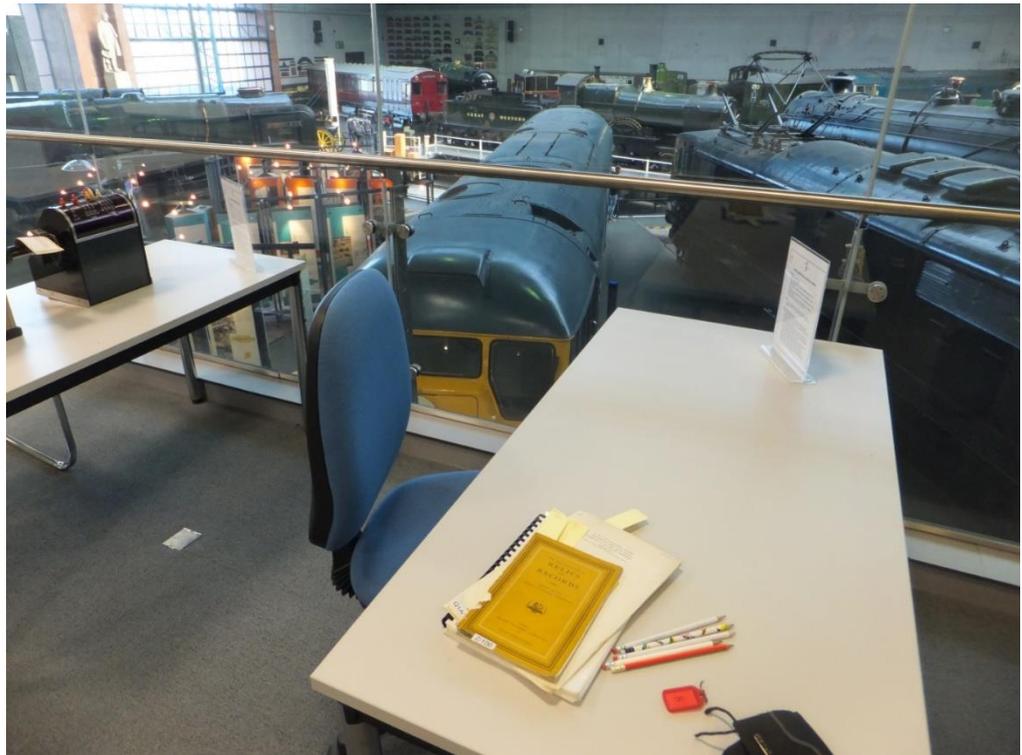


Figure 3. The glass wall dividing museum and archive at the NRM. One of the cash registers mentioned in the text is visible on the extreme left. *Author.*

Furthermore, I would argue that, in the context of my research, objects and written sources are often inextricably linked in a way which perhaps goes beyond the dichotomy between the two which was hinted at by Mills above. As Latour (1996: 222) has suggested, “there are only differences of degree between matter and texts”, whilst “nothing has a bigger appetite for paper than a technology of steel and motor oil”- and the same can be said of the railway and its associated machinery. The relationship between the paperwork- the correspondence and the meeting minutes- utilised in this thesis, and the locomotives, in particular, which exist- or don’t exist- within museum space, is not straightforward. The fact that a particular locomotive is situated at the NRM means that it brings a particular paper trail with it- thus each locomotive, or other object of a significant size- such as the Pullman

carriage *Topaz*- has its own green bound object file at the Museum (though it is unclear the extent to which these are updated now that correspondence by letter has largely been superseded by email). At the same time, these files only cover a locomotive or other object's post-preservation history, whilst locomotives which are part of the National Collection of officially preserved locomotives, but not located at the NRM, also have their paperwork deposited there. Furthermore, not all of a locomotive's post-preservation history is necessarily contained in its object file. For example, the former Great Western Railway locomotive No. 2818, now housed at the NRM's annexe at Shildon in County Durham, has an object file at the NRM in York, yet, since it was under the custodianship of Bristol City and County Council between 1967 and 1975, traces of its existence can be found at the Bristol Record Office in the Minutes of what in the 1960s and 70s was variously called the Museums and Art Gallery Committee (until 1967), the Cultural Committee (1967-1972), the Cultural Arts and Leisure Committee (1972-1973), and the Arts and Leisure Committee (from 1973) of the Council.

Moreover, it was often the paperwork itself- or more accurately the decisions which were inscribed upon it- which determined the fate of a particular class of locomotive, or of the individual locomotive within that class. The typewriter was thus not only mightier than, but determined the fate of, the sword. Thus, as is detailed in Chapter 6, the Q1, Lord Nelson, King Arthur and T9 Classes of locomotive in the National Collection ultimately owe their preservation, and thus existence, to a letter written on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1960 by David McKenna, Assistant General Manager of the Southern Region,

a copy of which I found in file BR/RSR/4/1716 at the National Records of Scotland (the letter was copied to all of British Railways' regions). It is difficult to resist hyperbole here; for this one short document essentially shaped British locomotive preservation as it exists today. For me then, in contrast to Mills, it was this sheet of paper and not a piece of "tactile 'stuff'" which was the most memorable item located during my research. Yet this was made all the more emotive because I had seen the locomotive No. 777 *Sir Lamiel* (the King Arthur class locomotive chosen to be preserved) operating at the Great Central Railway, and the Q1 Class 33001 both at the Bluebell Railway in Kent and later at the NRM. To see the paperwork that had led to their preservation was, for me, a truly special moment- but this affective response was driven by the interface between the archival document and the actual machine.

My research must be situated in its own historical moment. The nature of what could be achieved-of what, fundamentally, I could research- was influenced by the fact that I commenced this research in 2013, not 2003, 1993 or indeed 2023. Several of the files I viewed in the National Archives- were only opened relatively recently, often between 2000 and 2005. Thus this PhD could quite simply have not have been done as recently as 15 years ago, at least not in the same way that it has been carried out here. At the same time, many of the individuals directly involved in the processes which I have described here passed away during the 1990s or 2000s, rendering the use of oral history and interviews largely impossible. In this respect, then, there

never was a perfect time at which to undertake the PhD- although the period 1995 to 2005 or so would have been particularly difficult!

Meanwhile the paperwork of the Railway Heritage Committee- a statutory body which was set up during the railway privatisation process of the 1990s to identify and designate, and thus protect, items of especial historical interest on the UK railway network-was, at the time at which I began my PhD, yet to be deposited at the NRM or elsewhere. This was partially why the timeframe of my thesis stops with the passing of the 1968 Transport Act, rather than continuing to the present. Furthermore, there are perhaps files at the National Archives, and certainly at the National Archives of Scotland, which are not yet available to view (the (admittedly out-of-date) catalogue at the National Archives of Scotland shows unopened, and therefore inaccessible, files, whereas the National Archives' Discovery catalogue does not). In the future then, a wider period of time will be able to be covered and this provides an opening for further research.

**Chapter 4: “There is an intense and perfectly articulate interest in locomotive matters”: Nationalised beginnings, 1947-1951**

At 3PM on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947, eleven middle-aged or elderly men met in the art deco surroundings of 55 Broadway in London, then the headquarters of the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB), to discuss, what the incoming Chairman of the BTC described, at the meeting, as “the collection of records and relics relating to the railways, etc., in the possession of the Main Line Railways and the LPTB”<sup>8</sup>.

The meeting took place in the context of dramatic organisational changes to the operation of the British railway network. Under the Transport Act of 1947, the system was to be nationalised with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1948, and the so-called Big Four - the London, Midland and Scottish (LMS), Great Western (GWR), London and North Eastern (LNER) and Southern Railway companies, which had operated Britain’s railways since the Grouping of 1923- but which had been under government control, through the Railway Executive Committee, since 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939- were to be replaced permanently by a new Railway Executive, which traded as British Railways and operated under the auspices of the British Transport Commission (BTC), an organisation which was also responsible for a wide variety of other transport functions including road haulage, bus services and the Thomas Cook travel agency. Although the meeting did not immediately lead to the formulation of BTC or Railway Executive directives, the conclusions and decisions- vague as they were- which were reached set the tone for the BTC’s policies with

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<sup>8</sup> (National Archives (hereafter NA) file reference: AN13/1203

regards to railway preservation until its own demise in 1962- although the precise details were to be more clearly mapped out in the report 'The Preservation of Relics and Records' in 1950. The meeting therefore provides an appropriate place to begin this section.

The meeting was attended by those who would form part of the new regime, and at least one representative (the Southern and the LPTB were represented by two individuals) from each of the outgoing railway companies and the LPTB (which was to be replaced by the London Transport Executive). It comprised those individuals who had "made the collections (of historic railway artefacts or documents which already existed) and taken an interest in the subject in the past"<sup>9</sup>. Alongside Sir Cyril Hurcomb, the BTC's Chairman, this organization (and thus the new order) was represented by Miles Beevor, (who, as well as being the Chief Secretary of the BTC, had previously been the Chief Legal Adviser and Acting Chief General Manager of the LNER), and Sir William Valentine Wood, who as well as being the President of the LMS was also a Member of the BTC. Representing the old regime were, for the Great Western Railway, director Captain Hugh Vivian, for the Southern Railway Colonel Eric Gore Browne, its' Chairman- who had vociferously opposed nationalization (*The Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1946)- and Mr C. Grasemann, its' Press Relations Officer, for the LMS, Mr G.R. Smith, its' Secretary, for the LNER Lieutenant Colonel The Honourable Arthur C. Murray, Chairman of the Company's Scottish Area and one of its' Directors, and Mr George Dow, its Press Relations Officer, and from the LPTB Mr John Cliff, Member of the

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<sup>9</sup> NA; AN13/1203

Board with responsibility for staff, welfare and medical services, and Mr H.F. Hutchison, its Publicity Officer.

#### **4.1. The nature of British railway preservation in December 1947**

In order to understand the decisions which were taken at the meeting and their importance to the path of British railway preservation, it is first necessary to contextualise in terms of the nature of railway museums and the protection of historic railway artefacts at this time. Generally speaking, railway preservation prior to the Second World War was sparse, primarily consisting of a randomly assorted selection of locomotives displayed in various parts of the country, which were collected in what Dunstone (2007) describes as 'haphazard' fashion, often saved on the initiative of private individuals because they had, whether by accident or design, survived for a long period of time, either in service, stored or converted to other uses (e.g. the locomotives *Sans Pareil* and *Lion* were both preserved after spending time as water pumping engines) and dependent on whether there was suitable storage space for them to be housed (Simmons 1981, Hopkin 1987 and Dunstone 2007). The Science Museum contained what Simmons (1981:2) described as an "important collection of railway relics"; this primarily consisted of early locomotives including *Puffing Billy* (1813) and *Rocket* and *Sans Pareil*, which competed at the Rainhill Trials of 1829, when the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, completed the following year, conducted a series of tests to ascertain the type of traction which they would use on their services (famously won by George Stephenson's *Rocket*). However, the museum also contained a City and South London Railway locomotive dating from 1890,

used on the world's first major electric railway, which was also the world's first deep level underground line.

The LNER had opened a Railway Museum at York in 1927. This had been catalysed by the previous major organizational change of railway operation, the grouping of 1923, since the original core of the collection represented, as Simmons (1970, 1981) suggested, the efforts of a small group of men, led by J.B. Harper, the organizational assistant at York, to collect together objects relating to the North Eastern Railway before it was subsumed into the much larger London and North Eastern Railway under the Railways Act of 1921. The museum reopened in 1947, having been closed during the war, with its exhibits being moved elsewhere for safety. By this time it had built up a collection of 12 locomotives, which included two other early locomotives, one from the Hetton Colliery in County Durham (built in 1822) and *Agenoria* (1828), on loan from the Science Museum. It also housed a locomotive inherited and withdrawn by each of the other three Big Four companies, although the one-time London, Brighton and South Coast Railway locomotive *Gladstone*, built in 1882 and withdrawn in 1927 by the Southern, had been preserved privately by the Stephenson Locomotive Society (SLS) and put into the museum for safe keeping; it had initially been intended to display this locomotive at the Science Museum in South Kensington (Nathan, online). The York Railway Museum also incorporated a selection of engineering exhibits, illustrating, for example, developments in signalling and bridge design (incorporating both models and parts of actual structures), paraphernalia relating to the day-to-day running of the railways (including timetables) and a

“splendid collection of pictures and prints” (Rolt 1958:7) depicting a range of railway-related subjects, from images of railways in the landscape to representations of prominent railwaymen (such as company chairmen or Chief Mechanical Engineers). Due to the specific interests of curatorial staff, the municipal museum collections of Hull and Newcastle contained collections of railway artefacts, although much of Hull’s collection, amassed by Thomas Sheppard, who had been the Curator of the Museum collections between 1901 and 1941 (and who had previously been a clerk on the North Eastern Railway) was destroyed during World War Two bombing.

In addition, numerous locomotives and carriages had been displayed around the country prior to the war, either on plinths at stations or other public places- Barrow-in-Furness, Liverpool Lime Street, Darlington, London Waterloo, Moorgate, Newton Abbott and Wantage Road stations all had at least one locomotive or carriage on display (Darlington had two, *Locomotion* of 1825 and *Derwent* of 1845, whilst Moorgate had had both a locomotive and carriage on display) whilst the 1830 locomotive *Invicta* had been placed on a plinth in a Canterbury park in 1906. Others were stored in depots, away from the public eye, with three locomotives stored at Crewe works, a locomotive and a carriage at Derby, one (replica) locomotive at Swindon, two locomotives in Glasgow and two locomotives and a carriage at Farnham in Surrey. During the war, the City and South London locomotive which had been displayed at Moorgate was destroyed by a bombing raid, whilst the locomotives which had once been displayed at Barrow-in-Furness (‘Old Coppernob’ of 1846, named due to its copper-clad boiler), and Liverpool

Lime Street (*Lion* of 1837) were removed for their own protection (*Old Coppernob* having suffered damage when the glass case in which it was housed was shattered in an aerial attack).

#### **4.2. “No one is ashamed to have worked for the Southern Railway”: corporate pride in the dying days of the Big Four**

Arguably, the meeting represented a combination of what Dunstone (2007) describes as the ‘whim’ of the enthusiastic individual and the specific organizational context of the transition to the BTC: for whilst each of those who attended the meeting may have held an interest in the subject, they were only brought together, and driven to act, through the circumstances of this forthcoming change and, for those representatives of the Big Four, by a genuine desire to preserve the material and written record of the company for which they worked.

Despite existing for a relatively short period, the Big Four companies inspired affection amongst those who worked for and led them, as was captured by Colonel (later Sir) Eric Gore-Browne, Chairman of the Southern Railway, at this company’s last meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1948 (when it had already been legally disbanded):

The history of the Southern Railway in the 25 years of its existence has been one of which, I think, we can all feel proud. No one is ashamed to have worked for the Southern Railway and few people whom I have met and who lived on our line have wished, from the railway standpoint, to have lived elsewhere. (*The Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1948)

That the desire to preserve the past- or what was soon to become the past- was intrinsically linked to the organizational change of the time- and, importantly, by the transition from private to state ownership- is underlined in the (somewhat barbed) speech made by Sir Ronald Matthews, Chairman of the London and North Eastern Railway Company, upon the re-opening of their Railway Museum in York on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1947:

The importance of the museum, great though it is to-day, will only be enhanced by the changes in ownership and organization that loom ahead (i.e. nationalization). It will stand for all time as a record of the ingenuity and skill of the original railway pioneers and *as a tribute to the private enterprise which laid the foundation stones of Britain's industrial greatness.* (*The Times*, July 19<sup>th</sup> 1947, italics added)

Dunstone (2007:27) suggests that railway preservation entailed the saving, by private individuals, of objects which were themselves produced as a result of private enterprise, arguing that “just as the creation of the railway in Britain was a venture of private capital, so preservation has been largely caused or carried out by private individuals”. The juxtaposition and conflict between public and private models of railway operation has to some extent underlain railway preservation policy and practice since the Second World War. However, it is suggested here, contrary to Dunstone, that there is a crucial difference between the private *individual*, acting on more-or-less independent enterprise, and the private *organization*, acting as a more or less effective joint undertaking. Although Dunstone is right to a certain extent to emphasize “the role of the enthusiastic individual” (2007:9), a perhaps more nuanced

approach to the subject could be deployed whereby the organizations involved in railway preservation, whether private or public, are portrayed as 'structures of feeling' within which individuals often behaved according to certain mutually constitutive codes of behaviour, and, as we can see in the example of the Southern Railway, exhibited a particular loyalty and pride. I am seeking to suggest here that- in the period which I am studying-railway preservation was carried out as much along organizational lines as by the actions of enthusiastic individuals acting alone. Dunstone does suggest that corporate pride has been a key reason for the preservation of locomotives; it is argued here that railway preservation in the post-war era was, in some instances, catalysed as much by the desire to preserve the memory of particular organizations as it was by the wish to preserve particular types of technology for their engineering credentials alone, as can be evidenced in the gathering of "almost anything which is capable of bearing those sacred initials of railway companies" (Cossons 1968: 87) at the Museum of British Transport in Clapham, in addition to railway locomotives. Crucially, it was also implemented *through* its own codes of behaviour and ways of being.

Exemplifying this corporate pride, management figures at the Big Four, despite being under the control of the Railway Executive, were able to save and restore seven locomotives between the cessation of hostilities and nationalisation in 1948 (*Heritage Railway* August 4<sup>th</sup> 2011). The Southern Railway- as an example- laid to one side an 1893 London and South Western Railway T3 Type 4-4-0 locomotive at Eastleigh Works in Hampshire in 1945 and restored the former London, Brighton and South Coast Railway 1880

tank locomotive 'Boxhill', which had been used as a shunter at Brighton Works, into its original condition in 1947. Both of these were displayed as part of an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of London Waterloo Station in June 1948, by which time the Southern Railway had morphed into the Southern Region of British Railways.

The meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947, meanwhile, appears to have arisen from the initiative of the Chairmen of the soon-to-be-disbanded companies of the Big Four. A letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> August 1947 from Hurcomb to Viscount Wyndham Portal- the last Chairman of the GWR, which had its own private museum at Paddington,- states that Portal had recently raised with him "the question of preserving models and other objects of interest in railway history"<sup>10</sup>. Hurcomb cautions against the individual railway companies taking action "until the British Transport Commission has had an opportunity of discussing with the Railway Executive what steps can best be taken to preserve these collections". He states that, in his opinion, "collections of this kind gain both in general interest and in scientific value if they are as comprehensive as possible and thus make orderly and significant arrangement easier to effect."

Against, by implication, the organisational disjuncture brought about as a result of the 1947 Transport Act and the creation of the BTC, Hurcomb argues in his letter to Portal that "every care should be taken to preserve historical continuity, both of written records and of other material of the type you have in mind (i.e. models and other objects)". He suggests that Portal's

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<sup>10</sup> NA ANI 3/1203.

fellow company Chairmen- who were Eric Gore Browne of the Southern Railway, Ronald Matthews of the LNER and Sir William Valentine Wood (President) of the LMS- had already given consideration to the issue of the preservation of historic objects and records and proposes the meeting which was ultimately held at 55 Broadway just under four months later. In a memo to his Chief Secretary Miles Beevor, circulated to the other members of the Commission, Hurcomb proposed a holistic approach to transport preservation, as was to perhaps be expected from an organization which encompassed a range of different transport modes: “We may have to consider the problem in a wider aspect and make room for similar objects relating to the history and development of road and other forms of transport” (NA AN13/1203). Portal was not present at the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December, and neither was Ronald Matthews. The meeting minutes themselves, perhaps ironically given Hurcomb’s emphasis on continuity and comprehensiveness, separated those who were part of the new BTC campaign from those who worked for the Big Four and the LPTB.

### **4.3. Plans for a British Railway Centre, 1945**

In the correspondence leading up to the Broadway meeting, Gore-Browne had drawn Hurcomb’s attention to proposals written in October 1945, in which the Southern Railway’s Press Relations Officer Mr Cuthbert Grasemann (Figure 4) had joined with the LNER’s Press Relations Officer George Dow (whose son, Andrew, was to become the Director of the NRM between 1992 and 1994) and John Richard Hind, the British Railways Press

Officer, to propose a 'British Railway Centre' in London<sup>11</sup>. Again it could be suggested that these plans represented the convergence of personal interest and organizational opportunity, for whilst all three had a personal interest in transport history, as expressed through their published works, it was only in the context of the Second World War's organizational apparatus- in which the competition of the interwar era was replaced by a spirit of co-operation and collaboration under the Railway Executive Committee- that the three men were able to come together and write this proposal. George Dow was a prolific railway historian in spite of the heavy workload which he must have faced in his various railway positions- following his role as LNER Press Relations Officer he was later appointed as the Public Relations and Publicity Officer for first the Eastern and North Eastern, and then the London Midland, Region of BR, before becoming the Divisional Manager of first Birmingham and later Stoke-on-Trent<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, he was the founding Chairman of the Historical Model Railway Society, which aims to improve the accuracy of railway modelling through research, in 1950. Grasemann seemed to take a greater interest in shipping than in railways, although he did take a particular interest in the ships which were owned by the railway companies themselves<sup>13</sup>. John Richard Hind, meanwhile, was the editor of the Collins

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<sup>11</sup> A copy of this plan was located in NA AN13/1203.

<sup>12</sup> He is noted for his three volume history of pre-Grouping company the Great Central Railway (published in 1959, 1962 and 1965) and the book *Railway Heraldry and other insignia*.

<sup>13</sup> In 1939 he co-authored the work *English Channel Packet Boats* with G.P. MacLachlan, whilst after the war he wrote *Round the Southern fleet: a brief review of the Southern Railway's fleet in 1946* (which was about the company's extensive merchant shipping fleet, rather than its locomotives and/or carriages) and translated into English Belgian Albert de Burbure de Wesembeek's *The centenary of the Ostend-Dover line, 1846-1946: a contribution to the history of the Anglo-continental maritime relations by mail-boat services since its origin*, from the original French.

Railway Journal and wrote a number of railway-themed books for children prior to the war through the Collins Clear-Type Press<sup>14</sup>.



Figure 4. Cuthbert Grasemann, (1<sup>st</sup> December 1890- 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1961), Southern Railway/ British Railways Southern Region Press Relations Officer 1930-1951, source National Railway Museum, Cuthbert Grasemann archive Reference Number 1996-7070 (photograph used in newspaper articles in 1948 – relating to his transfer back to the Southern Region following a secondment at the British Transport Commission to establish its Public Relations department, and in 1951 in relation to his retirement). *Author*.

Dow, Grasemann and Hind's proposal, addressed to the General Managers of the four companies, proposes a vast British Railway Centre based in London, incorporating a Museum, a cinema and lecture hall, an exhibition hall, an information bureau and library and offices to be let to enthusiast societies. The plan was formulated in response to enthusiastic interest- or as Dow, Grasemann and Hind put it, the "increase of public interest, both in this country and overseas, in railway matters in recent years". This increase in railway enthusiasm from the interwar period onwards was borne out by the formation of several new societies in addition to the SLS and the Railway Club, which had started in 1909. These new organizations included the Newcomen Society in 1920, the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society in 1928, the Industrial and Road Locomotive Society and the Light Railway and Transport League in 1937, the Tramway and Light Railway Society in

<sup>14</sup> These included *The book of the railway* (1927), *Train, Station and Track* (1928), *The Railways of the World* (1929), *The Gateway to railway land* (1930), *The Locomotive at work and at rest* (1930) *Railway Marvels* (1935), *The Boys Book of Railways*, *The Railway Bumper Book* (jointly with GG Jackson and James Ferguson) and *Tales of the Iron Road* (editor).

1938, the Locomotive Club of Great Britain in 1949 and the Railway and Canal Historical Society in 1956- whilst new publications including *Railways* in 1939 and *Trains Illustrated* in 1946 also catered for this interest. Alongside this was the huge interest in trainspotting, evidenced in the popularity of former Southern Railway clerk Ian Allan's ABC Spotter's guides (providing a list of locomotive numbers for each region), produced from 1942 onwards, and the associated Locospotters Club from 1944, which had 100,000 members by 1951 (Carter 2008; *The Telegraph* 2015)<sup>15</sup>. As referred to in the literature review, Carter (2008) suggests that the 1950s and 1960s were the most successful decades in terms of the number of locally-based railway enthusiast groups which existed, and the number of members that each society had-he uses the South Bedfordshire Locomotive Club, which existed from 1956 until 1977, as an example.

Dow, Grasemann and Hind's memorandum was, also a response to the suggestion that a national railway museum should be formed. As Hopkin (1987) and Dunstone (2007) have noted, the concept of a national railway museum dated back to 1896, with the formation of The National Railway Museum Committee, comprised of retired locomotive engineer Archibald Sturrock, railway writer W.M. Ackworth, engineer and writer A.R. Bennett and writer and speed recorder Charles Rous-Marten, who was the Committee's Chairman. Their attempts to win over the railway companies, firstly in 1896 and repeated in 1908, were unsuccessful but the subject was brought up again by a correspondent to the *Railway Magazine* in 1917, whilst

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<sup>15</sup> Ian Allan's business grew, becoming perhaps the most famous and prolific name in post-Second World War Railway publishing (see Allan 1992, Carter 2008).

in the 1930s Reverend R.B. Fellows campaigned for a more co-ordinated scheme of locomotive preservation, and for the production of a card index showing what had already been preserved (Dunstone 2007). Whilst the LNER's railway museum in York had de facto national status by virtue of its being, at this time, the only museum of its kind in the country, it nonetheless continued to have a particularly North Eastern character, despite the fact that it also contained exhibits from other parts of the UK (Rolt 1958; Simmons 1970).

Dow, Grasemann and Hind's plan was, more immediately, a response to a suggestion made in the March and April 1945 issues of the *Railway Magazine* that, as these three men put it: "A series of model locomotives, all to a uniform scale, should be assembled to represent British locomotive development from the earliest days". Feeling that these proposals did not go far enough, Dow, Grasemann and Hind proposed a site which would be able to house a whole range of railway-related objects: "both full size and scale models of historical locomotives and rolling stock, together with historical documents, prints, photographs and other railway relics, such as permanent way, signalling apparatus, coats of arms, seals and railway tickets of historic interest".

This was to be formed from the pre-existing collection at York, other preserved locomotives and models which were stored around the country or displayed at the Science Museum and local museums- whom it was hoped could be "induced to release or exchange those railway relics or models which they now possess and which should be more properly housed in a

British Railway Museum”. The authors also express their hope that private collectors will bequest their collections to the Museum, rather than these items being sold at auction after the owner’s death. They refer to the collections of John Phillimore and Chapman Frederick Dendy Marshall, which comprised an assortment of railway-related items- including paperwork (such as signed letters from famous locomotive engineers), prints and pictures, maps, pottery, porcelain and glass and artworks- which had been, or were about to be, sold at Sotheby’s on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1942 and 13<sup>th</sup> November 1945 respectively, following the death of their owners<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, they cite the impending sale of the Dendy-Marshall collection as one of the key catalysts behind their proposal.

In addition to the Museum element, the proposed British Railway Centre was also to include a Combined Cinema and Lecture Hall showing “many of the films made by the film units of the railway companies” and could be hired out to enthusiast societies for meetings<sup>17</sup>. An Exhibition Hall was planned, which the authors suggest could include rail access “so that new locomotives and rolling stock introduced by the Railways could be on public view”. The authors thus linked historical display and the preservation of the past with displays which showcased the railways’ present and future<sup>18</sup>. Again, the hiring

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<sup>16</sup> Catalogues: Sotheby & Co. ‘The Phillimore Railway Collection: catalogue of the collection of books, autograph letters, prints and pictures, maps, pottery, porcelain and glass, works of art etc., relating to railway and locomotive engines, formerly the property of John Phillimore’ (Date of Sale Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1943) and ‘The Dendy Marshall Railway Collection: catalogue of books, autograph letters, prints and pictures, maps, pottery, porcelain and glass etc. relating to railways and locomotive engines’ (Date of Sale Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 1945).

<sup>17</sup> Grasemann had himself established a Films Division of the Public Relations and Advertising department of the Southern Railway (National Railway Museum, Cuthbert Grasemann file 1996-7070).

<sup>18</sup> In 1938, the LNER had been involved in, as Dunstone (2007: 24) termed it, “the exploiting of contrast with the past for publicity purposes”, restoring the express passenger locomotive

out of the Hall to enthusiast societies was also suggested. There was also a plan for a somewhat awkwardly defined Information Bureau- which wouldn't be able to give out information "relating to rates, fares and services", but would deal with other enquiries (whatever these might have been) and sell railway publications- and a Library, which was also only sketched out in brief, with the authors commenting that it would include a section which contained railway books for loan to the public. Finally, the plans included Offices for letting: the authors' pointed out that "several railway and model railway clubs in the London area lack proper accommodation".

The distinction drawn by sociologists between the enthusiast and professional spheres- evident for example in Bishop and Hogget's (1986:1, *italics added*) definition of enthusiasts as "self-confessed *amateurs* who go about their activity in a highly professional manner"- is not one that is drawn by Dow, Grasemann and Hind, who suggest that their proposed Centre could be staffed by "Exceptionally well-informed enthusiasts; *there are many, both young and old among the ranks of railway officers*" (*italics added*).

Thus, for the three authors of this report at least- one of whom, George Dow, was clearly an enthusiast in his own right- it was possible for an individual to be both an enthusiast *and* a professional, contradicting the more recent definition of enthusiasm as inherently being the domain of the dedicated amateur (although an individual may have been involved in their particular interest prior to retiring). Furthermore, in this context Dunstone (2007:186) suggests that post-war railway preservation represented a mixture

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No. 1, a 'Stirling Single' with a 4-2-2 wheel configuration built by the Great Northern Railway in 1870, to working order and comparing it to the then modern *Flying Scotsman*

of science and indulgence: “with the professional restorers and archivists as enthusiastic as the amateurs, and the amateurs bringing their own professionalism”. Thus it is perhaps possible to go a step further and suggest that some- but by no means all- of the individuals involved in railway preservation in this period were concurrently both enthusiasts *and* professionals, passionate about the history of the industry in which they served and the company for which they worked, and channelling this passion into the writing of articles and books or, indeed, the building up of a private collection of railway artefacts<sup>19</sup>. This is reinforced by Sir Cyril Hurcomb at the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947- he comments that, in relation to the pictorial and documentary records, “there was a great deal of interest taken in this matter *both* by railway staff *and* by many other persons interested in railway history” (italics added).

Whilst Grasemann, Dow and Hind’s report was not formally adopted, some of its proposals were repeated at the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947 and, having later been reinforced by the report *The Preservation of Relics and Records*, became BTC policy. The idea of establishing a comprehensive railway museum in London was accepted as the ‘ultimate object’ at the meeting, although for the time being it was deemed necessary to merely keep together and catalogue pictorial and documentary records whilst items of machinery

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<sup>19</sup> Captain Hugh Vivian, who was present at the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947, appears to have amassed a small collection of railway artefacts focussing on the early development of the railways which came up for auction in February 2014, including a locomotive nameplate and what the auctioneers’ described as “a notable collection of railway themed mugs”, which depicted the Liverpool and Manchester Railway’s infrastructure and early locomotives (Mallham’s 2014).

“could be exhibited at suitable places”- with care taken to avoid “dispersing the various collections away from railway centres”.

#### **4.4 Geographical tensions in the BTC’s early railway preservation policy**

At the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947, Colonel Gore-Browne of the Southern had suggested a four-pronged approach whereby, firstly, ‘Physical items of major interest’ would be housed in London at a site which was approximate or attached to the Science Museum, whilst secondly ‘Items of minor but reasonable interest’ - which seemingly referred to the paperwork (e.g. timetables, official notices and handbooks) and the official seals of the pre-grouping railway companies, some of which had been preserved- would be, somewhat awkwardly, “centralised in each Region according to the Main Lines, but not necessarily at London Headquarters”.

Thirdly, he suggested that the collections which were housed in Board Rooms- which primarily consisted of portraits of prominent railwaymen (i.e. company directors and famous engineers) - could be “centred in the Regional Offices”. Fourthly, he said that historical records could be “placed in the custody of the Chief Secretary of the Commission”.

Hurcomb broadly accepted Gore-Browne’s plans for a museum in London, although he suggested that the BTC “might consider placing items of special interest at the Science Museum on loan”. However, he argued that portraits of Directors and Officers should remain in Regional Offices, and that “Items of general interest such as the seals of the companies, timetables, notices, etc. might be placed on general exhibition together with the notebooks of

engineers, to which students could be given access on special application”. Hurcomb did not make clear whom should have custody of the railway’s records, merely suggesting that “the records must be retained for reference by the administration”.

The meeting exposed underlying geographical tensions between the preservation of exhibits at the local or regional scale, and the consolidation of items in a national museum, for which London was the only location given consideration at this time. The preference for national consolidation and regional dispersal oscillated between states of juxtaposition and conflict over the course of the period which I am studying, with the ultimate result, the NRM in York, representing, in some ways, a compromise between the two, as a provincially based national museum.

This tension between local, regional and national investment- in both monetary and emotional terms- in railway preservation and display can also be seen to reflect the railway’s status as a technology which simultaneously “forged a conception of the modern nation based on connection and circulation” (Revill 2012:69) yet also inspired local affection and pride. Two of the men present at the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947 emphasised the ‘local interest’ that particular exhibits had garnered by this time. Lieutenant Colonel Murray, who as mentioned above had from 1938 built up a semi-private museum of the LNER’s Scottish region in Edinburgh, was broadly supportive of a national museum yet suggested that it was “desirable to retain objects of *particular local interest* in their present situations and to keep the York Museum intact, as well as to preserve in Edinburgh a collection of

special interest to Scotland”. G.R. Smith (*italics added*), meanwhile, did not appear to approve of the idea of a central museum at all, suggesting that record books should remain where they were, and also that “old locomotives and carriages should be preserved in situ, *in view of the local interest taken in them.*”

Murray and Smith are both implicitly referring to those locomotives and carriages which, as mentioned above, had been placed on plinths in stations around the country. Their emphasis on local interest can in one sense be seen as a straightforward attempt to resist the centripetal force of the BTC- whether in terms of this organization physically bringing historic items into London or into Regional centres, or, in more abstract terms, by it cataloguing all of the items which it had inherited, and thus bringing them under one conceptual umbrella- by prominent staff members of the outgoing railway companies, which had been organised along regional lines. But this does not explain Murray and Smith’s emphasis on the *local*, rather than *regional*, interest in railway history, and I would suggest that their arguments hint at a fundamental paradox in the railway’s social history: that despite the railway’s role as a technology which compresses space and time, it has nevertheless come to be portrayed as a technology which, in any particular place, possesses a local identity, and has become a naturalized feature of the landscape (Revill 2012) The locomotives displayed on plinths around the country seem to have become local landmarks, or curiosities, and thus, for Murray and Smith, they would no longer *make sense* as objects if they were

removed from this context, and away from the local interest which underpinned their continued display.

Following the meeting, Sir Cyril Hurcomb instructed the Railway Executive to keep a careful check on records of both historic and practical value, and upon the historic relics which were in their possession. This instruction, having been repeated by the Chairman of the Railway Executive Sir Eustace Missenden, was passed down to the Chief Regional Officers, who were “requested to catalogue items of special or historic interest”<sup>20</sup>. This, as Morgan (1963:11) later suggested, was a lengthy task: “Every member of the family (e.g. each BTC Executive) had tens of thousands of smaller objects of interest- some of which had inevitably become a little dispersed through local sentiment, a little neglected through the hazards of war”.

There was thus a detailed process of stock-taking throughout the country; the Scottish Region, for instance, produced a list in March 1948 entitled ‘Railway Relics Held By the Various Departments in the Scottish Region’ (which was later amended to show the fate of individual items, some of which had gone missing)<sup>21</sup>. The (unnamed) author of this list did not differentiate between historical artefacts and records, and many of the items listed were obsolete pieces of paperwork such as the timetables and official documents of railway companies which existed prior to the Grouping, and which in some cases dated back to the 1850s. However, a variety of physical objects were listed too, including a ‘Hydraulic Rivetting (sic) machine with fittings used by

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<sup>20</sup> Letter, E.Marsden, Secretary of the Railway Executive, to Chief Secretary, British Transport Commission (Miles Beevor), 29<sup>th</sup> January 1948; AN13/1203.

<sup>21</sup> National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), file reference BR/RSR/4/1758

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in 1890 to close the last rivet at the opening of the Forth Bridge', located at Dalmeny, and a 'Bible inscribed "Not to be taken from Linton station, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1859, from Lady Blanche Balfour of Whittingham' at East Linton. The list does not, however, include the locomotives which had by this time been preserved and which were stored in Glasgow. A separate list showed the objects which had been gathered together to form a small museum by Arthur C. Murray at the LNER's Offices at 23 Waterloo Place in Edinburgh, which again included the paperwork of obsolete railway companies (including company seals and crests) and smaller objects such as the 'Platform refreshment barrow used by Palace Hotel for conveying breakfasts to trains for Royalty passing through Aberdeen; 1896-1914'<sup>22</sup>. These lists illustrate the tendency of those collecting railway artefacts to amass items which have a connection with royalty, which are in a sense literal relics insofar as they have been touched-or even, in the case of royal carriages, been lived in- by royal personages.

Under the somewhat idiosyncratic organizational structure of the BTC in the early years of its existence (until it was amended by Sir Winston Churchill's Conservative government in 1953), the Railway Executive had a large degree of autonomy, whilst individual Regions of the Executive themselves had a certain degree of freedom. This led to divergence between the aims of the BTC and Railway Executive, and to disparity within the Railway Executive itself. Furthermore, as there was no definition of what a relic actually was at this time, it seems likely that a range of individuals at a

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<sup>22</sup> NRS BR/RSR/4/1734.

local level, including for example station masters, shed masters and administrative staff, had their say in what should be classified and preserved as being of historic importance (in creating the lists of historic relics to be passed on to their managers) - and indeed whether any items *should* be preserved at all. Thus the process of rational categorization advocated by Hurcomb, and later documented by Morgan, was in fact a rather chaotic process in which the very definition of an historical object was uncertain.

#### **4.5 “He has not succeeded in completing his full terms of reference”: G.R. Smith’s Relics and Records reports of 1949**

The Railway Executive suggested to the BTC that relics and records “which merit preservation” should be centralised in London, and put forward the Shareholder’s Meeting Room at Euston Station as a suitable site- though this could not of course house full-size locomotives<sup>23</sup>. They also proposed that a ‘senior railway officer’ be appointed to manage the “selection, collection, cataloguing and staging of exhibits”. They recommended that G.R. Smith, the former Secretary of the LMS who had attended the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 1947, should be appointed in this role. They later suggested that Smith, who was retiring from the LMS upon the formal winding up of the company, should be given a princely 75 guineas a month salary, and these proposals were generally approved by the Commission, with Beevor, in a memo to the Railway Executive of 10<sup>th</sup> February 1948, making reference to a “Central Museum under the control of G.R. Smith”<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, some sources

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<sup>23</sup> Letter, E.Marsden, Secretary of the Railway Executive, to Chief Secretary, British Transport Commission (Miles Beevor), 29<sup>th</sup> January 1948; NA [ANI 3/1203](#)).

<sup>24</sup> Source as above.

appear to have believed that he had been appointed in this role- for example, A J. Strachan, in sending a list of the relics housed at 23 Waterloo Place in Edinburgh to John Elliott, at that time the Chief Regional Officer of Scotland (in order to be forwarded to Smith), refers to G.R. Smith's appointment as 'Curator of Railway Museums'<sup>25</sup>. Another memo suggests that he was to be given a "special allowance... at the rate of £1,500 *per annum*" (italics added), although at the same time he was entitled to retire from the Commission from 30<sup>th</sup> April 1948, albeit staying on as Secretary of the LMS, without remuneration, until the company's foreign properties had been transferred to the BTC<sup>26</sup>. Ultimately, however, it was agreed at a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1948 that Smith would be paid 1000 guineas to "prepare a comprehensive report on the custody and exhibition of relics and records of the Railway, London Transport and Docks and Inland Waterway Executives, to be completed in 12 months"<sup>27</sup>. His envisaged role had thus changed from that of being a permanent museum Curator of physical objects to being the compiler of a one-off report.

As Dunstone (2007: 28) comments, Smith's initial report, which he sent to the Deputy Secretary of the BTC Sidney Taylor on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1949, was of poor quality, and he describes Smith as an "unimaginative bureaucrat, quite out of his depth once away from the detail in which his life had presumably been immersed". However, Smith clearly had an interest in railway history; just before the war he wrote two historical works pertaining to the railways,

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<sup>25</sup> Letter, A.J. Strachan to J. Elliott, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1948; NRS BR/RSR/4/1734

<sup>26</sup> Memo to Commission from Miles Beevor, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1948

<sup>27</sup> Extract from Minutes of a Meeting of the British Transport Commission held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1948, NA AN13/1203

written on the occasion of important centenaries in railway history - *The history of Bradshaw: a centenary review of the origin and growth of the most famous guide in the world* and *Old Euston: an account of the beginning of the London and Birmingham Railway and the building of Euston station* [on occasion of the Centenary of Euston and the London and Birmingham Railway]. This perhaps explains why it was felt that he was suitable for the task in the first place. He kept a scrap book, housed at the National Archives, which was comprised of a series of press cuttings dating from the early 1930s through to the late 1940s, relating to both the preservation of railway history and to stories relating to the contemporary railway which had been cut out and stuck onto *The Railway Diary and Official's Directory for 1929* (see figure 5)<sup>28</sup>. The catalyst for this process of documentation appears to have been the centenary celebrations of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which were held by the LMS in Liverpool on 13-20 September 1930.

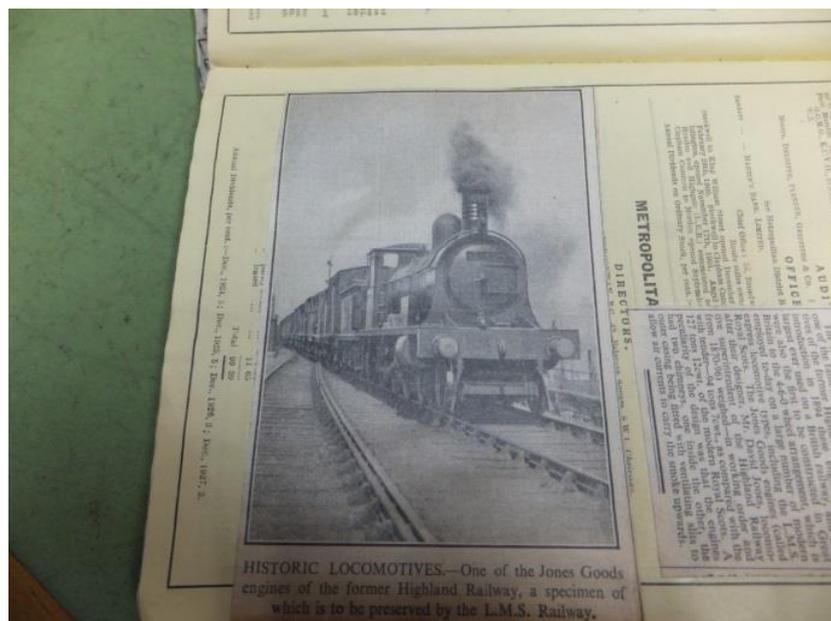


Figure 5. Photograph of G. Royde Smith's scrap book (RAIL 421/1204). Author.

<sup>28</sup> RAIL 421/204

Notwithstanding Smith's interest in railway history, Beevor and his Deputy Secretary Sidney Taylor agreed with Hurcomb's initial view that the report was 'disappointing', pointing out that Smith had not visited the Railway Museum at York; indeed he had not, as far as could be ascertained, "inspected the relics and records of any company, other than his own" and had been "completely rebuffed by the London Transport Executive"<sup>29</sup>. As a consequence of this, his report contained very little information which was either not known already or could not have been easily and quickly obtained, although he had "given answers in fairly general terms on the questions which were put to him for advice". Taylor and Beevor were particularly keen to stress the importance of defining what precisely was meant by the terms 'relic' and 'record'; this had been hinted at by Smith but not fully enumerated. He had somewhat dived into the topic, assuming prior knowledge of a dividing line between the two without attempting to define it- for example he suggested that "the lists supplied by the Railway Regions consist of Relics and not Records" but did not go into further detail<sup>30</sup>. The definitions which Taylor and Beevor give for 'relics' and 'records', in response to Smith's report, are important as they formalised a divide between the physical object and the written document which, though referred to in dissimilar terms at different junctures in history, has been a characteristic feature of post-war railway preservation. Their definition of 'Relics' is of: "Objects not in daily use which have historical, antiquarian or technical interest as showing the development of transport or

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<sup>29</sup> Memo, Office of the Chief Secretary to Chairman, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1949; NA AN13/1203.

<sup>30</sup> G.R. Smith's first Report on Relics and Records, NA AN13/1203.

as connected with the pioneers of the past”<sup>31</sup>. Examples of these included company seals, pictures and prints, holograph letters of famous engineers, models and designs of locomotives, bridges and stations and- as Taylor and Beevor termed it (in brackets): “the old locomotives themselves where preservation is possible”<sup>32</sup>. Meanwhile, printed or written documents such as Minute Books, share registers and legal registers were referred to as records, and were themselves sub-divided into the private documents of old companies and legal documents.

Smith did not examine any of the preserved relics himself; instead he looked at the lists available for each region- which appear to have also included items which Taylor and Beevor would have termed ‘records’-namely “prints, time sheets and pieces of paper”<sup>33</sup>. He summarily dismisses the objects in these lists, commenting that “about half have no great historical interest” and that “there is a certain amount of duplication” (without clarifying precisely which objects held no interest or were duplicated). He suggests that “If time and staff could be spared, a comprehensive listing and classification might be made”, with some items being put on display (such a comprehensive listing was in fact what Smith’s employers at the BTC were perhaps requiring from his report). Smith was also surprisingly (though perhaps not altogether unrealistically) negative about the prospect of opening a new museum given his interest in railway history, suggesting that, whilst a “limited but interesting exhibition” could be established at what he terms the

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<sup>31</sup> Memo, Office of the Chief Secretary to Chairman, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1949; NA AN13/1203.

<sup>32</sup> As above.

<sup>33</sup> G.R. Smith’s first Report on Relics and Records, NA AN13/1203. Subsequent quotes are also from this document.

Proprietor's Meeting Room at Euston, establishing such a site would be undesirable because "every time there was a call for a percentage reduction in staff, the Museum would be the first to suffer". Furthermore, he adds that the Science Museum "has the pick of everything", having been supplied with material for fifty years by the railway companies, that several local museums have good railway sections- he mentions the Hull Museum, the Glasgow Museum and the Bridewell Museum in Norwich- and that the London and North Eastern museum in York, "well known, well established and well patronised", should not be altered. He later summarises this by saying that: "There are already in existence so many railway museums (amongst them the Science Museum, which was first in the field and has the cream of everything) that the establishment of another seems barely justified at the current time".

With regards to the paper records of the railway, Smith again did not conduct a thorough investigation, although he identified that the chief records of the railway were minute books (which were apparently the only type of document to be retained by the LMS and the Southern), title deeds and land plans. He suggests that other records are 'scanty and occasional'. In terms of accommodation, he suggests that certain records (based on the evidence of some of those housed at Euston) have a predominantly local interest and could thus be sent to county-based collections, and that the "time has not yet arrived for the erection of a central depository of records" owing to the need for the Western and Eastern Regions (and the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive) to refer to these records. With regards to altering the practices of individual regions, he writes that "the advantage of standardisation can easily

be offset by the cost and chaos of change and subsequent and permanent delay by over-centralisation” and that “Want of accommodation and staff upheavals all point to the wisdom of leaving well alone”.

Beevor and Taylor agreed with Smith that the private records of the old companies should continue to be regionally deposited, albeit under a common system of organisation, whilst legal documents should be housed in Deeds Offices, with both coming under the remit of the Chief Regional Officer. They conclude by saying that the successful storage, indexing and preservation of relics and records depends upon finding the right man suitable for the job. Their definition of the ‘right man’ is almost teleological, depending on ‘feelings’ and indeed personal enthusiasm: “We feel that Archivists and Curators are really born, and not made, in the sense that unless a man has a feeling and natural interest in the job, he will never perform it adequately”<sup>34</sup>. They go on to suggest that the Museum Curator “may not also be” an Archivist responsible for organising the preservation and indexing of records across the country. Cyril Hurcomb generally agrees with Taylor and Beevor’s comments, particularly regarding the separation of relics and records and the need for an enthusiastic Curator, and he also suggests that the Archivist and Curator would require special training. He argues that, for want of enthusiasm and training, “many local museums are muddled and melancholy and often meaningless collections”<sup>35</sup>. Once again, we can see the association of enthusiasm and occupation here, yet this enthusiasm, for Hurcomb at least,

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<sup>34</sup> Memo, Office of the Chief Secretary to Chairman, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1949; NA AN13/1203.

<sup>35</sup> Hurcomb, written response to letter from Chief Secretary, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1949.

needs to be channelled into ‘meaning’, into a coherent notion of what a particular collection *is for*.

At a meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March, Smith’s report was discussed and it was “agreed that a central collection of relics be formed at Euston”, whilst “the question of the custody and preservation of records” was to be further considered<sup>36</sup>. Smith continued in his post despite the disappointing lack of thoroughness he had shown in his initial work- and even though it had, as Beevor comments in a memo to his Chairman on 24<sup>th</sup> November, become increasingly unclear whether “we shall ever find that he has carried out a comprehensive review of all relics and records” and thus that what Beevor termed a “special organization” would need to be established by the BTC to consider the issue in a more effective manner<sup>37</sup>. Smith himself, finding those whom he had attempted to acquire information from at a regional level to be uncooperative, appears to have given up, calling to see Beevor on 25<sup>th</sup> November to inform him that he had “really not been able to make any appreciable further progress” and accepting that “his work must be brought to an end, even though he has not succeeded in completing his full terms of reference”<sup>38</sup>. Nevertheless, he produced a final, rather rambling report, which focussed on records, in December 1949.

The report, and more particularly Beevor’s responses to it, is of interest as it shows the extent to which the BTC attempted to effectively postpone the

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<sup>36</sup> Extract from Minutes of Meeting of British Transport Commission held on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1949, NA AN13/1203.

<sup>37</sup> NA AN 13/1203

<sup>38</sup> Memo from Chief Secretary to Chairman, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1949 NA AN13/1203.

costly creation of a centralised archive and the appointment of trained staff<sup>39</sup>. For the time being, suggested Beevor, the Minute Books of the pre-nationalisation (and often pre-grouping) companies could be centralised within each region, under the remit of the Chief Regional Officer. There also existed other historic paperwork such as correspondence involving early engineers or promoters or Director's reports, which could be treated in the same way. Smith, being aware of the existence of such early correspondence at Euston had attempted "to discover if similar records had survived in other regions", but had only found evidence of it at Paddington, where the Great Western Railway "had made a selection of the (Isambard Kingdom) Brunel papers for preservation"<sup>40</sup>. Meanwhile Beevor recommended that a central library of Acts of Parliament should be established and administered by the Chief Solicitor, whilst the other legal documents which existed at disparate locations- comprised of "Acts of Parliament, Deposited Plans, Land Plans, Title Deeds and miscellaneous Agreements" lodged with Engineers, Estate Agents, Solicitors or Chief Regional Officers- were "well held" and still "required for working purposes" and should therefore remain in situ. Crucially, Beevor goes on to suggest that, whilst the establishment of a Central Record Office housing "is to be the ultimate objective", for the time being it would suffice to set up a committee with a representative from each Executive, the BTC's Publicity Officer and the Deputy Secretary. The reasons for this delay are, by implication, cost-related:

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<sup>39</sup> Beevor, Memorandum to the Commission, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1949; ANI3/1203.

<sup>40</sup> Page 9 of Smith's final report; ANI3/1203

At the present time, the major questions are of administration, accommodation, and staff to be allocated to these *non-revenue earning* duties associated with the preservation of archives, and I do not feel that a *professional Archivist* on the staff of the committee is yet necessary, so long as the Executives have the custody of their own records. (Beevor, Memorandum to the Commission, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1949; ANI3/I203, italics added)

Similarly, he suggests that the Railway Executive could make a start on the process of centralization by bringing together all of their early correspondence (from the likes of Brunel and Stephenson) and duplicated records, along with early Minute Books, together in one place, a process which Beevor describes as a “gradual method” which would be “inexpensive initially, and would I think be more satisfactory than too comprehensive a scheme at the moment”. Such an office could then be converted into a Central Record Office covering all of the Executives, argues Beevor.

Meanwhile, Beevor suggests that relics are ‘incidentally’ referred to in Smith’s report, in spite of the fact that it is chiefly concerned with records. Indeed, Smith does mention the historical relics in passing and is more positive than in his first report about the possibility of establishing a new railway museum, commenting that the ‘Collection of Historical Relics’ is “of historical importance and might (with certain of the pictures) form part of a national railway collection” - although he does not go into detail as to what form such a collection might take. Beevor suggests that the relics should be concentrated at the Shareholder’s Meeting Room in Euston (in line with the decision taken by the BTC earlier that year), and that the Curator should be

on the staff of the Commission, whilst a common committee could advise on both relics and records. It is unclear whether he is advocating the appointment of a new Curator from outside or the redeployment of an existing member of staff to the role: he goes on to suggest that “One of the staff at the York Museum or a person with experience at this type of work would be best, although a member of the Registration Staff might be found with some qualifications”

Again, whilst the ultimate objective is of “a Transport Museum available to the public... on the grounds of expense the provision of the necessary glass-topped display cases, stands, extra lighting, attendance, etc. can be deferred for the time being”. Thus the Museum would “take shape as a private collection”, only available by appointment to “responsible interested people”; at other times “the Museum would be kept locked”. This thus creates the somewhat ironic situation whereby a publicly owned organisation is, at least initially, hoarding its’ historic items and not allowing the public to see them (although they were not viewable prior to nationalization either), albeit with the ultimate objective of putting them on display.

At a BTC meeting on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> December 1949, three decisions were made in respect of relics and records<sup>41</sup>. Firstly, it was agreed that Mr G.R. Smith’s contract would be terminated at the end of the year, with the fee of £1000 being paid out to him. Secondly, progress was to be made towards preparing standard schedules defining the periods for which documents should be retained by the different Executives. Thirdly, and most importantly

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<sup>41</sup> The surviving meeting minutes (NA ANI 3/1203) do not state who was present at the meeting.

for the purposes of this chapter, the meeting led to the formation of a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary, on which would serve BTC Publicity Officer Christian Barman, and also representatives of each Executive. These representatives included John Richard Hind, in his capacity as the awkwardly titled Public Correspondence and Suggestions Officer for the Railway Executive, along with Mr H.F. Hutchison, the Publicity Officer for the London Transport Executive, Mr S.C. Howard, Senior Secretarial Assistant at the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive, Mr J.G. Potter James, Archivist for the Road Haulage Executive, and Mr T.H. Baker, Assistant Secretary at the Hotels Executive. Taylor later wrote that “Apart from Barman and Hutchison, L.T.E., the body is a quiescent body with no views of their own”<sup>42</sup>. The first meeting of the Committee was held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 1950 at 55 Broadway. At this time the Chairman refers to developments at the Railway Executive, relating to the preservation of locomotives, and it is perhaps worth pausing a while to consider this other, hitherto largely separate, strand of post-Second World War railway heritage designation and display which became incorporated into the Committee’s deliberations.

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<sup>42</sup> Letter, Taylor to Beevor, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1950, NA AN13/1203

#### 4.6 “We had our backs against the wall at this time”: W.O. Skeat and enthusiastic interventions in locomotive preservation in 1948-9



Figure 6. Photograph of William Oswald Skeat (9<sup>th</sup> August 1904-21<sup>st</sup> December 1993), taken on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1959. Photograph courtesy of Bill King, the Great Eastern Railway Society.

William Oswald Skeat (9<sup>th</sup> August 1904-21<sup>st</sup> December 1993, Figure 6) was to become a key figure in the BTC's railway preservation activities in the post-war era, particularly in relation to its preservation of steam locomotives. He had undertaken a Premium Apprenticeship as a locomotive engineer under Sir Nigel Gresley at Doncaster Locomotive Works between 1921 and

1925 (during which time the Great Northern Railway, for which Gresley had once worked, was subsumed into the LNER) and had subsequently gained practical experience at New England depot in Peterborough and Stratford Works in East London prior to undertaking a BSc (Eng) degree in Mechanical Engineering at King's College London. He graduated in 1932 before spending another year at this institution researching "apparatus for investigating steam flow through nozzles"<sup>43</sup>. Following this he joined the staff of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and appears to have moved away at this time from 'hands on' engineering towards writing, editing and publishing articles about the subject. He was the Institution's Technical Assistant and later the Editor of its' Proceedings, "in charge of all the major publications of the Institution and of publications staff" (Box 65, NRM). Later, in 1950, he became the Secretary and Editor of the Institution of Water Engineers (the personal profile found in Box 65 appears to have been written as part of his application for this post), responsible for its Technical and Administration work and the preparation of its' annual Journal (Harvey, Blyth and Carpenter 1994).

Skeat had joined the SLS in 1943 and quickly became one of its' prominent members, allowing it accommodation at his house at 32 Russell Road in Kensington between 1946 and 1968, editing the Society's Journal for a short time in the 1940s and, after his retirement, becoming a Vice-Chairman of the Society from 1969 until his death (Harvey, Blyth and Carpenter 1994). He also made many contributions to the Journal and gave lectures at Society meetings (Harvey, Blyth and Carpenter 1994). Correspondence available at

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<sup>43</sup> From personal profile found in Box 65, National Railway Museum, hereafter NRM).

the NRM (Box 65) shows that Skeat had undertaken a successful one-man campaign during 1946 for the preservation of LMS locomotive No. 20002, which was one of many ancient locomotives which had survived longer than it usually would have done due to the pressures put on the railway network during the war (it was eighty years old by this time) but which was under threat of being scrapped. He sent many letters about the locomotive both to the LMS itself and also to other potentially interested parties such as Professor Bullied of what was then called University College Nottingham, and also the Lord Mayor of Nottingham. Since the locomotive had worked latterly out of a Nottingham depot, Skeat (Letter from Skeat to Professor Bulleid, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1946) suggests that “In the mind of its many supporters it is now always (sic) associated with Nottingham, and it would indeed be fitting if support for a plea for its preservation could be voiced from that quarter”. Again the interplay between local and national notions of railway heritage can be perceived here- for whilst Skeat suggests that the locomotive could be housed in the York Railway Museum- and that space has already been found for it- he also says that putting it on display in Nottingham would represent “a most appropriate alternative”. In fact, the LMS- in what was again perhaps a display of corporate pride at the time of its imminent demise under the 1947 Transport Act- postponed the locomotive’s breaking up and restored it to its Midland Railway livery, although its longer-term future remained uncertain.



Figure 7. John Neville Maskeylne (1892-1960), President of the SLS 1925-1960. Photograph courtesy of Gerry Nichols, SLS Librarian.

On 27<sup>th</sup> December 1947, Skeat and J.M. Maskelyne, President of the SLS (Figure 7), wrote a letter to the Railway Gazette in which the fate of No. 20002 was weaved within wider concerns over the fate of what Skeat and Maskelyne described as “items of railway equipment, drawings, and records of unique historic value” following nationalization<sup>44</sup>. They note that although the LMS was willing to sell the locomotive to the SLS for scrap value, the Society was, as they put it, “not interested in the mere acquisition of historic locomotives as such; but it is intensely interested in their preservation and permanent exhibition so that their full significance, in the trend of engineering thought and in the constructional style of their day, can be appreciated by the public.”

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<sup>44</sup> AN 104/1.

This represents a sea-change in SLS policy since before the war, when they had acquired the former London, Brighton and South Coast Railway locomotive *Gladstone*, displayed at the York Railway Museum since 1927, from the Southern Railway. For Skeat and Maskelyne, No. 20002 was effectively a test case for the Railway Executive's attitude to preservation, and it was a test which, from the enthusiast's point of view, they ultimately passed, although in subsequent lists the locomotive is not listed as having been officially preserved until 1951 (NRM Box 65).

Skeat and Maskelyne also suggested that the "time is now fully ripe" for the establishment of a national railway museum, and viewed nationalisation- and, by implication, the consolidation of both equipment and organizational effort, as both a threat and an opportunity; for whilst many items of railway equipment will be "discarded through change of ownership", this in itself represented, for these two men, a chance of "preserving them for posterity" in what they presciently term a 'national railway museum'. In concluding their letter, they ask: "Is it too much to hope that in the country which gave railways to the world, a due appreciation of their unparalleled historical worth could be expressed in the establishment of a national collection?" (Underline original)

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1947, Lord Greene, President of the British Records Association and Chairman of the Historical Manuscripts Association (who had already written to Hurcomb concerning the handling of the historic records which would come under the BTC's care), A.P. Thurston, President of the Newcomen Society, Dr Herman Shaw, Director of the Science Museum,

Julian S. Tritton, President of the Institute of Locomotive Engineers, F.L. Castle, the 1947-1948 President of the Institution of Railway Signal Engineers, and Kenneth Brown, President of the Railway Club, wrote a joint letter to *The Times* in which the impending changes to the British railway network were solely viewed as a danger, rather than an opportunity for change. The six authors gave a grave warning about the possible negative effects of nationalization on historic objects, arguing that “at such times of reorganization, documents and relics of industrial, economic, historical and educational importance are most liable to become dispersed, lost or destroyed”.

Sir Cyril Hurcomb’s response to this letter was published in *The Times* on the following day, stating that the BTC had already given the matter “much thought” and that “steps have already been taken to compile lists of the documents and relics in their possession”. He suggested that consideration was being given to the way in which material of “historic or technical interest” would be displayed, talking in general, non-committal terms of “convenient centres, where it is hoped they will become available for public inspection”. He stressed, however, that the BTC was “concerned with other forms of transport besides the railways”, specifically referencing efforts to ensure that the records of canal companies, some of which went back to the eighteenth century (i.e. pre-dating those of the railways), were not “dispersed, lost, or destroyed”.

The *Railway Gazette* published an editorial on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1948 (the issue in which Skeat and Maskelyne’s letter was published), in which editor John Aiton

Kay, in direct contradiction perhaps to Skeat and Maskelyne, recommends that regional museums should be constructed instead of one national site. He suggests that the past failure to construct a national museum has occurred partially because of the “formulation of grandiose and costly schemes for a National Museum and Library”, and that the Standing Commission of Museums and Galleries had in 1931 “showed considerable realism in pointing out that a National Central Museum was impracticable”, as so much material was already in the hands of local museums and galleries, public libraries and what the author terms ‘semi-public collections’, whilst many of the important records relating to the history of the railways were in fact part of the collections of technical institutions and “societies devoted particularly to the study of some aspect of transport”. He goes on to add that “many of the actual achievements in preserving specific objects or groups of records have been the result of local effort, inspired by local pride and enthusiasm” and that, in any case “large objects such as locomotives and carriages can be grouped more readily in stations (for example) than grouped together in museum buildings”. Thus, in his opinion, “a policy of co-ordinated decentralization would appear to offer the greatest chance of success”- this being reinforced in the author’s mind by the “shortages of labour and material that are likely to last some years”. He goes on to suggest that the nucleus of such an organization already exists in the collections of the Science Museum in London, in Liverpool and at York, commenting that “it may be that a series of local museums will prove the most satisfactory method, and Sir Cyril Hurcomb’s reference to convenient centres indicates that such a course is already in mind”. Acknowledging the promise that Hurcomb had made - in his

letter to *The Times*- to “consult with other bodies interested in the matter”, the editor concludes by expressing the hope that a “fully-representative National Committee” will be formed to advise and assist in the preservation of historic relics and records- a committee which, as he envisaged it, would include: “The great technical institutions, and all those societies which specialise in some branch of the study of transport, engineering, and technological history.”

Following this, the Reverend R.B. Fellows once again took up the subject of railway preservation in a letter of 17<sup>th</sup> January, calling, as he previously done before the war (in 1932), for a start to be made on the production of a card index which would, as he put it:

Name the railway relics known to exist, and where they could be seen, including those in museums, railway stations, public libraries, art galleries, and other places to which the public has access, and also items of railway interest preserved by universities, clubs, and quasi-private bodies, which might be inspected by permission only. (Letter addressed to *Railway Gazette* from Reginald B. Fellows, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1948, copy in NA AN104/1)

These interests and anxieties led John Maskelyne to make an approach to Hurcomb, and thence to a meeting between Maskelyne, Skeat and Hurcomb on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March 1948 (Dunstone 2007). Hurcomb invited both the creation of a list of locomotives to be saved, and suggested that other enthusiast societies should become involved in this process<sup>45</sup>. These societies were the Railway Club, the Newcomen Society, the Railway Correspondence

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes of Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee, NRM Box 65

and Travel Society and the Model Railway Club. The Institution of Locomotive Engineers was invited to join, but declined to get involved in the selection phase of the process (though suggesting that they would be “glad to offer advice and suggestions to the Executive at a later stage”); they were effectively replaced by the Science Museum, through G.P. Westcott<sup>46</sup>. This led to a further meeting around the 15<sup>th</sup> July, at 32 Russell Road, between Skeat and the following individuals, who formed themselves into the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee:

- H.A (Hugh Aymer) Vallance (Railway Club).
- G.R. Grigs (Railway Correspondence and Travel Society).
- Arthur Stowers (Newcomen Society)
- G.P Keen (Model Railway Club)
- G.P Westcott (Science Museum)

This meeting led to a listing of 12 locomotives to be earmarked for preservation (see Table 3). As Dunstone (2007) remarks, the report detailing the reasons for these locomotives’ inclusion in the list does not survive, although a roughly penned list of the selections is still in existence, and a later letter from the Secretary of the Railway Executive to the Secretary of the BTC (4<sup>th</sup> June 1953) also lists the classes earmarked for preservation in full (AN 13/1203).

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<sup>46</sup> As above.

Table 3. List of locomotive classes selected for preservation by the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee on July 15<sup>th</sup> 1948

	Locomotive Class (Year Built)	Subsequent preservation?	Justification for Preservation
1	Midland Railway 1000 (compound) Class (45 built 1902-1909)	Yes- No 1000	“First and only really successful type of compound locomotive to be built in any numbers, a peculiarly British development which has been little used outside this country. Arrangement of cranks, valve gear etc. of special interest.”
2	Midland Railway 156 Class (29 built 1866-1874)	Yes- No 20002 (Midland Railway No. 158A)	“Typifies a mode of highly successful and widespread construction, examples of which have achieved outstanding longevity. Design of frames, outside cranks and springing are notable.”
3	Great Western Railway ‘Star Class’ (73 built 1907-1923)	Yes- No 4003 <i>Lode Star</i>	“The first really successful four-cylinder express engine, which has had a more profound influence on present-day design than any other type. This particular engine showed its superiority

			over a L&NWR 4-6-0 during a notable locomotive exchange in 1910. Effect of this design and its successors has been marked on LMSR and LNER construction.”
4.	South Eastern and Chatham Railway 4-4-0 ‘D class’ (51 produced 1901-1907)	Yes- No. 737 (BR 31737)	“The high-light of locomotive development on the South Eastern and Chatham Railway. Typical of best British constructional practice at the turn of the century and of engine finish in Great Britain generally. It would be desirable for one of this type to be saved, since engines of the other constituent sections of the Southern have already been restored.”
5.	<b>Either</b> Great Eastern Railway T26/E4 type 2-4-0 (100 built 1891-1902) <b>or</b> Great Eastern Railway Claud Hamilton type (121 built, to slightly differing designs, between 1900 and	T26 type- Yes, No. 490 (BR 62785)  Claud Hamilton- No, last example withdrawn and	“The 2-4-0 engines make an excellent example of the lengthy Holden regime at Stratford; an example of the mixed-framing construction then widely used and of the placing of steam chests and valves below the cylinders. The variable blast pipe was also a feature. These were mixed traffic engines, no

	1923)	scrapped in 1960	<p>example of which is preserved.</p> <p>If one of these engines cannot be spared, one of the remaining 4-4-0s of the 'Claud Hamilton' class with a Belpaire firebox would make a welcome alternative. Many technical features of construction are shared by both classes. The "Claud Hamilton" might have the Holden oil-burning apparatus installed, in view of its historic importance as a British development."</p>
6	Highland Railway Drummond type 'Small Ben' Class locomotive (20 built 1898-1906)	No- No 2 (LMS 14398, BR 54398) <i>Ben Alder</i> was set aside for preservation and stored in different locations around Scotland, but was ultimately scrapped in	"The preservation of this engine would cover the whole of the widespread "Drummond School" of which examples appeared on the Caledonian, Glasgow and South Western, Highland, London and South Western, and North British Railways. The Drummond layout of framing, wheels, and motion has several interesting technical points which have proved very successful in service."

		1966/67.	
7	Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway 2-4-2 Class 5 (310 built 1889-1911)	Yes- No. 1008 (BR/LMS 10621)	“Undoubtedly the most successful engines on the former L&YR, which made history by the way they handled intense traffic over heavily graded routes. Good example of Horwich construction, with Joy’s valve gear, no example of which exists in a preserved engine. The final superheated version of these tank engines is probably best known and most worthy of preservation.”
8	London and North Western Railway 4-4-0 ‘Precursor’ class (130 built 1904-1907) OR London and North Western Railway 4-6-0 ‘Prince of Wales’ class (246 built 1911-1921, 1924)	No- Last examples withdrawn and scrapped in 1949	“The 4-4-0 ‘Precursor’ is the last remaining example of the numerous engines built to replace the old Webb compound, and inaugurated a new era at Crewe, with a type of construction which lasted until the end of the LNWR Co’s separate existence: simple expansion of Joy’s valve gear of centre beaming for crankshaft, highly individual details of boiler and cab fittings, all typified Crewe practice from 1904 to 1922.

			If the “Precursor” cannot be saved, a “Prince of Wales” class 4-6-0, of which only 4 remain, would be an excellent alternative.”
9	London and North Eastern Railway Class ‘04’ (Originally Great Central Railway Class 8K, 126 built 1911-1914) OR LNER Class ‘C4’ (Originally Great Central Railway Class 8B, 27 built 1903, 1904-1906)	Class ‘04’: Yes- GCR 102 (BR 63601)  Class C4- No (last examples scrapped in 1950)	“One of the most successful goods engines ever built. Selected by Ministry of Munitions as standard type for War Office requirements during 1914-1918 war and built in hundreds for service overseas. Many also sent abroad during 1939-45 war. Superb example of simple and robust design to suit difficult operating conditions. Little attention has been given to preservation of goods engines and this is a most worthy example. As an alternative an “Atlantic” of the former Great Central Railway is suggested as typical of Robinson’s designs during 1902-22, and are last representatives of the form taken by that type on the Great Western and North British Railways.”

10.	London and North Eastern Railway Class 'K3'(originally Great Northern Railway Class H4, 193 built 1920-1937)	No- Last example withdrawn and scrapped in 1962	“The original large-boilered 2-6-0 introduced by Sir Nigel Gresley. Example of modern mixed-traffic locomotive for heavy high-speed traffic, afterwards built in large numbers. First type to have conjugated valve gear in its final form. The original engine (No. 1000 on the Great Northern Railway) would be most appropriate for preservation.”
11.	Great Western Railway '28XX' Class locomotive (84 built, 1903, 1905-1919)	Yes- Seven of this class survive, one of which, 2818, is part of the National Collection.	“The phenomenal success of the Churchward 2-cylinder engines, with their original modification of Stephenson’s valve gear makes this type worthy of preservation. The premier 2-8-0 in Great Britain, it has had a marked influence on other railways’ construction.”
12.	London, Tilbury and Southend Railway 4-4-2 tank engine (various classes built 1880-1930); OR North London Railway Class 75 (30 built,	LTSR tank engine- Yes- 79 class locomotive No. 80 (BR 41966)	“This type was the mainstay of a railway which ran the whole of its services by tank engines, and was the forerunner in a fashion for larger and longer tank engines for passenger working which culminated in the now extinct 4-6-4 tank engines used in a number of railways in the 1920’s.

	1879-1905)	<i>Thundersley</i>  North London Railway  Class 75- Yes, No. 116  (privately preserved)	As an alternative to the “Tilbury Tank” engine, a 0-6-0 tank of the former North London Railway would be of great interest. Outside cylinders, single slidebars, a characteristic wheel centre and balance weight, and a short wheelbase for negotiating sharp curves are features of these last survivors of the North London Railway.”
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Those who were present at the meeting (with the exception of Westcott) sent a covering letter alongside this list on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1948, which made some enlightening, if ultimately largely unacknowledged and ignored, comments and suggestions<sup>47</sup>. Seemingly influenced by the *Railway Gazette* editorial (John Aiton Kay was in fact Stowers' manager, being the Managing Director of the company which owned the *Railway Magazine* as well as being the editor of the *Railway Gazette*), and by Hurcomb's reference to 'convenient centres' the authors of the letter, though acknowledging that "a large national collection or museum would have many attractions", suggest that it would be "undesirable to denude an existing centre of interest, such as York Museum, to augment a new museum elsewhere". As an alternative, they suggest that each Region could have its own Museum. Housed in "some superseded running shed", such museums would display "engines belonging to the constituent companies of that region" and would be "open for inspection at regular intervals by the public who, no doubt, would welcome the opportunity". They suggest that locomotive display should be based upon a rooted localism: "There is... a definite feeling that, wherever possible, a locomotive is most appropriately housed somewhere adjoining the scene of its labours." From whom this 'feeling' arises is not made explicit- one would assume however that the authors of the letter are attempting to describe the views of the members of those societies which they represent. Again we can perhaps link this 'feeling' of localness to the display of locomotives on plinths at stations which had taken place prior to the Second World War, and the letter and list can be seen as an attempt to retain the familiar corporate

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<sup>47</sup> NRM Box 65.

identities not only of the immediate pre-nationalization 'Big Four' but also to those companies which preceded the grouping, which were evoked by the transport historian and preservationist L.T.C Rolt in his 1952 work *Lines of Character*:

Interesting though the immediate effects of unification may be, it must ultimately result in a loss of variety, in the gradual extinction of the rich individual characters which the old companies possessed prior to 1923. The impress of these characters will outlive us in the architectural design and detail of station buildings, signal boxes, and other lineside features. But, alas, it was in the trains themselves, in the design and livery of locomotives and rolling stock, that the individualism and pride of the old companies was truly centred, and as a result of standardization these will soon be no more than a memory. (p. 14)

The enthusiasts' letter to Hurcomb- and the list of locomotives to be preserved- represents an attempt to ensure that the old locomotives of the pre-grouping companies remain more than just a memory, representing a permanent memorial to the erstwhile organisations. Of the 12 locomotive types (and alternatives) listed by the enthusiasts for preservation, all of them had been designed, and for the most part built, prior to the grouping of 1923, with the vast majority being designed and built in the late Victorian and Edwardian era<sup>48</sup>. For these enthusiasts it was important that locomotive preservation should take place within the local context for which these

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<sup>48</sup> This era was also part of what post-war historians termed the 'railway age', stretching from the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 up to the First World War, in which railways had a profound influence on Britain's culture and economy (see chapter 7).

machines had been designed, and indeed within the very running shed in which they may have been housed and maintained during their working lives, in order for them to make sense, for them to be understandable as museum exhibits. Thus these machines were representative of a localised social order, rather than just examples of steam-driven technology. The letter- tailored as it was to Hurcomb's remit and to the interests of its authors- appears to be pre-occupied with the preservation of locomotives rather than any other aspect of railway operation, although it does suggest that the preservation of railway carriages has "received too little attention in the past" and that "a few notable examples" might be preserved "if sufficient space were available".

Despite being regionally dispersed, the museums proposed by the enthusiasts were nevertheless linked to national pride- and it was intended that the locomotives housed in them would form part of a national collection. The authors make an "Appeal for a Lead in Great Britain", describing the lack of effort towards forming a representative national collection as "lamentable" and suggesting that the public "are anxious that the milestones in locomotive development in the country of its origin should be preserved for all time". The author's inclusion of the 'public' is telling here: aware perhaps of the BTC's responsibility towards the populace, as a nationalised body- the enthusiasts suggest that "there is such an intense and perfectly articulate interest in locomotive matters which is keener to-day than at any time in the country's history, and (it) is sufficient to justify any effort which may be made to secure suitable examples of notable locomotives for public exhibition."

Preoccupied perhaps with other matters during the BTC's first year of operation, Sir Cyril Hurcomb did not respond to the enthusiasts' letter until 10<sup>th</sup> September 1948, and suggested a meeting with R.A. Riddles, who was the Member of the Railway Executive for Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, and who had also been present at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March<sup>49</sup>. The meeting was held at 3PM on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 222 Marylebone Road, the Headquarters of the Railway Executive. Alongside Riddles and the enthusiasts, Mr G.R. Smith was present, as was Mr R.C. (Roland) Bond, Chief Officer (Locomotive Construction and Maintenance), Mr G. Wynne Davies and Mr D.S.M. (Derek) Barrie, the Executive's Public Relations Officer (Barrie was himself a railway historian, specialising in the railways of South Wales). Riddles, who- according to a later letter written by Stowers- did "99% of the talking"- did not approve of the idea of the preservation of actual locomotives besides the 26 which were already preserved- and, perhaps somewhat grudgingly, examples of the 12 locomotive types which had been listed by the Committee (although there seems to have been some confusion as whether even these would be preserved). He preferred to create a collection of models representing key types, to be built by apprentices to a uniform standard and scale as part of their training (Hopkin 1987)<sup>50</sup>. In his Masters thesis, Dieter Hopkin (1987: 30) describes this briefly held belief in the modelling of historic locomotives, as opposed to the preservation of the actual prototype, as "model mania".

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<sup>49</sup> Copy of letter in NRM Box 65.

<sup>50</sup> First Meeting of Records Committee 15<sup>th</sup> February 1950 (ANI04/1).

In a letter to Barrie of 24<sup>th</sup> January 1949, Skeat confirmed that the amateur enthusiasts who had attended agreed with the Draft Memorandum of the meeting (this was done belatedly due to the illness of two Committee members), and he also used the opportunity to make an impassioned plea for the future preservation of locomotives:

The members of the delegation (the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee),... whilst they appreciate the difficulties (mentioned in the Memorandum) of preserving historic locomotives, reaffirm their belief that in certain cases, the existence (sic) of the actual machine has a value and interest far transcending that of any model, however well made; and it is only because they are keenly aware of this country's historic heritage, and its unique gift to the world in the steam locomotive, that they express the hope that The Railway Executive... will, as far as possible, preserve some, at any rate, of the locomotives which will come under the consideration of the proposed joint committee. (Letter located in NRM Box 65)

At the top of the copy of this letter at the NRM (Box 65), Skeat wrote- by hand, and presumably at a later date- that "We had our backs to the wall at the time". It should be borne in mind, however, that at this point in time steam locomotives were still being constructed for use on the British railway network (the last was constructed in 1960). Thus, as Kardas (1992: 138) has commented, railways were "still not only commonplace but the current high technology... people did not expect to find their hardware on display in museum conditions". At the same time, and rather contradictorily, the network had in many ways not changed much since Victorian times; thus "so

many relics were in daily service that a museum containing more of them was not calculated to appeal to the mass of the population” (Kardas 1992: 138). As Carter (2008: 113) has suggested, “Britain’s railways were nationalised in 1947, but their Victorian machine ensemble survived remarkably intact”. Thus the steam locomotive was at once considered too modern to be thought of as a potential museum piece, yet at the same time older locomotives and parts of the system were still being used and were therefore unable to be displayed. Even the more recent designs could trace their roots back, after a fashion, to the earliest locomotive types. The immediate post-war locomotive construction policy of British Railways encapsulated this, as all of the steam locomotives built for use in the United Kingdom until 1951 followed pre-war designs (and even the Standard classes introduced after this were substantially based on pre-war LMS designs). One type, the J27- of which 28 were built between 1949 and 1951- dated back to 1898! In such a context, it becomes clear why some of today’s national collection stalwarts- notably Number 4468 *Mallard*, which set the world record speed for steam locomotive power on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1938, were not included in the Locomotive Committee’s list: simply put, this locomotive was too new, at 11 years old, to be thought of as an historical relic at this time.

Though Skeat emphasises the resoluteness of the locomotive committee in preserving the ‘actual machine’ rather than a mere model, at a further meeting on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1949 between two members of the committee- Stowers and Grigs- and two Railway Executive representatives- Barrie and Bond- the decision was taken to overturn the suggested

preservation of two of the locomotive types which had been on the previous year's list- the London and North Western Precursor and King George the Fifth classes- and to scrap the last examples of these types in existence. The reasons for this reversal are somewhat unclear, with the afore-mentioned June 1953 letter from the Railway Executive to the BTC (ANI3/1203) commenting only that "these locomotives were not considered to be of outstanding historic interest" and were therefore "broken up on withdrawal from traffic with the concurrence of the Societies' representatives".

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the discussions and debates about the preservation of railway relics and records, as they were then termed, which occurred in the context of the nationalisation of the British railway network in 1948 under the BTC, and the major organizational changes which this process would bring about. Whilst the BTC's attempts to assess the collections of historic material it had inherited, and to formulate a strategy for safeguarding historic objects and paperwork for posterity, were, under the dubious stewardship of G.R. (Graham) Smith, somewhat faltering and incoherent, the responses to Smith's two reports by BTC senior management's team- particularly its Chief Secretary Miles Beevor and his Deputy Sidney Taylor- did lead to the formation of more substantial policies, and perhaps more pertinently to the outlining of principles- such as the separation of the management of three-dimensional objects (relics) and paperwork (records) -which were adopted throughout my time period and have arguably continued to be adhered to up to the present day.

Meanwhile, the efforts of private enthusiasts, through the organizational instrument of the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee, to preserve a selection of steam locomotive classes, were responded to sympathetically by some, but by no means all, of those in the top management of the BTC and the semi-autonomous Railway Executive. Whilst the Engineering member of the Railway Executive, Robert Riddles, preferred the creation of models of historic locomotives in favour of the preservation of the actual machine, the perseverance and persistence of the Committee, coupled, as we shall see, with the approval of a new Relics and Records Committee under the auspices of BTC Secretary Sidney Taylor, led to the preservation of nine locomotives, several of which are the only examples of their classes to have survived, which ultimately became part of the NRM's collection.

**Chapter 5: “Difficulties should be overcome in the national interest”: forming the Departments of Historic Relics and Records, 1951-1958**

The Records Committee, as it was termed, under the aegis of BTC Deputy Secretary Sidney Taylor, reported much more quickly than Smith had done, producing a draft report by 27<sup>th</sup> July 1950 (only just over 5 months after it had first met) and the full document in August, prior to the production of supplementary memoranda on staffing and accommodation<sup>51</sup>. Their findings - having been “accepted in principle” by Sir Cyril Hurcomb (BTC 1951:3) - were subsequently published in the following year and made available to purchase for one shilling and sixpence under the title of *The Preservation of Relics and Records*. It is this version of the report which I will refer to here.

**5.1 *The Preservation of Relics and Records***

One of the key aims of the Committee was to define precisely what a record and a relic were, and whether they should be organised under the same administrative umbrella or separately. With each individual member having prepared their own definitions of the two terms, it was decided by the Committee that whilst records, for their purposes, were items which possessed an “historical interest or value arising from the inscribed matter and not from the form of the article”, including “books, documents, manuscripts, plans and papers not required for administrative purposes” (BTC 1951: 7) and also those records which, if still required, should be substituted

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<sup>51</sup> NA AN104/1.

by photographic copies due to their historic importance<sup>52</sup>. The records being considered by the Committee had to be distinguished from records which were still in daily use, since the term record did not in itself denote historical antiquity. The term relic, by contrast, *did* inherently suggest an “antiquity or interest not connected with everyday business requirements”, and they used this word to denote all other “historical physical objects”, which, by implication, were of interest on the basis of their physical form (BTC 1951:7). They perhaps threw more heat than light at the matter to some extent, as they argued that, as well as more obviously tactile items such as rolling stock, objects such as “common seals and early timetables, rule books, tickets, and similar printed matter” (BTC 1951: 8) - matter which surely would be of more interest due to its content than its form- should also be defined as relics.

Furthermore, the Committee pushed for a wider definition of what constituted a transport relic than had hitherto been considered: “The efficient custody of transport relics should be founded on a clear appreciation of the wider social and cultural heritage of early transport development in many different fields” (BTC 1951: 9). In the Committee’s reading, the railways were more than simply “systems of high-capacity inland communication” (BTC 1951:9). Thus rather than just housing exhibits which were “associated with the engineering and operational aspects of train working” (BTC 1951: 9): from rolling stock through to prints, paintings and drawings- the Committee urged the preservation of objects from the fields of architecture, monumental

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<sup>52</sup> Minutes of the First Meeting of the Records Committee, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 1950, NA AN104/1.

engineering, furniture design, draughtsmanship and typography. As the Committee argued, “through their output in these fields, as well as through the direct impact of the new means of transport, the builders of our railways... influenced to a considerable degree the social organisation and habits of life of the British people.” (BTC 1951: 9). This widening of interest- particularly in terms of the incorporation of architecture- can perhaps be attributed to Christian Barman, who was an architect by training and previously by profession, and who wrote the book *An Introduction to Railway Architecture*, which was published in 1950.

As well as separating relics and records on the basis of physical form, the Committee also suggested that whereas relics could be put on “attractive display in museums available to the general public” (BTC 1951:8)- though one wonders where architecture fitted into this picture- records were, in essence, rather dull pieces of paperwork (the report’s authors tactfully suggested that they “possessed no general appeal” (BTC 1951:8)) which could not be made freely available and which would primarily be of interest “to the staff of the Commission and Executives in occasional reference to the past, to members of technical bodies and scientific societies, and to students undertaking research in economic history” (BTC 1951:8).

Given the material differences between the two, it was stated that Relics and Records should be considered, and thus administered, separately. This separation was important as it became the basis for the organization of official railway preservation not just in the post-war era but right up to the present. The Committee called for, on the Relics side, a Curator, an Assistant

Curator, a Clerk and two typists, and, on the Records side, an Archivist, an Assistant Archivist, two clerks and two typists. The Curator, who would have “high qualifications and experience in modern museum practice” (BTC 1951:21), would have a wide range of responsibilities including the safekeeping of the collection of relics to be centralised at the shareholder’s meeting room in Euston, the ‘correlation’ of the London collection with those in York and that to be later established in Edinburgh, the compilation of a schedule of historical buildings and other structures, advising on the policy to be followed with regards to the acceptance and care of donations and bequests from private collections, and also playing a role in the eventual establishment of a future museum in London. They also called, in the longer term, for the appointment of Keepers at the proposed new regional museum in Edinburgh and also at York. Whilst no immediate change was envisaged at York, where a Curator, Mr E.M. Bywell, already worked, as the Committee put it, “voluntarily and without payment” (BTC 1951:11), the Committee’s plans seemingly caused some consternation, as Christian Barman is reported to have written to Bywell “assuring him of our confidence in him and, in effect, comforting him by indicating that no drastic changes are contemplated, at least in the immediate future”<sup>53</sup>. Taylor wrote to E.Marsden, Secretary of the Railway Executive, on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1951 assuring him that “The Committee are very anxious to do all that is possible to encourage and improve the York Museum” in order that it could “take its rightful and important place in the comprehensive Museum arrangements of the Commission”<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Letter, S.B. Taylor to E.G. Marsden, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1951, AN13/1203.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, S.B. Taylor to E.G. Marsden, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1951, AN13/1203.

The spatial organization of the museums and archival repositories proposed by the Committee was to some extent a compromise between the concepts of 'co-ordinated decentralization' and a single national collection, with the complete, expensive, centralization of the collections of both relics and records being, for the most part, pushed into the future in favour of a short term combination of both limited centralization and continued regional dispersal. In the short term, the Shareholder's Meeting Room at Euston, described as an "imposing room with notable transport associations" (BTC 1951:16) and, later, crucially, as an "admirable *point of concentration*" (BTC 1951:22; italics added), would become a museum housing smaller exhibits relating to railway, canal and road transport. However, the museum at York would be retained and the Edinburgh collection amassed by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Murray would be rehoused and expanded to include "small transport exhibits originating in Scotland, whether of rail, road or dock" (BTC 1951:17). A collection of transport relics was also seen as desirable in Wales, with a small museum recommended "if ultimately it were found practicable" (BTC 1951:17). Importantly, an exchange of items was recommended between London, York and Edinburgh; what were deemed to be the most appropriate exhibits- i.e. those of particular regional significance- would be chosen for each place. The York museum in particular would be "devoted to relics associated with the railways of the North of England with those exhibits "not identifiable" with this region ultimately being transferred elsewhere (BTC 1951:14).

The second stage of the Committee's recommendations called for the establishment of a separate, and by implication bigger, museum in London able to house larger exhibits such as locomotives. On the point of the preservation of rolling stock, the Committee had initially decided that this should be "left to Mr Riddles' joint Committee", which had recommended that

Apart from the 26 outstanding types already preserved by the Executive-  
the production of large-scale models by apprentices... would most satisfactorily solve the acute storage and maintenance problem inseparable from the retention of additional numbers of out-of-date rolling stock (*although, as described above, the retention of 12 additional locomotive types was also negotiated at this time*) (BTC 1951:12).<sup>55</sup>

However, Mr Hind reported at the third meeting of the Records Committee that Mr Riddles' committee "would not have a permanent character, and in fact would probably not function much longer as their subject had been well discussed and their conclusions recorded"<sup>56</sup>. This, in essence, created a space in which the Records Committee were able to tactfully, and at some length, divert from Mr Riddles' recommendations, arguing that whilst locomotives require "a large building to accommodate them", a problem which the production of models would obviate, there was nevertheless a case for preserving them- although the case which was made by the committee was somewhat contradictory, being based on the public appeal of locomotives yet accepting that museum premises might, in the short

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<sup>55</sup> Second meeting of the Records Committee, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 1950; NA AN104/1.

<sup>56</sup> Third Meeting of Records Committee 28<sup>th</sup> March 1950; NA AN104/1

term at least, not be available and suggesting that a storage arrangement might be preferable: “As an attraction to the public, and for posterity, we feel that a determined attempt should be made now to allocate accommodation in one building for the retention of the most worthy specimens... even if this accommodation is merely storage accommodation unsuitable for displaying exhibits to the public” (BTC 1951:14).

The Committee go on to suggest that accommodation should be given to housing those locomotives not displayed in York in one building, adding glibly that “difficulties should be overcome in the national interest” (BTC 1951:14). They perhaps optimistically suggest that such accommodation might become available as a result of the railway network’s ‘unification’, and echo the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee’s call to save, in addition, “any suitable remaining specimens of early railway wagons and railway carriages”, which were “in danger of precipitate destruction” (BTC 1951: 15).

The Committee suggested that the large museum building proposed for the second stage of their recommendations would preferably be a former railway building in itself, and of antiquarian interest-which perhaps related to their interest in preserving railway architecture. As the committee put it: “the happiest and most appropriate arrangement for the custody and display of railway relics would be one which allowed the exhibits to be seen in a building which was itself a relic as notable as any of its contents” (BTC 1951: 22-23).

The National Maritime Museum, which had opened in 1937 in what had once been the Royal Naval Asylum and later the Royal Hospital School, was held up by the Committee as an example of the ‘high standard’ they were

looking for, and they noted that this museum not only charted the history of the Royal Navy, but was also “the national museum for commercial transport by sea” (BTC 1951:22), thus representing, in effect, the marine equivalent of the proposed BTC museum-and also a place in which the history of the building corresponded with the nature of the exhibits. The Committee recommended the former London and Southampton Railway terminus at Nine Elms (by then a goods shed) as a potential site for the new museum, and Lord Hurcomb visited the site in August 1950. There was some suggestion, prior to the publication of the full report, that the Nine Elms site may be readied in time for the Festival of Britain; Barman asked architect Frederick Curtis whether it would be possible to complete the scheme in nine months-in time for the opening of this event- but this seems to be discounted when Curtis says that, whilst such a timescale would be possible, the nine months would have to be counted from the point of him taking possession of the site and therefore, as Barman wryly comments on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1950, “To be ready for that date, Curtis would have to get busy next week”<sup>57</sup>. The Committee themselves did not seem overly convinced by their own proposition, and were particularly sceptical about the location of the Nine Elms site within London; they note that it should only be used “if no other suitable building in a more attractive position becomes available” (BTC 1951:24), although they suggest that the Festival of Britain might attract new development to the area. Ultimately, the terminus at Nine Elms was demolished in order to accommodate the re-housed Covent Garden flower market (appropriately

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<sup>57</sup> Letter, Barman to Taylor 1<sup>st</sup> August 1950, NA AN104/1.

perhaps, the London Transport Museum was established on the site of the original flower market, opening in 1980).

In terms of records, the Committee suggested that, ultimately, “a central collection within easy reach of London” should be established: “The ideal accommodation for records would be a building of strong construction capable of carrying the weight of a concentration of heavy books, situated away from London, but easily accessible” (BTC 1951:30). However, in the shorter term the Committee proposed a new British Transport Record Office in former Great Western Railway accommodation at Porchester Road in Bayswater, West London- yet they also suggested leaving the BTC’s collection of some 11,000 railway company Minute Books of Director’s and Shareholder’s meetings prior to 1921 largely untouched and in situ in their present locations at four different London termini (Euston, Paddington, Waterloo and Marylebone), York, Edinburgh and Glasgow- with the exception of the latter, in which the books would be combined with those in Edinburgh to form a concentrated Scottish collection. However, these would come under the control of an archivist whom would be responsible for all British Transport Records. Post-1921 railway records, meanwhile, would remain with the Railway Executive for the time being, but would come under the control of the Archivist “as and when the need for referring to them becomes infrequent” (BTC 1951:27). Similar arrangements would cover the Canal, London Transport Executive and Road Haulage divisions of the BTC, whilst drawings would largely stay in engineers’, surveyor’s and estate plan rooms, with the exception of particularly worthy and vulnerable items which

would be protected in the Record Office and replaced by photocopies. Thus centralization of process, through the control of a BTC Archivist, would occur, but the Minute Books themselves would remain physically dispersed. The other records in the BTC's possession, including correspondence relating to early railway and canal development, title deeds and early books could be housed in the Great Western Railway's Porchester Road accommodation in Bayswater- and specifically on the third floor, which was empty apart from the Western Region's Minute Books<sup>58</sup>. Whilst this, the British Transport Record Office, would be open to "students of economic history and research workers" (BTC 1951:31), access would be closely monitored: "The reasons for their enquiries would have to be ascertained and assistance afforded according to the merits of the particular case". No-one would normally be allowed to inspect the Minute Books (and a search fee would be levied on those occasions when inspection was allowed), and no access would be granted to Minute Books after 1900 (a date which appears to have been rather arbitrarily decided), with no publication of information allowed without prior written approval having been granted.

Perhaps the most important feature of 'The Preservation of Relics and Records' was its' commitment to the gradual updating of the collection of historic relics both from internal sources and potentially external purchases as well: "The collection of relics in the Commission's possession is not to be regarded as a static and lifeless accumulation, but rather as one constantly improving in continuity and expanding by contributions from many sources."

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<sup>58</sup> Staff and Accommodation for Relics and Records Organization' Memorandum to the British Transport Commission 25<sup>th</sup> August 1950, NA AN104/1.

(BTC 1951:10). The policy of systematic, continuous preservation enshrined in the report was innovative when compared to the scattershot approach to railway preservation which had been taken prior to the war, wherein, as we have seen, items survived largely on the basis of chance and whim. The principle of continuous expansion, though it has ebbed and flowed in practice, did remain intact throughout the period covered in this thesis.

## **5.2. After the report: establishment of the Relics and Records organisations**

Whilst the Railway Executive, whose views were expressed on the Committee by Hind, wanted to “run the new (Relics and Records) organisation for all the Executives as they do the (British Transport) Police”<sup>59</sup> it was decided that the Relics and Records organisations would be run as Common Services by the Commission itself, with the Records section, headed by the Archivist, coming under the control of the Chief Secretary and the Relics division, under the Curator of Historic Relics, coming under the remit of the Chief Public Relations and Publicity Officer, in view of the fact that Museums in general were “open to the public, often connected with external displays, and attract(ed) continual newspaper publicity”<sup>60</sup>. A further factor in this division was the interest taken in this subject by Christian Barman, who continued in his Publicity Officer role until the demise of the BTC in 1963. There is some historical irony in the Railway Executive’s interest in taking over responsibility for Relics and Records at this stage, given that, having later been assigned responsibility for these activities following the

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from Taylor to Chief Secretary Miles Beevor, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1950; AN NA AN13/1203.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Taylor to Chief Secretary Miles Beevor, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1950; NA AN13/1203.

1962 Transport Act, the BRB- which, in effect, was the Railway Executive's successor- expressed its dissatisfaction with this situation and attempted to dissolve itself of these duties as quickly as possible (see Chapter 7). These divisions- with the preservation, care and display of relics coming under the umbrella of the Publicity Officer, and the preservation of records being part of the Secretary's duties- stayed in place until, in the case of records, the responsibility for their care passed over to the Public Record Office in 1972, and in the case of Relics until 1965, when there was a subtle change in responsibility for their management, from Publicity to Public Relations (see Chapter 7).

As Beevor recorded in a memorandum to the Commission on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1951, Mr John H. Scholes was appointed as the Curator<sup>61</sup>. He had firstly been selected for interview from some 150 applications from external candidates alone. Then, after a short selection of the candidates had been made, he had been interviewed by Barman, Mr Gilbert (presumably Frank Gilbert, who was in the Chief Secretary's Office) and Barman's superior J.H. (Jock) Brebner, who was the Chief Public Relations and Publicity Officer. Scholes, who was 36 years old and married, had been the Curator of the Castle Museum in York since February 1948, and prior to that had worked in the same role at the Botanic Garden Museum in Southport from 1938, aside from wartime service in the National Fire Service and the Royal Observer Corps. His salary of £1000 per annum, whilst not pensionable, was an advance on the £750, rising to £900, which he had previously earned at the Castle Museum. Meanwhile

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<sup>61</sup> NA AN104/1.

Mr L.C. Johnson, who was 52 years old and had previously been Registrar at the LMS Registration Office in Watford, was appointed as Archivist after candidates had been nominated by four Executives (Johnson had presumably been the Railway Executive's choice, although this is not stated in the memorandum). Johnson had had "much experience in the preservation and recording of documents on a large scale", although he appears to have had no formal training in, or experience of, archiving as such. His salary was £1250 per annum.

In the seven years after their respective appointments, it would perhaps be fair to suggest that Johnson, representing the Records side of the 1951 report's arrangements, had the most fruitful period, whilst Scholes' job was more testing. The Records Department, which was able to find ample accommodation for its needs and was of continuing use to other sections of the BTC, had established not only a central archive at Porchester Road in London, but also separate repositories in York and Edinburgh, in this time. These fed, to some extent, into a burgeoning interest in transport history in the UK which was exemplified by the publication of a new Journal, *The Journal of Transport History*, in 1953- contributors to which often used the BTC's archival resources. These developments were mirrored in the United States, where the Society for the History of Technology, and its attendant journal *Technology and Culture*, was established in 1958. Although Scholes' Relics Department was able to put on four exhibitions at the Euston Shareholder's Meeting Room- with exhibitions also held at York and Battersea Wharf in London in connection with the Festival of Britain and the Coronation

respectively (although it is unclear the extent to which the event at York was attributable to his department)- the search for a site for a new, larger museum, or indeed for any covered accommodation for the locomotives which had been preserved, proved to be a fraught and frustrating experience. Worse still, poor communication between BTC management and those responsible for railway operation or even, in one case, the management of the museum in York meant that supposedly preserved items were destroyed; singularized items, in essence, re-entered the commodity sphere with devastating consequences- although in truth the economic value- more specifically the scrap value- of a particular object was always taken into consideration when preservation was mooted, particularly if the item in question was a locomotive. This chapter draws to a close with the denouement of this particular trend, the scrapping of three supposedly preserved items- a Car from the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway, a Great Eastern Railway tram locomotive and a carriage from the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway- at Stratford Works in East London in 1957.

### **5.3 The British Transport Historical Records Offices and those who used them**

The archival repository, which sometime later became known as the British Transport Historical Records Office, at 66 Porchester Road in Bayswater in West London, had by 1953 received, according to an article written by L.C. Johnson and published in that year, 800 visits “from research workers in all walks of life” (Johnson 1953: 96). The Enquiry Register records some 6301 visitors between 1951 and 1958, although this included other

London sites such as Euston<sup>62</sup>. The opening up of these resources appears to have both been a response to, and to have catalysed, academic interest in transport history, particularly from the field of Economic History. The Records Committee, in formulating their report, suggest that whilst a “Proposed Co-ordinating Committee for British Transport Museums could also act in relation to the Central Depository of Transport Records”, someone with “special knowledge of the requirements of economic historians”, as well as, possibly, the Deputy Keeper of the Public Record Office, should form part of these arrangements<sup>63</sup>. Whilst no such Committee was formed in practice, the reference to the “requirements of economic historians” is revealing as it suggests that there was a pre-existing interest in the sorts of documents which were to be preserved by the BTC, and thus in transport history, amongst those from this discipline.

*The Journal of Transport History* (JTH) started in 1953, and in the first editorial it is suggested that, in terms of “purely historical” research on transport (Simmons and 1953: 1), rather than that on transport technology more specifically, the *Economic History Review* had been one of the few publications to give attention to the subject. Indeed, analysis of the *Journal of Transport History* between its genesis in 1953 and 1966 (when the co-editorship of the journal came to an end, and the *Journal* took a hiatus until 1971) shows that economic historians and economists made up the vast majority of contributors, with eight lecturers or Professors from Economic History and six from Economics contributing to the *Journal* (published twice a

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<sup>62</sup> NA; AN104/23

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Records Committee; NA AN104/1.

year), which could suggest a latent interest in transport history which was tapped into by the publication of this Journal. At the same time, the formation of the Journal was itself driven by the desire to give an outlet to the work being done on the records to which access had recently been opened up by the BTC: “The British Transport Commission, which controls a substantial part of all the transport undertakings in the country, is opening its historical archives to students, and an increasing amount of work is being done on them” (Simmons and Robbins 1953: 1).

One of the editors of the journal, Michael Robbins, was the Secretary of the London Transport Executive in addition to being a railway historian, contributing articles to *The Railway Magazine* and later co-authoring, with Economic and Social Historian Theodore Barker, a two-part history of London Transport. His co-editor was Jack Simmons, a Professor of History at University College Leicester (later the University of Leicester). Robbins, who was something of a stickler for detail in railway matters (as evidenced in his book reviews for the Journal), had himself communicated with Taylor following the publication of *The Preservation of Relics and Records* to correct certain erroneous details in the list of locomotives published as an appendix- for example he comments that “The London and South Western coach (on the list) could not, I think, have been numbered 6474, because the South Western only possessed about 3000 carriages”<sup>64</sup>.

*The Journal of Transport History* provides another example of the way in which personal and professional interests were fused in this period, to such

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<sup>64</sup> Letter, Michael Robbins to S.B. Taylor, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1951; NA AN104/1.

an extent that the divisions between the two become almost superfluous. The Journal aimed to offer “common ground to historians both in the academic world and in the actual world of transport, who will in turn be writing for readers of both kinds” (Simmons and Robbins 1953: 1). L.C. Johnson himself wrote the articles ‘Historical Records of the British Transport Commission’ for Volume 1 Number 2 of the Journal (November 1953) and ‘British Transport Commission Archives: Work since 1953’ for Volume 5 Number 3 (May 1962), whilst Scholes wrote an article entitled ‘Transport Treasures’ for Volume 5 Number 1 (May 1961) - although both of these were effectively adverts, or promotions, of the BTC’s historical work.

The extent to which professional involvement in the transport industry and academic interest in transport history could become merged is illustrated in the fact that all of the authors of Volume 1 Issue 4 (1954) held a transport industry role of some capacity: A.J. Quin-Harkin, author of ‘Imperial Airways, 1924-40’ was Manager of the International Air Transport Association Clearing House, Paul E. Garbutt, author of ‘The Trans-Siberian Railway’ was Planning Assistant (Railways) at London Transport, P.A. Keen, writer of ‘Metropolitan Railway Road Services’, worked under Robbins within the Secretary’s Office at London Transport and J.A.B Hibbs, who contributed a piece on ‘Road Transport History in *Notices and Proceedings*’ was a Member of the Council of the Omnibus Society and its Honorary Librarian (having previously worked as a personal assistant to the Managing Director of a bus and coach company). As noted above, some of the famous railway historians in this era were employed by British Railways and wrote in their spare time, and Derek Barrie

and George Dow had their books reviewed in the journal, whilst Barrie also served as a reviewer himself (though neither contributed articles). Writing for the Journal, or indeed writing about transport history at all, represented, in effect, a very serious form of leisure for those transport professionals who chose to contribute to it, for transport history- or at least railway history- was conceived of, by co-editor Michael Robbins, as a craft with its own rules and codes of behaviour ('What Kind of Railway History Do We Want?' Robbins 1957). That being said, the link between the professional sphere and the academic arena should not be over-stated: whilst many of the authors who appeared in the Journal were from a professional background, Robbins later suggested that non-academic authors were "harder to manage" and had to be "pressed into writing" (Robbins 2002: 4).

To return now to the BTC's Records Service itself- which helped to both fuel and satisfy this academic interest in transport history- we can see that in this period Johnson and his team were primarily occupied with organising and classifying the documents and papers in the BTC's possession, bringing them into a scheme whereby they would both "form an organic whole"- being integrated into one collection- yet also "retain their individual identity" (Johnson 1953: 83). More space was clearly allocated or available at the Porchester Road office than had been anticipated, since rather than remaining regionally dispersed as had been suggested in the 1950 report, all of the company minute books and other paperwork (such as share registers, plans and agreements) were concentrated at this site alongside non-company material such as correspondence, notices, maps, rulebooks and timetables, a

collection of Periodicals and a Library. L.C. Johnson undertook what he termed an “educational course” at the Public Record Office during 1951, arranged by Taylor and under the auspices of Mr R.H. Ellis, then deputy to the chief assistant keeper at the BRO and Editor of the British Records Association’s ‘Archives’ magazine<sup>65</sup>.

The BTC’s collections were not only intended for the use of historic researchers- indeed in his second article Johnson suggests that the Records Service must “exist *primarily* for all branches of the Commission’s undertaking for functional purposes” (Johnson 1962: 160; italics added). Johnson cites, as examples of such purposes, the use of “statistical information dating back to the middle of the last century” for “an urgent current purpose”; whilst timetables found in a vault “yielded important information relative to an enquiry as to the opening in the last century, and continuous operation, of certain of the Commission’s ferry services” (Johnson 1962:161). Many of the documents looked after by the Records service had previously been administered by individual departments, who had, as Johnson suggests in a separate article written for the Journal of the Society of Archivists, not always treated these records with as much care and respect as they might have done- he suggests that, whilst some departments had “excellent systems and accommodation”, the staff of others had to endure “disagreeable and filthy excursions into dim and rather dank vaults when some new development suddenly made the production of old records of the highest importance” (Johnson 1955: 94). By contrast, Johnson’s Records department did not simply

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<sup>65</sup> Letter, Johnson to S.B. Taylor, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1951; NA AN104/1.

offer clean, ordered accommodation, but it also transformed “dead “old stuff”” as Johnson termed it, into “a series of live records... often of astonishing importance for present-day business purposes” (Johnson 1962: 160). This concept of the ‘living record’ is reinforced by Johnson’s earlier description of the collection as an “organic whole”. There is a certain historical irony here in that, whilst the BTC was actively discovering and enlivening its past, the then present day railway was withering on the vine (to use the ecological metaphors which, as Revill (2012) suggests, are prevalent in cultural depictions of the railway). The network failed to make a profit for the first time in 1952, and thereafter the losses increased year on year, despite the closure of many unprofitable lines (some 3,318 miles of line were closed between 1948 and 1962 (White 1986)) and the implementation of the 1955 plan ‘Modernization and Re-equipment of British Railways’, which proposed the elimination of steam traction, the concentration and mechanisation of goods and marshalling yards and the introduction of new equipment.

Crucially, the documents in the BTC’s archives were organised along company lines- Johnson was firm on this point, stating that “Company identity must rank prior to subject grouping” (Johnson 1953: 84). Indeed, for Johnson only the material which had been “created and used by an administrative body” (Johnson 1953: 83), in this case an erstwhile transport company, could be strictly classified as part of the archive. The identities of the BTC’s predecessors, both immediate and further removed (e.g. railway companies which were amalgamated following the grouping in 1923 or even those which were taken over by more successful companies prior to this), were thus

perpetuated in archival space. Whilst the Inventory Summary was divided into sections which largely corresponded to the five Executives into which the Commission itself was split (Docks and Inland Waterways, London Transport, Railways, Hotels and Road Transport), and there was a large Miscellaneous category which contained “documents and papers which cannot readily be incorporated in specific Company Groups” (Johnson 1953: 87), each extinct Company had its own Inventory prefaced with “a short history of the inception and evolution of the undertaking, with particular reference to the relevant Acts of Parliament” on the first page of its’ entry (Johnson 1953: 85). However, geographically and organisationally the records had of course been brought together for the first time, at a location which in many cases was far removed from the point of origin of a particular record, and thus from the specific space of the company to which they had once belonged.

The Archives were opened to researchers; indeed the opening hours of the central repository in Porchester Road were extended to 8.30 PM on Tuesdays in 1955, before being extended to this time on Thursdays as well in October 1957. Similarly to Scholes (see below), Johnson himself encouraged public donations to the collections in his charge, concluding his first piece in the *JTH* with a plea: “If any reader of the review has papers, documents etc., relating to transport, which he would like to deposit with us for preservation and custody, we shall be very pleased to receive them” (1953: 96)

However, the tone of suspicion towards private researchers adopted in the 1951 report- which as described above suggested that all visitors should state their intentions prior to being allowed access- was only partially altered

in practice, with brief details of the visitors' research interests logged in the enquiry register<sup>66</sup> and with Johnson insisting that "no extracts or material... shall be published without the prior consent of the Commission", although he adds that this will not be "unreasonably withheld" (Johnson 1953: 96). More obliquely, Johnson later suggested that researchers needed to have, in effect, an archival state of mind, to inhabit and transmit the liveliness of the archives, in order to be welcomed in his establishments. Steedman (2001:75) has written that visiting the archive is "expressive of a more general fever to know and to have the past", yet for Johnson any utilitarian use of the archive- by researchers rather than BTC staff- was anathematic to the vision he has for the collections in his care: "We are not happy about the writer who may wish to use the records for his immediate purpose only, and has no thought about their care, nor for the historian of the future, except perhaps, that the latter may rely upon the work the former!" (Johnson 1962: 161-162). Rather, Johnson approves of those authors who write "as to impress upon all who read his work the vital importance of the record itself and inspire a common spirit of archive consciousness", thus performing "a great service... for himself and for posterity" (Johnson 1962: 162). Concerned for the future of the records- perhaps in large part because, at the time this article was written, the future of the Records service itself had been thrown into doubt by the passage of 1962 Transport Act- Johnson suggests that "We cannot afford a casual or callous attitude towards our heritage of records" (1962: 162).

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<sup>66</sup> NA AN104/23.

In 1955 the BTC opened two branch archival repositories in York and Edinburgh. This drew a mixed response from Simmons and Robbins in an editorial in *JTH* (Volume 2 Number 3), and again this reflects the archive's organisation along ex-company lines as well as the geographical situatedness of the three facilities. The editors were generally in favour of the establishment of the Scottish facility, on the grounds that "a clean division can be made" since "broadly speaking, the Scottish (pre-grouping) companies can be separated from the English" in spite of the incursion of three of the southernmost companies into English territory. Thus it was "a clear gain that Scottish students should be able to study the domestic history of the purely Scottish railways and canals without the necessity of visiting London" (Simmons and Robbins 1956: 130). However, the editors suggest that "the case for the York facility is perhaps more doubtful", and that, unless it stimulates enquiry into the transport history of the North East, "the case for concentrating all the records of the English and Welsh companies in a single office should be re-examined" (Simmons and Robbins 1956: 130). They suggest that any further splitting of the BTC's records would not be desirable, suggesting in particular (and as examples) that the establishment of repositories in Liverpool or Cardiff would not be appropriate, even though "Lancashire holds a peculiarly important place in the history of railways" whilst "Welsh nationalists may press a claim that Wales should be treated like Scotland" (Simmons and Robbins 1956: 130). Such moves would necessitate "splitting the records of great companies like the London and North Western and the Great Western", a move which the two men describe, with seriousness, as "indefensible" (Simmons and Robbins 1956: 130).

Simmons later wrote an article in the *JTH* on 'The Scottish Records of the British Transport Commission', in which he suggested that whilst, on the one hand, the establishment of regional repositories may "foster local loyalties"- which was important on a railway network on which "the old "company" loyalty has survived nationalisation" and would more readily lead to the addition of newly discovered records since "news of unknown records of a Scottish company is much more likely to be given to an archivist established in Edinburgh than to one who is thought of merely as an official in far-away London"- on the other hand "the records of a subject are never easily divisible", which meant that "a single piece of research may now have to be pursued in two places, or even in three" (Simmons 1958: 158). Again, he suggested that "this problem arises less acutely in Scotland than in north-eastern England, since the very notion of this region was "certainly not synonymous with the territory occupied by the old North Eastern Railway" (Simmons 1958: 159). Later, Johnson suggested- perhaps in response to Simmons and Robbins' earlier criticism- that the two branches "have performed excellent work... becoming well known among the Universities and other cultural organisations in their respective areas as well as by students from other parts of the country" (Johnson 1962: 164). He suggests that "each branch is now rich in original records", including the records of the Stockton and Darlington Railway at York and of the Crinan Canal and the Forth and Clyde Canal at Edinburgh, and adds that "each branch has very well justified its establishment" (Johnson 1962: 165).

Whilst it is perhaps inadvisable to use the writings of L.C. (Leonard) Johnson to judge the success of the BTC's Records Department- given as he was the man responsible for their care, and therefore had a biased point of view- this Department's achievements were impressive nonetheless. The large number of visitors was perhaps testament to the Records Service's success to some extent, whilst Johnson mentions that the Repository's received "visits from representatives of large business and archival organisations... for the express purpose of studying our methods of archive administration" (Johnson 1962: 161). This is in itself remarkable given that Johnson had himself effectively trained on the job just over ten years earlier through his 'educational course' administered by the PRO.

#### **5.4 Exhibiting Britain's railway history at the Festival of Britain**

In connection with the Festival of Britain celebrations, an exhibition of railway rolling stock was staged by British Railways at the old station in York (built as a terminus and later closed to passengers in 1877, but remaining in use as carriage storage space until the 1960s) between June 4<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 1951. This exhibition seems to have pre-dated Scholes' involvement in exhibitions of historic relics and to have been organised by the then North Eastern Region, with the introduction to the exhibition's programme being written by Chief Regional Officer H.A. Short<sup>67</sup>. Whilst not strictly a part of the BTC's relics and records policies, as described elsewhere in this chapter, the exhibition is of especial interest here as both historic artefacts and newer items, including some brand new pieces of rolling stock, were on display.

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<sup>67</sup> Festival of Britain 1951: exhibition of railway rolling stock: old station- York, June 4<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>: programme, NRM Q1A/40P.

A similar *modus operandi* can be detected at the officially affiliated exhibitions in London, at Kelvin Hall in Glasgow and the travelling exhibitions housed in the festival ship *SS Campania* (which called at Southampton, Dundee, Newcastle, Hull, Plymouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Belfast, Birkenhead and Glasgow) and the overland travelling exhibition (which visited Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Nottingham). Whilst Dunstone (2007:30) suggests that the London exhibition incorporated “mainly modern” exhibits, I would argue that both this exhibition and the associated displays mentioned above combined historic and modern exhibits to emphasize Britain’s the railway’s role as a ‘gift to the world’- something which the York exhibition was not able to do due to the fact that it was organised by British Railways and therefore restricted to the use of British rolling stock, as opposed to those constructed by British manufacturers for export.

The opportunity to juxtapose and contrast historic relics with cutting edge technology- as Dunstone describes it, the “exploiting of contrast with the past for publicity purposes” (2007: 24)- was a key factor in the preservation and restoration to working order of locomotives in particular by the Big Four companies prior to the Second World War- for instance at the Stockton and Darlington Centenary celebrations of 1925, organised by the LNER, which included a cavalcade of locomotives incorporating machines from the dawn of railways- including an engine from 1822- up to the then present day (including an A1 Pacific express steam locomotive, a type built between 1922 and 1935). The exhibition in York continued this tradition, containing the locomotives *Britannia* (then less than five months old), *Mallard* (still only 13 years old at this

time, but already famous for its record-breaking run of 1938), electric locomotive 26010 (which was undertaking 'running-in' trials), and contemporary royal coaches alongside Locomotion Number 1, a coach from the Stockton and Darlington Railway, royal carriages designed for Queen Adelaide and Queen Victoria, an Ivatt Atlantic locomotive from 1902, a chaldron wagon (an ancient, traditional type of freight wagon) and some carriages of unspecified age<sup>68</sup>.

The official Festival of Britain exhibitions also combined historic exhibits with more modern technology, though these were often examples destined for overseas export. At the same time, they were to some extent riven by uneasiness as to the relative modernity of railway technology. The Railways section of the Transport and Communications pavilion, at the Festival's primary South Bank exhibition site, combined an eclectic mix of historic exhibits- including a selection of early track sections and the locomotive *Agenoria* (usually displayed at the Railway Museum in York), early timetables (including the famous *Bradshaw's Guide*) and signalling equipment- with models of various locomotives, principally intended for export (e.g. 'Exhibit No. A576- 10mm scale model of 500hp locomotive for the Peruvian Corporation')<sup>69</sup>. The objective of such a display was, as the accompanying catalogue put it, to illustrate not only that "British engineers gave railways to the world" but also that the railway industries "continue to maintain their position (as market leaders), in spite of increasingly heavy opposition from

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<sup>68</sup> Festival of Britain 1951: exhibition of railway rolling stock: old station- York, June 4<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>: programme, NRM Q1A/40P.

<sup>69</sup> NA WORK 25/230/E1/A2/1 'Festival Office Books and Pamphlets: Handbook of Official Programme.

overseas” (which, as the catalogue points out, often came from firms that had been established by British individuals or companies) and that “our industry is still abreast of the times”. Thus the exhibition sought to link the railway and railway technology to British national identity and its leading industrial position on the world stage, even if the acts of ‘maintaining position’ and ‘keeping abreast of the times’ were hardly ringing endorsements of the dynamic state of the contemporary British railway industry.

The overland travelling exhibition, which focussed on design- “the British people and the things they make and use”- took a more straightforwardly developmental approach, contrasting travel in 1851 and 1951 and utilising a special gallery of old prints, photographs and drawings to portray “the development that has taken place in passenger travel by rail since the 1830’s”- showing “the varying standard of comfort (and discomfort) that the passenger has enjoyed at the different times”<sup>70</sup>. The major railway exhibit was a full scale model of a passenger ‘lounge car’ of the near future designed to illustrate “how comfort and convenience can be provided with modern materials and techniques”. The design of the Festival Ship *Campania*, however, explicitly drew on the railway as an imperialist, or neo-imperialist, tool of British power and influence in the Transport section, with the catalogue to the exhibition suggesting that British railway engineering had influenced the development of countries across the world: “Many countries abroad, which now rely on railway systems as their chief means of transport, have to thank the foresight

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<sup>70</sup> NA WORK 25/230/E1/A1/7 ‘Land Travelling Exhibition. Guide Catalogue.

of British engineers, contractors and navvies who worked out those systems and brought them into being”<sup>71</sup>.

Thus, as well as a mural depicting 19<sup>th</sup> century railway development- (which was a series of four oil paintings depicting historic locomotives alongside contemporaneous events) painted by the lecturer and architect Lucian Pietka, a Polish émigré- the exhibition included another by F.H. Baines showing export locomotives, a model of a 2-10-0 ‘Austerity’ type Ministry of War locomotive (examples of which had been brought following the war by the railways of the Netherlands, Greece and Syria) and, in a perhaps eccentric display of sideways thinking, the Railways section also illustrated the vehicles used to take contemporary products of the British railway industry to ports for export, and the ships which were used to convey the rolling stock to the country in which it was to be used. There was also a vast model railway layout depicting both sub surface and deeper level London Underground lines.

The vast, ambitious Exhibition of Industrial Power in Glasgow aimed to tell “the story of Britain’s tremendous contribution to heavy engineering” and was split into coal and water sequences which came together in the Hall of Railways and Shipbuilding (locomotive and ship manufacturing were of course two of Glasgow’s principal industries at this time)<sup>72</sup>. Similarly to the main exhibition in London and the exhibition on the *Campania*, the Exhibition of Industrial Power’s Hall of Railways and Shipbuilding detailed the early history of the railways in order to emphasize the extent to which the railway was a

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<sup>71</sup> NA WORK 25/230/E1/A1/6 Festival Ship “Campania”. Guide Catalogue.

<sup>72</sup> NA WORK 25/230/E1/A1/5 Exhibition of Industrial Power. Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, Guide Catalogue.

British idea: “Britain can claim, without fear of dispute, not only to have invented the locomotive and the permanent way, but to have pioneered the construction of railways all over the world”.

Importantly, this historical narrative was not merely about the railway’s conquest of domestic space, but also sought to emphasize “how much the world owes to the early railway pioneers”. Clinging, nostalgically perhaps, to an imperialist narrative at a time when the British Empire was rapidly falling apart, the exhibition showed “the work of the men who laid tracks over the Andes and through the swamps and deserts of India and central Africa”, illustrating how “the first simple idea grew until, within a few years, the pioneers were setting out confidently to encircle the globe”.

The Hall of Railways and Shipbuilding also included modern locomotives and a display illustrating the story of locomotive development “from the days of primitive engines and open trucks to the streamlined expresses of the present-day”. Importantly, the Hall included several examples of rolling stock designed for export. This was partially motivated by their novelty value, as they were “types which were never seen at home”, rather than British stock which could be “seen in any railway station”- yet the display was also seen to illustrate the “pre-eminent position still held by British railway manufacturers in the world market”. Again we can see, both in the display and the description of it- particularly in the use of the word ‘still’- a faintly desperate emphasis on Britain’s industrial might at a time when the nation’s prominence within international geopolitics was being increasingly denuded. The end of

this Hall was “dominated by a magnificent locomotive which will be exported to the Government of Victoria when the exhibition closes”.

Whilst the Hall of Shipbuilding and Railways sought to emphasize the modern, up-to-date status of Britain’s locomotive construction industry, and included an “impression of the kind of carriage in which we may travel in the future”, this image was somewhat disrupted by the final part of the exhibition, the Hall of the Future, which showcased atomic power- the ‘power of the future’. This extraordinary space, for which Basil Spence (later Sir, who also designed the Sea and Ships pavilion at the main Festival site and, at a later date, Coventry Cathedral) was the architect, featured “a shining cone rising from the floor, its tip pulsating and throwing off great crackling flashes of lightning to a night sky which curves above it in a twinkling hemisphere- the limitless future”.

Richard Trevithick, the inventor of the steam railway locomotive, was featured within one of the pits showing the work of ‘five great men’ – the others were James Watt, Michael Faraday, Charles Parsons and Michael Rutherford- who had “made a discovery which influenced heavy engineering in the past or may do so in the future” (this latter part seems to have applied primarily to Rutherford). The railway, or at least the steam railway, was thus implicitly related to the past, whilst nuclear power was seen, with an astonishing degree of sinister dubiety given the celebratory nature of the Festival as a whole, as not only the power of the future but also as a force which could in itself determine what the future would hold. The catalogue to the Exhibition suggests the nature of the work being undertaken to advance

Rutherford's pioneering atomic discoveries, and the uses to which it was put, "will determine whether we are entering an age of undreamed of plenty and comfort, or whether we are working out our complete extinction". Faced with such world-altering power- the "basic power of the sun"- older technologies such as the railway, were, as world-changing as they themselves had been in their day, quite literally put in the shade.

One other railway exhibit at the Festival of Britain was the Oystercreek and Far Tottering Railway in Battersea Park, West London. This whimsical, narrow gauge railway, running for a third of a mile with three trains hauled by locomotives which were in part improvised from a variety of recycled objects, was designed by Rowland Emmet based on the cartoons he had produced for *Punch* since 1944 of a crumbling, decrepit branch line set apart from the modern world. As Grossart (1988:9) suggested, "the scenes were often a nostalgic look at a disappearing world of gentility, where machines were inefficient rather than mindless and temperamental rather than frightening and unrelenting in their machinations". According to Carter (2001:282), the presence of the Oystercreek and Far Tottering Railway acted as a counterpoint to the modernity of the rest of the Festival, "a refuge for visitors suffering from modernism overload". Samuel (1994:55), meanwhile, suggested that the railway was a "phantasmagoria of backwardness, showing that the British had a sense of humour"- for him the railway, and the model of Stephenson's *Rocket* on display at the main festival site, are proof that "the past was present (at the Festival) only in the form of anachronism". Carter (2001:282) goes as far as to suggest that "the British railway heritage industry

was born on the Far Tottering line, threading its fake-antique course among temples to modern teleology”. Certainly, the use of a railway- however fantastical- to denote backwardness, and an antidote to the arch-modern structures present at the rest of the Festival, suggests that this form of transport could no longer claim to be cutting edge technology. Even on the Tottering and Oyster Creek, however, the trains were held together by the latest adhesives and powered by internal combustion engines rather than steam (Carter 2008).

### **5.5 The exhibitions staged by the Department of Historic Relics during the 1950s**

Perhaps owing to the discrete separation of the Relics Department within the corporate structure of the BTC (and later the BRB) and to the difficulties associated with the site at Euston (which was only capable of housing smaller items) and later Clapham (which lacked railway access) the possibility of contrasting old and new examples of rolling stock or other exhibits was not taken up under Scholes’ tenure. The Museums which were ultimately established, or which continued to run, at York, Clapham and Swindon were also steadfastly parochial, either in a regional sense (the museum at York concentrated primarily on the history of railways within the North East, whilst that at Swindon solely documented the story of the Great Western Railway) or on a national basis in the case of Clapham- which specifically aimed to cover “all historical aspects of public transport *in Britain*” (Morgan 1963: 40, italics added). Being associated with British Railways as a corporate body, and facing acute storage problems with the collection he already had,

John Scholes was perhaps unwilling and/or unable to display items which depicted the role of Britain's railways on the world stage, as was illustrated when a plaque inscribed with the words 'Great Indian Peninsular Railway, 1849' was gifted to the Commission in 1958 by a Mr Malley of Dumfries, having been owned by a man who had worked on the line. Scholes, having taken possession of it, wrote in a letter that it was "unacceptable to the collections of the Commission as it refers to a railway outside the British Isles" and planned to "find a good home for it perhaps with the Indian Government"<sup>73</sup>. This was despite the fact that the line had been established through a British Act of Parliament, whilst British civil engineer James John Berkeley was this line's surveyor and route designer and Robert Stephenson served as Consulting Engineer to the construction process until his death in 1859.

Between his appointment in 1951 and 1958, Scholes organised five exhibitions, with four of these being held at the Shareholder's Meeting Room at Euston Station which, in architectural terms, was as much of a relic as the exhibits it was to contain. The Room had been restored, under Scholes' direction, "to its former design and colouring by reference to the original specifications and drawings of the Architect, P.C. Hardwick (1822-92)" (Scholes 1961: 24). Looking back, there is a certain poignancy to the choice of these surroundings, with the Meeting Room part of what Lord Hurcomb described as "a group of buildings at Euston which should be carefully preserved as a historical monument", and the refurbishment of which was

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<sup>73</sup> Letter, Scholes to Mr Hyde, Office of the General Manager, Scottish Region, 02/07/1959; NAS BR/RSR/4/1761

part of a redevelopment of the station to make it a more open space, and to make it more akin to the way in which “it was meant to be seen by those who built it”<sup>74</sup>. Less than 10 years later, the old station site- which Lord Hurcomb had suggested was “regarded by many as architecturally perhaps the most interesting and beautiful railway station in the world”, was demolished.

The Shareholder’s Meeting Room was not big enough to house any full size rolling stock, and the exhibitions which were held there were comprised of models and smaller items. New display cases, which had been designed by Robin Day- who had worked on chair designs for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and went on to design the now ubiquitous Polypropylene stacking chair- were installed to a modernist design, made almost entirely of frameless glass and with the exhibits lit by means of a fluorescent tube. The exhibitions held at this location were arranged under Scholes’ direction by Peter Miller and Sheila Stratton (who designed the poster ‘See London and London’s Country’ (advertising conducted coach tours) for London Transport in 1954) and were comprised of the themed exhibitions ‘London on Wheels’ (20<sup>th</sup> May 1953- 31<sup>st</sup> January 1954) - which “dealt with travel by road, rail and inland waterways in London in the nineteenth century” (Scholes 1961: 29) and attracted, according to a press statement of the time, nearly 50,000 visitors (ANI3/1203), ‘Popular Carriage’ (1954), ‘Steam Locomotive’ (1955), and the broader, semi-permanent exhibition ‘Transport Treasures’ (1956). In addition, in 1953 a travelling “coronation year” exhibition, ‘Royal Journey’, was staged featuring “the famous Royal railway coaches of the nineteenth and twentieth

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<sup>74</sup> BTC press release, Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 1953, NA ANI3/1203.

centuries and other relics connected with Royal travel” (Scholes 1961: 29). This began at what is described as Battersea Wharf Station between June 19<sup>th</sup> and July 11<sup>th</sup> 1953, before undertaking a “tour of the principal cities”<sup>75</sup>. The exhibition consisted, in London, of four royal carriages- Queen Adelaide’s coach of 1842, Queen Victoria’s coach of 1869 and two originally built for King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (and later modified for King George V and Queen Mary and used up to the beginning of World War II), a Caledonian Railway locomotive which had been used as a royal ‘pilot’, running in front of the royal train before it passed, and many smaller exhibits connected with royal journeys, such as the folders illustrating arrival and departure times and line gradients for the benefit of royal passengers.

Meanwhile, Transport Treasures itself became a travelling exhibition, visiting firstly Leicester in June 1957- in connection with a centenary exhibition put on by the City of Leicester itself entitled ‘Leicester and the Midland Railway’ - and later many other parts of England and Wales before being discontinued “because of the heavy maintenance costs and operational problems” (Scholes 1961: 30). What is important, I would argue, about these exhibitions is that they seem to have moved as an *entire train* across the country, with these carriages being displayed in often disused stations or sidings. Thus, rather than being merely a set of objects which were displayed in different museums around the country, the *whole museum display* effectively moved from place to place- and the carriages themselves were sometimes

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<sup>75</sup> Press statement, NA AN13/1203

housed in buildings which were relics of a bygone railway era, and had been closed to passengers for many years.

Each of the exhibitions was accompanied by a brightly coloured pamphlet authored by different well-known transport historians, although the author was in each case not named on the booklet's cover, which attributed the work only to the BTC. Those for 'London on Wheels', 'Royal Journey' and 'Popular Carriage' were written by Cuthbert Hamilton Ellis, a writer and painter who had authored or co-authored both factual works on railway history such as *The trains we loved* (1947), *Nineteenth century railway carriages in the British Isles* (1949), and *The beauty of old trains* (1952), and also fictional works which often featured railways as a motif, such as *Who wrecked the mail?* (1944). The accompanying pamphlet for *Steam Locomotive- a retrospect of the work of eight great locomotive engineers* was written by O.S. Nock, who was to become a leviathan of British railway literature and who had, at this time, written *British Locomotives at Work* (1947), *The Railways of Britain, past and present* (1948), *Scottish Railways* (1950), and *Four Thousand miles on the footplate* (1952). The accompanying pamphlet to *Transport Treasures* (1956) was written by L.T.C. Rolt, an author and campaigner who had come to prominence through his role in the establishment of The Vintage Sports Car Club (1934), The Inland Waterways Association (1946) and The Tallylyn Railway Preservation Society- which successfully restored a neglected narrow-gauge railway line in mid-Wales- in 1951. He had also written prolifically on a variety of transport topics, including *Narrow Boat* (1944), *High Horse Riderless-* a philosophical work on the relationship between humans, technology and the

natural world which, as Revill (2012: 238) suggests, “posited a new balance between machines, science, art and spirituality based on organic principles of self-sufficiency”, *The Inland Waterways of England* (1950), *Horseless Carriage: the Motor Car in England* (1950), *Lines of Character* (1952)- “an evocation of that varied regional character of railways which is ebbing away as a result of standardization or the closure of branch lines” (Rolt 1952: 15-16), *Railway Adventure* (an account of his establishment of the Tallylyn Railway Preservation Society) (1953), and *Red for Danger* (a definitive history of railway accidents ) (1955). Rolt also wrote a guide to the Railway Museum in York in 1958.

The accompanying pamphlets to each exhibition are perhaps unconventional insofar as they do not describe, or in some cases even refer to, the exhibition itself. Rather, they form chronological histories of the exhibition’s subject matter, acting as an accompaniment, and giving context, to the exhibition rather than relating what it contained as such. Nock’s pamphlet, for example, describes the achievements of the “eight great locomotive engineers” as part of a story of the evolution of steam locomotive design and production, with the titles of the men in question- Robert Stephenson, John Ramsbottom, Edward Fletcher, Patrick Stirling, Samuel Waite Johnson, Dugald Drummond, G.J. Churchward and H.N. Gresley- incorporated into the text itself rather than placed into separate sections. Such writing techniques- and specifically the disassociation of the text from the exhibition it was connected with-enabled further editions and reissues of these texts to be printed into the 1960s, even after the BTC had been split up and the Curator’s role had become part of the newly formed BRB. O.S.

Nock's *Steam Locomotive: A retrospect of the work of eight great locomotive engineers*, for example, was published in 1955, as a new edition in 1958, and then reprinted in 1962 and 1964. Ellis' *Royal Journey: A retrospect of royal trains in the British Isles* was published in 1953, as a second edition in 1960 and as a second impression in 1964. Scholes recommends Rolt's *Transport Treasures* to readers of his article in 1961, after this exhibitions' effective successor the Museum of British Transport had opened in Clapham, although *Transport Treasures* was, to use Scholes' phrase, the 'nucleus' of the Clapham collection.

Each of the pamphlets included an identical script at the back in which the work of the Office of the Curator of Historical Relics was related- being described as "the systematic preservation of all material of historical interest appertaining to public transport in Britain". The script belies both a Whiggish belief in technological progress over time- with the author (presumably Scholes himself) noting that each of the objects in the collection "had their day before giving way to the march of progress"- which was also evident in the chronological arrangement of the pamphlets themselves, which were largely concerned with the seemingly inexorable progression of technological development. Yet at the same time it also hints at a particular fondness for the pre-nationalisation era, as suggested in its description of those companies which had amassed many of the 'transport treasures' in its collection- "the former independent railway, road and inland water concerns during the *momentous* industrial period from 1760 onwards (*italics added*)". Similarly to Johnson, Scholes uses these end-of-pamphlet sections to appeal to the public

to make “donations, bequests and, in certain cases, permanent loans of suitable material”.

Although Scholes was successful in organising several exhibitions, and in amassing objects for the Department- in his 1961 article he suggests that “many thousands of items” have been added to the collection since his appointment through “diligent searching of locations and premises in different parts of the country”, donations and purchases (Scholes 1961: 23)- he nevertheless faced difficulties in relation to the storage of items (particularly locomotives), the acquisition of objects and, worse, the destruction of objects which had previously been selected for preservation. Dunstone (2007:30) suggests that Scholes was “out of his depth, though extremely hard-working and determined”, and that “he was observed to display a certain lack of confidence when dealing with his superiors”, but also that was better at communicating with enthusiasts. Dunstone also speculates that he may have suffered from being an ‘outsider’- a non-railwayman. Scholes’ lack of confidence is to some extent borne out in the correspondence of the time- for example in a memorandum of 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953, it is stated that, whilst Mr Scholes has been asked to catalogue all of the relics of 222 Marylebone Road (the headquarters of the Railway Executive), he “doesn’t want to upset people”, and seeks to make arrangements which could “pave the way for him” (though as it turns out he was right to do so, as the turmoil surrounding the abolition of the Railway Executive, and the other Executives, at this time leads to the recommendation that his ‘inquisition’ be postponed).

However, Scholes was also stymied perhaps by the rather dysfunctional organizational structure- and specifically the lack of communication both within British Railways and between these functions and the management of the BTC itself (even after the Railway Executive had been abolished in 1953 and replaced with more direct organizational control) – whilst the sheer geographical vastness of the organization of which he was a part also adversely affected his attempts to both preserve objects and ensure, effectively, that they stayed preserved, or singularized, rather than entering or re-entering the commodity sphere. Furthermore, decisions were occasionally made about the preservation or operation of historic objects seemingly without Scholes' consultation. The organizational structure of the BTC effectively held its own agency within the processes of preservation which occurred at this time, dictating through its' sheer dysfunctionality the fate of individual historic objects.

### **5.6 How railway preservation unfolded 'on the ground': The Scottish Region and the preservation of *Gordon Highlander***

Surviving 1950s correspondence from the Scottish Region of British Railways, concerning management discussions about the preservation or otherwise of a number of different historic objects, illustrates the complexity of the organizational structures in which Scholes was embroiled, and also that, in some cases, decisions about the preservation of historic objects were made without his involvement or counsel, and often at the prompting of amateur enthusiasts. To some extent the discussions pertaining to the preservation of objects in this era reflect the problems which the BTC was encountering as a

result of the legacy of the haphazard and largely incomplete listing and preservation of preserved items which it had inherited in 1948, yet the arcane managerial structure and devolved decision making processes of the organisation itself (particularly when the Region in question was situated a long way from Scholes' base) certainly decreased the effectuality of the railway preservation procedures which the Commission had in place at this time. Presumably because he was himself part of the Public Relations and Publicity Department, Scholes' communications with Scotland- or at least, the Scottish Region of British Railways (one assumes that other contacts dealt with his road and canal transport enquiries)- had often to go through H.M. Hunter, the Public Relations and Publicity Officer, who in turn had to seek permission for particular decisions from the General Manager's Office- the General Manager of the Scottish Region in this period (1955-1963) being James Ness (though sometimes Scholes wrote to the General Manager's Office directly). The General Manager's Office then had to communicate with the relevant Department in order to arrange for the preservation of the object, and/or where relevant discuss this at an Area Board meeting, and then in turn communicate the action taken with Scholes (or liaise with Hunter, who himself would communicate with Scholes). Scholes himself was not always the orchestrator of these processes.

A key example of the application of these procedures, the preservation of the locomotive 'Gordon Highlander' (Figure 8) was a tortuous process which consisted of enthusiastic prompting, a change of mind (or of heart) and a cataclysmic error. A campaign to save a former Great North of Scotland

Railway 4-4-0 locomotive was begun in March 1957 by John Emslie, then a medical student at Glasgow University, who went on to become a distinguished epidemiologist and later (1964) the co-founder of the Great North of Scotland Railway Association and an office holder of the Stephenson Locomotive Society (Campbell: 2000). He had erroneously believed that three of this variety of engine (which had originally been divided into several marginally different sub-classes of 100 locomotives built over a number of years) were still in traffic at this point- in fact No. 62265 (built 1909) had already been cut up, but at this time No. 62264 (built 1899) and No. 62277 (built 1920) survived, with 62264 having recently been withdrawn and 62277 still in service. He had consulted with H.M. Hunter, the Publicity Officer- whom he knew from having undertaken research in his department- as to the possibility of preserving 62264 specifically, and Hunter had in turn contacted the Chief Mechanical and Electrical Engineer for the Region, M.S Hatchell<sup>76</sup>. Hatchell had withheld the scrapping of the locomotive, yet on enquiry from Ness' office as to whether there was "any special reason why Engine No. 42264 should be preserved"<sup>77</sup>, he does not seem especially enthusiastic about the concept of saving it, writing in one letter that "the only reason that could be put forward is that... it would provide an example of old G.N. of S. design and livery" to match the Highland and Caledonian examples which had already been preserved (thus the pre-grouping identities were again making their ghostly presence felt in the preservation strategies of this era)<sup>78</sup>. He also

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<sup>76</sup> Letter from Public Relations and Publicity Officer to James Ness, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1957, NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>77</sup> Letter to Hatchell 'for James Ness', 24<sup>th</sup> April 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>78</sup> Letter, M.S. Hatchell to James Ness, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

comments that “this type (4-4-0 wheel arrangement) became the standard employed by that company for both passenger and goods working”, which made its’ traction policy unique (all other companies used a mixture of different locomotive types rather than just one)- although he stops short of suggesting that this is a reason as to why it should be preserved. He goes further in a later letter- which unlike the first is signed by, rather than for, him- suggesting that “there is really no end to various requests for preservation, and I can see no real justification for acceding to this request”<sup>79</sup>.

Hatchell also pointed out that the Engine was not one of those which the railway preservation societies had recommended for preservation in 1950. The meeting at which this was decided, described above, had actually taken place on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1948, but the information was not it seems transmitted to Scotland or any other region until a letter from Riddles to M.S Bellamy, then the Chief Mechanical Engineer for the Scottish Region of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1950 ordering that the last example of the class of which No. 14397 ‘Ben-y-Gloe’, a locomotive formerly of the Highland Railway, was the pioneer, should be preserved<sup>80</sup>. It was this instruction which led to the preservation of *Ben Alder*, the last surviving member of this class, in 1953. The omission of a Great North of Scotland Railway Locomotive from this list of one locomotive type- which is double-checked by Ness’ office- along with the fact that, in the opinion of the CM&EE and the Motive Power Superintendent that “there is no special reason why 62264 should be preserved”-led to a recommendation

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<sup>79</sup> Letter, M.S. Hatchell to James Ness, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1957, NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>80</sup> Copy in NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

of 7<sup>th</sup> June 1957 that the locomotive should not be saved<sup>81</sup>. Hunter informs Emslie that the locomotive will be scrapped (though this letter is not on file), which in turn leads to a letter from W.A.C. Smith, Area Secretary of the Stephenson Locomotive Society, who perhaps inevitably disagrees with Hunter's assessment that the locomotive(s) are not worth preserving (it seems that No. 62277 was also included in this assessment)<sup>82</sup>. Surprisingly perhaps, he agrees that "there is nothing particularly unusual about the locomotive in question", yet he suggests that this ordinariness should in fact be a reason for its preservation, serving as an example of a "typical pre-grouping design", and as a "relic of the Great North of Scotland Railway". He suggests that it would be regretful if the Great North of Scotland Railway's stock was allowed to "become extinct", as had already happened with the Glasgow and South Western Company's vehicles. Noting the proposal for a National Transport Museum and the "not inconsiderable number of locomotives scheduled for preservation in England" he suggests that special consideration should be given to the locomotive's 'case', or that "at least, the last of the class be used to work a special farewell trip for the benefit of railway enthusiasts as has been done with success in other regions". A note on the file suggests that the locomotive, whilst on its way to Kilmarnock (its previous location was not stated) should not be broken up at this stage, pending a final decision at the Board Meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> August<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Letter G.W. Stewart (for General Manager) to H.M. Hunter, Public Relations and Publicity Officer, NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, W.A.C. Smith to James Ness, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>83</sup> Note by J.S. (probably John Scott, who worked in Ness' office), 19<sup>th</sup> July 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

The conflict between preserving unique locomotives- whether they were unique for mechanical reasons (such as Caledonian Number 123, the only one of its class) or because of their particular achievements (such as the *City of Truro*, which was the first British locomotive to be recorded at a speed of 100mph, or *Mallard*, which broke the world record speed for steam railway locomotives)- and preserving examples of ‘ordinary’ rolling stock- both locomotives and carriages- to demonstrate travel in the past was a common theme within the discussions and debates about railway preservation in this era. Within Scotland, the belief that “a disproportionate number of engines had been consigned to Clapham” (Thomas, n.d.:12) compared to the number preserved in Scotland led ultimately to the formation of the Scottish Locomotive Preservation Fund in 1962, although an emphasis was also placed on ensuring that the locomotives in question were in running order, rather than “mere museum pieces” (Thomas, n.d. 12)- even if ultimately the locomotive which they saved, former Caledonian Railway No.828, was put on display at the Museum of Transport in Glasgow in following British Railways’ embargo on the operation of privately owned locomotives (and later all steam locomotives).

Smith’s letter led to a suggestion from Ness that the locomotive should be used “to work a special trip for railway enthusiasts prior to being broken up”, and it was later suggested- and agreed- that the locomotive’s fate would be discussed at an Area Board meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> July 1957<sup>84</sup>. A memorandum was drafted with the agreement of Graham Miller, Chief Draughtsman at St Rollox

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<sup>84</sup>Letter, Ness to Hunter, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

works in Glasgow, putting both sides of the story (juxtaposing Smith's letter with the negativity of the Motive Power Superintendent and the Chief Mechanical and Electrical Engineer) and requesting the "consideration of the board"<sup>85</sup>. It was then that disaster struck. Before the matter could be discussed, No. 62264 was broken up at Kilmarnock following what Hatchell describes as a "misunderstanding between members of my staff"<sup>86</sup>. In the confusion following this, the writer of the memorandum, a J.S. (probably J. Scott), having heard about the scrapping via a telephone call, arranges for the issue to be withdrawn from the Agenda altogether, not realising at first that another locomotive- i.e. No.. 62277 *Gordon Highlander*- was available for preservation. By the time Miller informs them- and presumably also by the time that Hatchell's letter, which also mentions No.62277, has been received- the Agenda had been closed and the matter would thus have to wait to be discussed at the next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> September. This is communicated, in rather vague terms, to Smith and the Stephenson Locomotive Society- Ness suggests that he "cannot yet write you definitely about the question of preserving a G.N. of S. D. 40 type", but does note that "No. 62264 has in fact been broken up", thus *Gordon Highlander* is the only example of the type left.

There then followed something of a press campaign and a groundswell of support for the preservation of locomotive No. 62277 began to build. Mr David N. Angus of Culter, Aberdeen wrote similar letters supporting the locomotive's preservation in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* of 20<sup>th</sup> August, the *Scotsman* of 21<sup>st</sup> August and the *Glasgow Herald* of 24<sup>th</sup> August, ending each

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<sup>85</sup> Draft memorandum, 'Preservation of former Great North of Scotland Railway Locomotive, signed 'H', 24/7.; NRS BR/RSR/5/349,

<sup>86</sup> Letter, Hatchell to Ness, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

with the sentence “It would indeed (this word is dropped from the last letter) be a pity if the opportunity were missed of saving this historic and appropriate memorial of a once flourishing railway (i.e. the Great North of Scotland Railway)”<sup>87</sup>. The use of the term ‘memorial’ is perhaps notable here- Angus implies both that this particular organisation *should* be remembered, and that the only way that this can be achieved is by saving a physical remnant of its rolling stock. Angus’ letter to the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* was supported by a letter to this publication on August 23rd by Emslie- who suggested that readers should contact Hunter on the subject- and by the Marquis of Aberdeen, who also wrote to Hunter directly<sup>88</sup>. Emslie’s plea led to further letters to Hunter from Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey of Dinnet, author of *History of Great North of Scotland Railway*, and another from a Mr D. Murray-Smith of Old Aberdeen<sup>89</sup>.

Furthermore, W.Loch Kidston, who had co-founded the Edinburgh and Lothian Miniature Railway Club and gone on to play a key role in the establishment of the Gauge 0 Guild (Gauge 0 being a scale used in railway modelling), wrote to Ness directly, as did W.M. Johnston of Messrs George Outram and Company Limited- publishers of the *Glasgow Herald*, who forwarded Angus’ letter to Ness<sup>90</sup>. Kidston argued the case for *Gordon Highlander* in terms more of its engineering than of preserving evidence of the Great North of Scotland Railway as a social organisation. He uses the plural ‘we’, suggesting perhaps a common bond between himself and Ness as

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<sup>87</sup> Press cuttings, NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>88</sup> Press cuttings, NRS BR/RSR/5/350.

<sup>89</sup> Letter for H.M. Hunter to General Manager’s Office, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>90</sup> Letters, W.Loch Kidston to James Ness, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1957, W.M. Johnston to James Ness, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349

Scottish railwaymen, and speaks of the future development of a Scottish Regional Railway Museum, suggesting optimistically that “we hope that a site will yet be found for such, and that in the not too distant future”. In the meantime he suggests that *Gordon Highlander* represents “the danger of “scrapping” irreplaceable locomotive specimens which are essential if such a museum is to be truly representative of locomotive development (sic) in Scotland” (it is unclear why he puts the word scrapping in quotation marks). He mentions that the GN of SR was noted for its use of this type of engine and adds that “it would be deeply regretted later if when the Museum is in being it were then found that such could be housed and yet had been scrapped”, citing the example of the last North British Atlantic type locomotive, originally preserved but later scrapped. Poignantly- yet also with some dark irony- he concludes the letter by comparing *Gordon Highlander* with *Ben Alder*, which as it ultimately transpired was another locomotive which had supposedly been preserved but was later scrapped: “If it should be possible to house her under cover as is done with the Highland 4-4-0, *Ben Alder*, it would do much to ensure her ultimate preservation”.

Upon being vaguely reassured by Ness that “The possibility of preserving Engine No. 62277, the “Gordon Highlander” is not one we have lost sight of”<sup>91</sup>, Kidston writes again to Ness citing another example of a supposedly preserved Scottish locomotive, the last Ex-Highland Railway locomotive which had been working on the Dornock branch, which had been thought to be safe but, as Kidston amusingly puts it, “a wheel came off one day and so she

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<sup>91</sup> Letter, Ness to Kidston 27<sup>th</sup> August 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

“went””<sup>92</sup>. He concludes by implicitly comparing the quality and antique value of old locomotives with that of old furniture (and, by extension, perhaps criticising some of the very designs of locomotive which had been introduced under Ness’ tenure!): “After all, go to Christie’s or Sotheby’s and what is it that “tops” the prices? Not the modern polished plywood furniture but the masterpieces of yesteryear. Verb. Sap<sup>93</sup>. “

The pressure was further increased by Emslie, who according to a piece in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* of 9<sup>th</sup> September 1957 wrote to no less than 10 councils- the town councils of Aberdeen, Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Banff, Elgin, Huntly and Iverurie and the county councils of Aberdeen, Banff and Moray- asking them to write to Hunter in support of the locomotive’s preservation<sup>94</sup>. According to the article, Fraserburgh had “already written of its readiness to back the plea for preservation”. By now Emslie had seemingly been regarded by the Management team as something of a nuisance, with an anonymous handwritten note rather sinisterly asking ‘Do we know anything about him?’<sup>95</sup> A note in response to this suggests that he is known to the P.R. & P.O (Hunter), that he is a medical student at Glasgow University (where his father is a lecturer), a keen railway enthusiast and active member of the Stephenson Locomotive Society, and that “He has no “weight””<sup>96</sup>. Thus the nature of the respondent appealing was, for Ness and the management team, as important as the number of people making the appeal. A letter from Hunter at a later

<sup>92</sup> Letter, W.Loch Kidston to Ness, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>93</sup> Latin: a word is enough to the wise.

<sup>94</sup> Press Cutting, NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>95</sup> Note on Press Cutting, ‘Councils to Save Famous Old Engine?’ *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 9<sup>th</sup> September 1957, NRS/BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>96</sup> Note from J.S. for General Manager, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1957, NRS/BR/RSR/5/349.

date goes into extraordinary detail about Emslie- the two were clearly well known to one another:

The gentleman who sparked this appeal off is Mr. J.A.N. Emslie, a student in Glasgow University. Mr Emslie is resident in Burnside and first came to my notice in 1952 when he was still a young lad at school. In those days he was a collector of relics, handbills, maps, timetables, tickets, labels, etc., of the old Great North of Scotland Railway... He was a regular railway fan asking all sorts of elementary information for an article which he hoped to publish. Much of the information in which he was interested latterly was contained in the book published by Sir W. Barclay Harvey who was a Director of the Great North of Scotland Railway and he was referred to that publication during one of his frequent trips to this Office. He still calls from time to time.<sup>97</sup>

At the Area Board meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September, it was decided that no action should be taken to preserve the engine, but in the wake of an increasing amount of correspondence about the issue the matter was reconsidered at the Board meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1957<sup>98</sup>. Emslie's round robin letter to ten local councils has not been seen, and has perhaps not survived, but it proved to be relatively effective, since six of those councils were moved enough by his words to express a plea for the preservation of the locomotive to Hunter. Hunter received letters on the issue from the Town or County clerks of Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Peterhead, Banff, Elgin and

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<sup>97</sup> Letter, Hunter to Ness, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1957; BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>98</sup> Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Scottish Area Board 'Preservation of Former G.N. of S. Engine, 18th September 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

Aberdeen, out of 21 letters he received about the issue in total. In a draft memorandum for the October board, it is suggested that “In view of these subsequent- and extensive- representations the Board may wish to give further consideration to the preservation of the engine”. It was not put before the October Board, but it was discussed at the November meeting. Prior to this, the locomotive’s cost, when new- £10,769- its replacement cost at the then present value- £26,039- and its scrap value- £1330- are ascertained and noted, thus de-singularizing the locomotive and inscribing it with economic, rather than purely cultural, value<sup>99</sup>. At the November meeting, however, it was agreed that “when this engine reached the end of its working life no action should be taken to scrap it but that it should be retained pending further consideration of its future”<sup>100</sup>.

It was not until 19<sup>th</sup> December 1957 that Scholes appears in the story- he has been asked at a Commission meeting whether he had any official correspondence concerning the preservation of *Gordon Highlander* (which he presumably has not), but can only state that he *believes* that the decision was turned down and later reversed. He suggests that the locomotive “would be a most appropriate exhibit to be included with the ‘Transport Treasures’ Mobile Exhibition which will be in Scotland during the summer of 1958”<sup>101</sup>. He also suggests that it would be ‘appropriate’ if a locomotive from each of the Scottish pre-grouping companies was preserved, “irrespective of its contribution to locomotive design, which is, of course, the main reason for

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<sup>99</sup> Handwritten note by J. Scott, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>100</sup> Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Scottish Area Board ‘Preservation of Former GN of S. Engine’ 20<sup>th</sup> November 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

<sup>101</sup> Letter, Scholes to Scott, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1957; NRS BR/RSR/5/349.

preserving locomotives in the main collection”. Thus he suggests that preserving the pre-war social order of particular individual companies is, in this instance, as important as preserving particular examples of locomotive design.

Ness himself was clearly not adverse to the preservation of railway history, since the locomotive was repainted (inaccurately, as it turned out) in its original colours in June 1958, the month in which it was withdrawn from service, on his express instructions when he paid a visit to Inverurie (where the locomotive was being readied for the celebrations of the town)<sup>102</sup>. Ultimately four historic locomotives, including *Gordon Highlander*, were restored and kept in working order at Dawsholm Shed in Glasgow during the late 1950s and early 1960s, occasionally working special society or public services- including an intensive array of services in connection with the Scottish Industries Exhibition of 1959- before all of them were placed in the Museum of Transport in Glasgow when it opened in 1967 (Thomas, n.d.). These four locomotives were displayed together at this site until 2011 (alongside other exhibits); at this time the other three locomotives were moved to the new Riverside Museum of Transport in the City whilst *Gordon Highlander*, appropriately enough, moved to the (volunteer-run) Scottish Railway Museum at Bo’ness.

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<sup>102</sup> Letter, Hatchell to Ness, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1958.



Figure 8. *Gordon Highlander* pictured in 1964. Image available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LNER\\_Class\\_D40#/media/File:Gordon\\_Highlander\\_steam\\_locomotive.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LNER_Class_D40#/media/File:Gordon_Highlander_steam_locomotive.jpg)

**5.7 “The ball is put right back in the Region’s court but they have to improvise as before for a racquet”: continuing problems of storage, display and decision making for the BTC’s historic relics**

Although, as mentioned above, several exhibitions of historic artefacts had been arranged under Scholes’ tenure, the Scottish examples illustrate that within a bureaucratic organisation as geographically vast and administratively complex as the BTC, items could be easily be destroyed by accident, whilst decisions over which items should be saved were not always in the hands of the Curator, even if he had in theory the deciding authority over which items should be set aside. The patchiness in communications between Scholes and those responsible for preservation ‘on the ground’- or even those one level

removed from it- was bi-directional, with Scholes not necessarily being informed of preservation efforts which were underway in a particular region, and with those regions- and importantly, those on the ground, in turn often failing to enact Scholes' instructions.

Furthermore, the problems of accommodation for a new museum, or simply to store, in particular, the locomotives which had been earmarked for preservation, proved to be seemingly intractable, and even after the acquisition of a site for the Museum of British Transport in Clapham these issues were not fully resolved. Due to the site's small size and lack of rail access it was, by Scholes' own admission, a compromise. It was a combination of the destruction of historic objects which occurred as a result of the communication difficulties described above, and of the lack of progress towards the National Transport Museum proposed in the Relics and Records Committee's 1951 report, which led to the establishment of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics in 1958.

Scholes had, quite literally, big plans for his National Museum of British Transport, as he discussed in his 1961 article for the *JTH*. He estimated that he required a building of "at least four acres" (1961: 23) for the locomotives and rolling stock alone- but, in total, the size of the entire site would need to be of somewhat gargantuan proportions:

Allowing for expansion schemes, car parks catering facilities, lecture halls, open-air exhibition spaces, special exhibition pavilion, workshops, administrative offices, nothing under 60 acres would be adequate if the

collections are to be given the dignity of preservation which they so obviously deserve.

Putting this into perspective, the current NRM at York covers a site of around 20 acres- although Scholes' museum was intended to accommodate road vehicles and canal barges in addition to railway rolling stock. Scholes searched the country looking for such a site and, although he found that "a museum has low priority in industrial and commercial enterprises today because of the constant need for expansion and development", he nevertheless suggests that his plans had "aroused the interest of certain towns and cities and undeveloped sites have been considered" (Scholes 1961: 24). This enabled Scholes and the BTC's architect Dr F.F.C. Curtis to draw up a design "which would meet every requirement concerning the conservation and presentation of the relics and their use by every grade of educational organisation in the country" although he notes with a degree of sadness that the plan "is as yet a dream prevented from materialisation by the absence of finance which is the root of all evil concerning most museum projects in Britain" (Scholes 1961: 24). It could also be suggested that the sheer scale of Scholes' plans also contributed to the difficulties which he had in bringing them to fruition.

The difficulties faced in the establishment of a railway museum or even a store for historic locomotives during the 1950s became somewhat fraught, as historic locomotives in particular were viewed by those undertaking the day to day operation of the railway as a waste of precious space, whilst no sites suitable for the establishment of a new museum appeared to present

themselves. The problems were exacerbated by disagreements between the Relics and Records Committee-which was reconstituted in 1956 to “review the report in light of circumstances and to recommend action for the future” - and Sir Brian Robertson over whether the best solution to the accommodation problem lay in a large central museum (as the Committee argued) or through a network of regional museums (as Robertson preferred)<sup>103</sup>. On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1953 it was agreed at a BTC Board meeting to preserve two locomotives- No 41000, a former Midland Railway compound locomotive, and No.54398 *Ben Alder*, along with examples of seven other classes of locomotive when they were due for withdrawal- yet the problems of storing historic locomotives were already “acute” according to a Memorandum written by Brebner (who as mentioned above was the Chief Public Relations and Publicity Officer at this time) the month before<sup>104</sup>. The Railway Executive had “pressed forward with the disposal of surplus land and buildings under the directive given by the Commission”, resulting in historic locomotives being removed to “places where there is no proper protection”. The locomotives appear to have been a source of friction between British Railways and BTC management, with Brebner commenting that “the (Railway) Executive has asked that the Commission should make themselves responsible for their storage”. Brebner suggests that a former tram depot in what he describes as ‘Norwood Road, Norwood’ should be used to store road vehicles and provide accommodation for a film store (this being the only time that the preservation of promotional films is referred to in the literature

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<sup>103</sup> Interim Report of Reconstituted Relics and Records Committee, AN157/383

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum, Chief Public Relations and Publicity Officer to the Chairman, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1953; NA AN13/1203.

that I have seen), whilst a redundant shed adjacent to St Enoch station could be used for the storage of historic locomotives. The reconstituted Committee was formed primarily to decide upon the suitability of what is presumably the same scheme- although they describe it as ‘Norwood Road, Lambeth’ (the St Enoch shed idea was not pursued it seems)- but felt unable to recommend it as it could not be “converted in the long term into a satisfactory transport museum”. Once again, the Committee recommended a long term solution to what was effectively a short term, pressing problem, arguing that “before considerable expenditure was incurred on a store for relics, consideration should be given to the next step, which would be the public display of the Commission’s historical relics in a museum”<sup>105</sup>. They thus began a search for a “redundant weather-proof building which would accommodate not only... road vehicles and small relics, but also (and more important) the historic railway rolling stock which still remains unsatisfactorily dispersed”. The Committee were enthusiastic about the idea of converting Brighton Works, which was about to be decommissioned, into a museum site: “Brighton Works is not only a most suitable place for a transport museum, but it is, so far as can be seen in say the next ten years, the only place where such a museum could reasonably take shape”.

However, although the site was surveyed by Scholes- and SLS Chairman Jack Boston wrote in support of the scheme- the Brighton Works plans were ultimately discounted as part of the site, which would not in any case become available until 1959, had already been leased to a Dunsfold Tools Limited for

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<sup>105</sup> Interim Report of Reconstituted Relics and Records Committee; NA AN157/383.

the manufacture of microcars (the BMW Isetta), with further expansion by this company accounted for both in the negotiations which had been conducted in relation to this, and under the terms of the lease. Furthermore, the Southern Region in particular argued that the scheme would provide employment for men who would otherwise become unemployed as a result of the Works' closure at a level which would not be able to be provided by a museum. This was, as the Southern Region's Secretary (communicated through the Chairman) patronisingly and rather crudely suggested in a letter to the SLS, what Robert Stephenson would have wanted:

I am quite sure that on reflection you would agree that if a railway museum could only be gained at the expense of the employment of our staff it would have represented a breach of faith with the memory of the creators of the locomotives and rolling stock which you would like to see displayed and preserved.

Following the failure of the Brighton scheme, the Committee in their interim report (12<sup>th</sup> December 1957) suggested that Area Boards, Divisions and the LTE be asked to suggest suitable sites for a BTC museum in the South of England "capable of a visit from London in a day" and costing no more than £200,000. However, this idea was effectively rejected by Robertson, who-aside from suggesting that "the Commission was in no position to spend much money on preserving the past when funds were so urgently needed for the present and future" and that the government should be approached to assist in preserving a "national heritage"- argued that the 'problem' of establishing a transport museum "would be more likely to be solved on a

Regional basis rather than by attempting to build up a very large central museum”<sup>106</sup>. Thus, as the Committee put it in their surprisingly caustic memorandum, “the ball is put right back in the Region’s court but they have to improvise as before for a racquet”.

In combination with this lack of progress with regards to the establishment of a National Transport Museum, Scholes’ apparent lack of control over the fate of supposedly preserved objects which were under his jurisdiction led to a letter campaign in the pages of *The Times* and to the formation of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (described in the next chapter). The denouement of this came in the scrapping of three preserved objects- a Great Eastern Railway tram locomotive and carriages from the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway and the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway- at Stratford Works in 1957. However, prior to this other preserved items, or items which may have warranted preservation, had also been sold or scrapped either before or during Scholes’ tenure. The entire contents of the Royal Waiting Room at Windsor had, with the agreement of Buckingham Palace, been sold at auction in September 1950. The Commission were not aware of this until July 1953, and Hurcomb (then still the Chairman) was appalled, suggested that “we (the BTC) should have been consulted before these articles were sold”<sup>107</sup>. Even in the relative safety of the York Museum, a coach from the Weardale Railway was destroyed in 1952 having become infested with woodworm, a fate which Scholes suggested could have

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<sup>106</sup> Undated Memorandum entitled ‘Preservation of Historical Relics’ NA; ANI57/383.

<sup>107</sup> Handwritten note on letter from Publicity Officer to Chairman, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1953; NA ANI3/1203.

been avoided “if he had been consulted when the infestation was first brought to the notice of the North Eastern Region”<sup>108</sup>.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter began by describing *The Preservation and Relics and Records*, a report produced by the BTC in 1950 which set the tone for the activities of this organization, and its successor the BRB, throughout the rest of my time period, for example in establishing the principle of continual acquisition of historic records and objects, in its setting out the ultimate goal of a large museum in London, and in its creation of Records and Relics Departments. I have suggested here that, whilst the ‘Records’ side of the Relics and Records report’s recommendations appear to have been fulfilled with a degree of success- serving a burgeoning scholarly interest in transport history- managing the storage and display of railway relics proved to be a somewhat more trying experience for Curator John Scholes, who was stymied by the BTC’s labyrinthine management structure and a lack of permanent storage or display space for the larger objects (particularly locomotives) in his care. Though he was nominally in charge of all historic objects in the BTC’s possession, in fact the decision as to whether or not to preserve historic rolling stock was often taken without his consultation, which sometimes had unfortunate consequences. Meanwhile the parochial and small- though nevertheless successful- exhibitions which Scholes held at the Shareholder’s Meeting Room at Euston station contrasted with the world-embracing and ambitious displays of the Festival of Britain, although railways, no longer the cutting edge

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<sup>108</sup> Undated letter; NA ANI3/1203.

technology they once were, played little more than a supporting role in the Festival as a whole and were to some extent presented as a contrast to newer modes of transport.

**Chapter 6: “We would be very lucky to get some locomotives preserved in any shape or form”: establishing and running the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, 1958-1962**

“The unauthorised scrapping of certain items set aside for preservation, without any reference to Mr Scholes, caused members of the interested societies to complain in the national press, and to appoint forthwith representatives to seek an interview with Sir Brian Robertson” *From pamphlet ‘Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics’ (p.4), dated September 1970; author unknown.*

As was detailed at the close of the last chapter, and as is further described in a pamphlet setting out the history of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (hereafter shortened to Consultative Panel) up to 1970 -this organisation had its immediate roots in the enthusiast response to the scrapping of three supposedly preserved railway items in 1957, and also concerns about the future of part of the York Railway Museum at this time given the publication of plans by York City Council to construct a bus depot on the site of the large exhibits section. However, the establishment of the Panel cannot be divorced from what the pamphlet describes as its ‘pre-history’; in other words the earlier representations to the BTC made in 1948- organised under the title of ‘Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee’- which were detailed in Chapter 4. The same railway enthusiast organisations- namely the Stephenson Locomotive Society, the Newcomen Society , the Railway Club and the Model Railway Club- which

had been involved in these earlier processes also became involved in the establishment of the Panel and, furthermore, two of the key individuals involved in these processes- W.O. Skeat and Arthur Stowers, by this time a representative of the Science Museum- were also involved in the running of the Panel, whilst John Maskelyne, who had previously been President of the Stephenson Locomotive Society and represented it in the 1948 discussions, also supported the process of establishing the Panel, without himself getting actively involved in the running of the organisation.

If this reflected a certain continuity within the railway enthusiast community, it was a continuity which was being shaken, in an interrelated fashion, by the increase in public interest in railways and railway history which occurred at this time, and the increasing pace of branch line closures (as detailed in Chapter 5, more than 3000 miles of track were closed between 1948 and 1962 (White 1986)) and (to a perhaps lesser extent at first) technological change (notably the wholesale withdrawal of steam locomotives), and the concomitant increase in the number of enthusiast societies and railway preservation schemes in this era. In short, by the late 1950s both the 'supply' of discarded infrastructure and technology for potential preservation, and the 'demand' amongst the general public to assist in the preservation of this infrastructure and technology, were high, leading to the proliferation of preservation schemes and societies. As Ron Wilsdon, founder of the Transport Trust (which, after some years of preparatory discussions and agreements was formally established in 1965 to promote a wider financial base for transport preservation), was later to write: "Between

the Tallylyn Railway Preservation Society launch in 1951 and 1959 (when Wilsdon first formed the idea of the Trust) a number of preservation societies had appeared, each aimed at saving a specific line or item of rolling stock and each supported by its own band of enthusiasts” (Wilsdon *n.d.*: 4).

This increase in the number of societies was to continue during the next decade, in response to the rate of locomotive withdrawals (and particularly the withdrawals of the last few locomotives within particular classes, leading to the possible destruction of particular designs) and branch line closures (particularly in the wake of the *Reshaping Britain’s Railways* report, published in 1963 under the auspices of BRB Chairman Dr Richard Beeching). Importantly, the fundamental concepts of being able not only to purchase a steam railway locomotive but to keep it in working order for use on special trips on the main line, and also of reviving standard gauge branch lines in order to restore passenger services, were established at this time, with the purchase from BR of the locomotive Number 1247, an 0-6-0 locomotive which had been based at King’s Cross shed, by the Engineer Captain Bill Smith RN in 1959, and the re-establishment of passenger services on the Bluebell Railway in East Sussex in 1960 (Dunstone 2007).

Thus, as well as detailing one of the most prominent activities of the Consultative Panel during the first five years of its’ existence- specifically the designation in 1960 of 19 locomotive types (or in some cases, individual locomotives) to be preserved upon withdrawal, which along with eight types added by British Railways’ Regional Managers, came to form the backbone of what is now known as the National Collection of railway locomotives- this

chapter will also look at the way in which the Consultative Panel, which represented the interests of longer established transport enthusiast societies, adapted to the myriad of new preservation societies being formed at this time. The Panel incorporated additional societies into its membership, but it also had an uneasy, tense relationship with some of the preservation schemes which arose during the early 1960s, particularly those that sought to preserve locomotive types which it had not recommended to be saved as part of its own listing process in 1960, and which were directly critical about BTC policy.

### **6.1 Growing public Concern over BTC policy, 1957-1958**

The correspondence in the pages of newspapers- predominantly *The Times*- which catalysed the formation of the Consultative Panel reflected both a more specific concern about the preservation of railway rolling stock- often posited as being part of Britain's national identity- and also perhaps a deeper mistrust of the nationalised transport industry. Many improvements had been promised by the government at the time of nationalisation, but due to a lack of funding for investment, and the sheer difficulties of running an organisation as vast and varied as the BTC, the promises made at the time of the 1947 Transport Act had not been kept and transport "maintained a persistent air of crisis" (Tivey 1973: 50). As Kelf-Cohen (1960: 76) suggests, "the public were indignant at a state of affairs when transport, in poor shape, talked and planned of great schemes of development without being able to keep themselves in a reasonable state of efficiency."

A letter campaign in the pages of *The Times* began with a letter from Henry Maxwell in November 1957. Predating this was a letter to the *Eastern Daily Press* by Ronald Clark, published on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1957<sup>109</sup>. We can perhaps presume (without knowing for certain) that this was the same Ronald Harry Clark who wrote *A Short History of the Midland and Great Northern Railway* (1967) and *An Illustrated History of Midland and Great Northern Railway locomotives* (1990), as well as compiling *Scenes from the Midland and Great Northern Railway* (1978).

Clark suggested that the Commission appeared to have “lost all interest” in preserving historic relics, which had resulted in items being “scattered up and down the country in odd works and sidings”, “rapidly deteriorating” under tarpaulins and inaccessible to the public. Perhaps hinting at the Commission’s publicly owned status, Clark suggested that “These priceless exhibits belong to the nation” and that it was “scandalous that no place to house them has yet been provided”. Given that certain items had been scrapped, Clark wrote that “not one of these neglected treasures is really safe”. He went on to speculate that the Commission perhaps hoped that “if they persist in their present attitude long enough public opinion and interest in the museum project will wane” and called for “a series of pointed questions in the House of Commons” to dispel this hope.

Henry Maxwell, who wrote to *The Times* on November 21<sup>st</sup> 1957, worked for ICI and was a regular contributor to *The Railway Magazine*, editing *Railway Magazine Miscellany* in 1957, and also wrote two books of railway doggerel -

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<sup>109</sup> Press Cutting, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: No 3/22 BT Relics Consultative Panel Loco & Rolling Stock Committees Box 5.

*The Ballad of the M7* (a type of small locomotive built by the London and South Western Railway between 1897 and 1911) and *A Railway Rubbiyat*- and a biography of the opulent Southern Railway cross-channel ship the SS Canterbury, all of which were self-published. He later privately purchased the Pullman carriage *Topaz*- which had been used on the Pullman Car Company's luxury services in conjunction with the South East and Chatham Railway-in 1960 before handing it over to the Museum of British Transport at Clapham in 1961. He was perturbed firstly by the destruction of the three aforementioned items which had been at Stratford Works:

It is disquieting to hear that three irreplaceable items already scheduled for preservation- namely, the, restored London, Tilbury and Southend Railway coach, the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway car, and the former Great Eastern Railway tram locomotive- have, notwithstanding, been destroyed at Stratford Works (The Times, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1957).

The destruction of the LTSR coach was particularly embarrassing for the BTC, since as an article in the *Southend Pictorial* of 29<sup>th</sup> November (kept on file by Panel member and later Secretary Skeat) makes clear, the coach had been used, alongside the tank locomotive Thundersley, as part of the centenary celebrations of the London, Tilbury and Southend line in March 1956, hauling a special commemorative train (Dunstone 2007)<sup>110</sup>. At this time senior British Railways staff made assurances that the rolling stock would be preserved, as the *Pictorial* suggests: "In good faith during the Southend celebrations Mr C.J.Bird, General Manager of the Eastern Region and Sir Reginald Wilson,

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<sup>110</sup> 'Rail Coach Destroyed- In Error!' Press cutting, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: Box 65.

Chairman of the Eastern Area Board, told Southenders that one remaining coach of the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway would be preserved for all time.” Maxwell’s concerns, however, went beyond the destruction of the three items at Stratford, pointing to the “many other valuable pieces of rolling stock” which were “deteriorating through exposure and neglect”. He said that it would be a “tragedy” if this stock perished through neglect or was destroyed because it got in the way, and was distrustful of BTC management, suggesting that it would be “interesting to know whether the Transport Commission consented to the destruction of rolling stock that they themselves had scheduled for preservation” (the *Southend Pictorial* suggested that it had been destroyed ‘in error’). He also pointed to the fact that it had been seven years since the Commission had suggested building a transport museum, but “nothing has been done and much is in danger of being lost”. Maxwell disliked nationalisation, as can be ascertained in this verse towards the end of his *The Ballad of the M7*:

“Owned by the South-Western, first

Then to the Southern handed

And finally in the accursed

State custody remanded”

A.J. Boston, President of the Stephenson Locomotive Society, and prominent member W.O. Skeat wrote a strong response to Maxwell suggesting that he had only “lifted the fringe of a shameful state of affairs”- although the only example which they gave in the letter (which had perhaps been edited) was of some historic locomotives and carriages which had

previously been stored in a shed at Salisbury but had been moved to a siding at Grately (in Hampshire), where they were lying under tarpaulins (The Times, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1957). They suspect that “many other such cases of neglect have occurred”.

David Carnegie- the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northesk and a Scottish representative peer, along with the poet John Betjeman, and John Maskelyne, responded to this with a letter pointing to a “proposal to scrap the building which houses the larger exhibits of the Railway Museum, York, in order to make room for a bus depot”, suggesting that this was “even more ominous” (The Times, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1957). Betjeman and Maskelyne gave York a positive, if far from glowing, review: “This is the only effective transport collection in the country; in spite of its limitations, it is a most praiseworthy exercise”. They suggest that, if the large exhibits section was to close, there would be “precious little for the public left to see”. This plan was refuted by BR in the Yorkshire Post of December 4<sup>th</sup> 1957, who suggested that the proposal referred to a railway yard rather than the museum itself and also that, in the unlikely event that the museum was affected, an alternative site would be found for the large exhibits section which would be better than the existing accommodation<sup>111</sup>.

In spite of this, a BBC radio broadcast on December 11<sup>th</sup> by Robert Aickman who was vice-President of the Railway Development Association- which had been established by Owen Prosser, one of the founding members of the Tallylyn Railway Preservation Society, to promote the rescue of rural lines and the adoption of favourable legislation for the volunteer groups which

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<sup>111</sup> Press cutting, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: No 3/22 BT Relics Consultative Panel Loco & Rolling Stock Committees Box 5.

sought to run them- discussed the ‘Proposal to demolish the York Railway Museum’<sup>112</sup>. Aickman, whose prose was caustic and ironic in tone, was sceptical in the extreme about the reassurances given by British Railways in relation to the Museum, arguing that, whilst the demolition was merely a proposal, “many of the closure operations with which the Commission is largely associated, closures of branch lines, and of canals, have begun merely as proposals”. Furthermore, he implied that the Commission was neglecting the historic items in its care: “there are constant informed complaints that early locomotives and railway coaches which the Commission has undertaken to preserve, are none the less being left about in sidings all over the country, sometimes merely under tarpaulins”.

Aickman draws upon the patriotic view of the railway as Britain’s ‘gift to the world’ (which had also been used at the Festival of Britain’s Transport displays, as mentioned in the last chapter), suggesting that “we (i.e. Britain) did invent the railway, and until very recently we led the world in every department of operation”. More than this, he suggests that “it can be seriously argued that civilization culminated in the railway age, after which the scale tipped”. This is perhaps a reference to the fact that, as shall be discussed in Chapter 7, the railway’s ‘Golden Age’ was commonly defined at this time as encompassing the late Victorian and Edwardian age- and thus before the mass devastation and uncivilized barbarity of the First and Second World Wars. This reference to the railway as a civilizing agent provides an interesting counterpoint to depictions of this technology as a monolithic, unstoppable

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<sup>112</sup> ‘The Proposal to demolish the York Railway Museum’ by Robert Aickman, transcript of radio transmission, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: No 3/22 BT Relics Consultative Panel Loco & Rolling Stock Committees Box 5.

war machine, as the key component in the enactment of the Holocaust and, according to historian A.J.P. Taylor's railroad theory, as the principal contributing factor to the outbreak of World War One (Revill 2012).

Aickman suggested that the public should persuade the Commission that they cared about the preservation of historic relics, and that this preservation paid- thus, by implication, preservation would be seen as a financial boon rather than a burden. This could be achieved through the simple act of visiting the York Museum: "Do go to York, and see for yourself. Show that you care". Foreshadowing the later success of the NRM, Aickman suggested that the Railway Museum could be very popular if it was publicised effectively, drawing upon the 'railway mystique' created by John Betjeman, Aickman's fellow vice-President: "Properly housed and properly publicized, our Railway Museum would be a major tourist attraction, a magnet to every father and every son, and a beneficent influence upon industrial design".

At the same time, Aickman suggested that "there should be constant opportunities for excursions in the old trains... 'Puffing Billy' should get puffing". Thus Aickman implies that a Museum of stilled locomotives and carriages is in some way *not enough* to capture the public's imagination (since the excursion trains which did run were, as Aickman suggests, often full), and thus that the museum exhibits needed to 'get puffing' (in fact 'Puffing Billy' was itself too old and fragile, having been built in 1813-14, to be restored). This also perhaps mirrors Simmons' later depiction of a transport museum as a 'contradiction', since "transport moves, or it is not transport" (Simmons 1970: 17).

In the midst of this interest in the preservation of railway rolling stock, a letter was sent to the *Daily Telegraph* by an A. Cowan on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December, which represents one of the few times that it was suggested that Britain's existing transport museums should be operated in a private capacity: One cannot help wondering whether something could be done to put the whole business of preserving and exhibiting transport relics on a private enterprise basis in co-operation with existing transport facilities and experience. Perhaps some new approach on these lines could be made by people with capability, vision and capital resources. They must exist among the thousands of railway enthusiasts in this country, the Commonwealth, and the United States- whose tourist dollars mean so much.<sup>113</sup>

Lord Montagu, who had established the privately-run National Motor Museum at his estate in Beaulieu, Hampshire in 1952, could perhaps have represented exactly the kind of individual with 'capability, vision and capital resources' to whom Cowan referred. Montagu clearly had an interest in historic railway rolling stock as well as historic motor vehicles, enquiring as to the future of the three railway museums in the House of Lords before, during and after the 1962 Transport Act (as will be detailed below); furthermore he purchased the 'Schools' class ex-Southern Railway locomotive *Stowe* and three Pullman carriages in 1964, displaying them at Beaulieu in a recreation of the Bournemouth Belle service until 1973. However, Montagu stopped short of attempting to take over the transport collections at Clapham, York and Swindon, and the national collection, as it became known, has remained in

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<sup>113</sup> Newspaper clipping, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: No 3/22 BT Relics Consultative Panel Loco & Rolling Stock Committees Box 5.

wholly public ownership, albeit of different varieties (i.e. initially through the nationalised railway industry, and later through the Department of Education and Science) up to the present day.

The concerns regarding railway preservation at this time were reinforced in the *Railway World* editorial for the March 1958 edition<sup>114</sup>. Perhaps unexpectedly given the nature of the publication, the editorial suggested that, whilst they supported a museum, “we do not necessarily confine this museum to railways. We feel that a national transport museum should be formed”. Exaggerating the case somewhat, the editorial suggested that “every day some item of interest has to be scrapped because no home has been found for it”. The editorial makes a link between the past and the future, suggesting that “years hence people are going to ask why something was not done to preserve these historically valuable items”. The editorial also hinted at the significance of railways to British national identity (which, as mentioned in the Chapter 5, had been brought up during the Festival of Britain events), concluding: “it is fantastic that in the land of its birth we cannot find sufficient space to display for posterity even railway items (York is merely nibbling at the matter).”

## **6.2 Forming the Consultative Panel**

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December, a meeting was held between the representatives of six railway societies which, as a short piece in *The Times* suggested, called on the “British Transport Commission to implement their undertaking in 1951 to establish a national railway museum” (*The Times*

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<sup>114</sup> Magazine clipping, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files: No 3/22 BT Relics Consultative Panel Loco & Rolling Stock Committees Box 5.

19/12/57). They were concerned about the future of the Large Exhibits Section of the Museum at York, and “recalled with misgivings the course of events when Brighton Locomotive Works was closed”- as recounted in the last chapter, plans to construct a museum at these Works were ultimately shelved in favour of the establishment of a factory manufacturing micro cars. The deterioration of exhibits was attributed to the lack of accommodation in which to house them, but intriguingly it is also reported that Jack Boston, representing the Stephenson Locomotive Society, suggested that there was a “lack of control over regions, so that exhibits scheduled for preservation were in danger of scrapping by regional officers” (*The Times* 19/12/57). This, ironically, came at exactly the same time as Sir Brian Robertson, Chairman of the BTC, was proposing that the ‘problem’ of storing and displaying historic relics would be “more likely to be solved on a Regional basis than by attempting to build up a very large central museum”<sup>115</sup>.

The lack of progress towards the aims of the 1951 report was cited as a further frustration, and Arthur Stowers, representing the Newcomen Society, reportedly told the meeting that he had served on a committee which had in 1952 recommended that 41 models be made of outstanding locomotives, but that, since then, “nothing had been done because there was no museum to put the models in”. This was perhaps seen as indicative of the slow pace at which the 1951 report’s proposals were being implemented, and Sir Brian Robertson was urged to implement these proposals “with all possible speed” and ensure that, in the meantime, the exhibits would be indelibly marked,

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<sup>115</sup> Undated Memorandum entitled ‘Preservation of Historical Relics’ NA; AN157/383.

presumably to avoid their being unwittingly disposed of as had happened with the three objects at Stratford Works (which are not directly mentioned in *The Times'* piece). The Committee also decided that they should “ask to wait upon Sir Brian Robertson to put other matters”. Illustrating the popularity of railway enthusiasm by this time, the men at this meeting “expressed the grave concern of those they represented, “probably thousands of people interested in railways””.

The railway society representatives who had met on 18<sup>th</sup> December put their intention to ‘ask to wait upon Sir Brian Robertson’ into action, writing a letter- as reported in *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*- which brought up five points for discussion<sup>116</sup>:

- The desirability of issuing instructions to all regions telling them not to destroy any item scheduled for preservation.
- Fixing metal plates to larger scheduled items.
- The establishment of a committee, representing the BTC and other interested parties, to find a site for a transport museum.
- The storing of items intended for the museum at a place where they can be viewed by the public and kept in good condition.
- The cataloguing of all drawings and photographs of extinct stock, which would be passed to the Curator.

A delegation of four- W.O. Skeat, A.J. Boston, B.D.J. Walsh of the Railway Club and Mr G.H. Platt of the Historical Model Railway Club-met with John Scholes and Sir Brian Robertson on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1958. This meeting was

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<sup>116</sup> Press clipping from the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post*, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1958, NRM Box 5 Locomotive Sub-committee.

described as a “landmark in the whole history of the preservation movement” in the initial draft of the Consultative Panel’s historical brochure (accessed at the NRM, Box 66), which was written in September 1969 by the Panel’s then Publicity Officer Geoffrey Richards and was more opinionated and colourfully worded than the finished version, which appears to have been written by W.O. Skeat himself (accessed at the University of Leicester’s Wilson Library).

In an article written in 1966 for the Association of Railway Preservation Societies’ (ARPS) newsletter, Skeat described the reception as “at first cool (the official idea apparently was that some irresponsible number-snatcher types wanted appeasement)” but suggested that Boston (who was the head of the delegation), broke the ice with “one of the best speeches he has ever made”<sup>117</sup>. In the final version of the Consultative Panel’s history, it is noted that Mr Boston had put forward at this time “the notion of a nationally owned collection, with Government support”. However, “Sir Brian, in his wisdom, had preferred to see the scheme started under BR auspices” (p.9). Whilst those representing the railway enthusiast societies had pressed for a single, national museum-described as a national railway museum in *The Times*-Robertson, unsurprisingly given his comment to the BR Board in December 1957 that “the problem would be more likely to be solved on a regional basis” (ANI57/383), suggested that funds could not be raised for a museum housing the entire national collection, and recommended the establishment of a number of regional museums housed in existing buildings and encompassing all of the Commission’s interests (p.6, 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Consultative Panel

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<sup>117</sup> ‘The Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics’ Article, marked ‘Article for ARPS’; Box 66 Clapham files, NRM.

history). In his 1966 article, Skeat described this as a “magnificent solution” which “delighted everyone present”. It was Robertson’s directive which led to the establishment of the museums at Clapham and Swindon, although the former- a large, centrally situated museum intended to house, according to Scholes the Commission’s ‘main collections’- perhaps conflicted with the overall strategy of regional dispersal<sup>118</sup>.

Sir Brian Robertson also proposed the concept of a representative organisation of enthusiast groups, an idea which would lead to the formation of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics. Skeat later described the concept as an “advisory body of representatives of the Societies interested in all forms of transport with which the Commission was concerned” which would “confer with Curator and recommend items for preservation” (second Consultative Panel history, p.5). The Panel, as this body was to become, thus represented an “effective means of making the specialist knowledge of the societies available to the commission” (Consultative Panel history, 1<sup>st</sup> edition).

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<sup>118</sup> Report to the Panel, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1959, Box 65.

### 6.3. Organising and running the Consultative Panel



S.L.S. OCCASIONS — 44. The late Jack Boston on the footplate of Highland Railway 'Jones Goods' 4-6-0 103 at Thurso on the S.L.S./R.C.T.S. Scottish Tour in June 1962. Although a photograph of 103 on this tour has already featured in the series, we show another picture of the occasion in memory of our former President.

*John Edgington*

Figure 9. Photograph of Alfred John (Jack) Boston, (8<sup>th</sup> November 1908-August 1992) the first Chairman of the Consultative Panel, taken in June 1962. *Photo from SLS Journal volume 68 (1993). Courtesy of Gerry Nicholls, SLS Librarian.*

The first meeting of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics was held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1958 at High Holborn in London at 6.30PM. Perhaps reflecting the association of technology, and thus technological enthusiasm, with masculinity and male power (Faulkner 2000; Geoghegan 2010) - wherein science and technology are, as Faulkner (2000:91) suggests, seen as “powerful motifs of hegemonic masculinity”- the first, and, so far as the author has seen, all meetings of the Panel were entirely male affairs (at least in terms of the participants; Miss Marjorie Green, John Scholes' Secretary, was also present). The Panel initially dealt with “all forms of transport with which the Commission was concerned”- as such it consisted

of representatives from organisations whose representatives were not interested, at least directly, in the preservation of railway rolling stock, although its first Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer were both associated with railway societies, albeit acting in a private capacity in relation to the Panel.

Jack Boston (Figure 9) and B.D.J Walsh (Figure 10) (members of, respectively, the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Railway Club), were appointed as Chairman and Secretary respectively- acting in a private capacity rather than as a representative of any particular body. Meanwhile representatives were appointed from the Railway Club (T.S. Lascelles; later R.C. Riley), the Stephenson Locomotive Society (W.O. Skeat), the Newcomen Society (C.E. Lee), the Model Railway Club (J.R. Anning), the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (C. Smith), the Historical Model Railway Society (G.H. Platt) and the Omnibus Society ((D.H. Spray), Other societies for which representatives were added to the Panel in its first two years of existence were the Light Railway Transport League (J.W. Fowler), Railway and Canal Historical Society (C. Hadfield), the Tramway and Light Railway Society (R.Elliott), the Tramway Museum Society (J.H. Price), the Vintage Passenger Vehicle Society- which later merged with the Historic Commercial Vehicle Club (K.C. Blacker) and the Electric Railway Society (V. Goldberg). John Scholes and Lieutenant Colonel T.M. Simmons, representing the Science Museum, attended as observers, although in practice the manner of their interventions tended to be similar to that of the representatives themselves.



Figure 10. Bernard Walsh, the first Secretary of the Consultative Panel.  
*Photograph courtesy of Bill King, the Great Eastern Railway Society.*

It should be noted that none of these individuals all met at the same time, at least on Panel business- meetings were usually quite well attended, but nevertheless several members were usually missing from each meeting (whether having sent apologies or otherwise), and some individuals (such as Hadfield) were absent from multiple meetings. At the fourth meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1960, only Boston, Walsh, Skeat, Spray, Price, Smith , Skeat, Scholes and Simmons attended-these men, along with C. Lee (absent from this meeting due to appendicitis) and G.H. Platt perhaps engaged with the Panel

the most, in terms of attending meetings, serving on Sub-Committees and writing correspondence. During the course of the 1960s, representatives from the Transport Ticket Society, the Association of Railway Preservation Societies, the Transport Trust and the London Underground Railway Society were added to the Panel's membership.

The second meeting of the Panel was held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 1958, and the third on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October 1959- the only meeting of the Panel to take place in this year. Following this, however, the Panel met roughly quarterly, in January, April, July and October- from 1960 until October 1985 (further meetings were scheduled, but no records of these survive). After the first two meetings in Holborn, subsequent meetings were held at Triangle Place in Clapham- initially a store for British Transport's Historical Relics, which opened as the Museum of British Transport in 1961- until the meeting of May 1975 (more than two years after the Museum had closed to the public), when the Panel moved its meetings to the then embryonic NRM in York.

The Consultative Panel operated by means of a series of Sub-Committees, which recommended items for preservation and reported back to the main Panel meetings. Three Sub-Committees relating to aspects of railway operation were established by the Consultative Panel; the Locomotive Sub-Committee, the Rolling Stock Sub-Committee (relating to carriages and wagons) and the Signalling and Permanent Way Sub-Committee. The Committee for Locomotive Preservation, as it was initially termed before being renamed the Locomotive Sub-Committee, was established at the third

meeting of the Consultative Panel in October 1959, and was formed initially of Skeat, Walsh and Boston. The Rolling Stock Sub-Committee was established at the seventh meeting in October 1960, and consisted of Platt, Goldberg, Riley and Simmons, whilst the Signalling and Permanent Way Sub-Committee was constituted at the ninth meeting held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 1961, and was initially formed of Boston, Lee, Walsh and two individuals- Mr W.J. Sadler and Mr J.T. Howard Turner- who were included (at the suggestion of, respectively, Scholes and Skeat) and who were later co-opted onto the Panel, because of their specialised knowledge of this particular subject.

The next section of this chapter will use one example- the drawing up of a list of 27 steam locomotives to be preserved in 1960- to illustrate the activities of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics during the first five years of its existence. As well as representing the railway aspects of the Panel's work- which are more apposite to the aims of the thesis- the steam locomotive list produced in 1960 was important to the Panel's own sense of identity, insofar as this was channelled in the two Panel histories which were produced, and also to the lasting impact of the Panel on the preservation of railway artefacts. The inclusion of a non-state actor in the process of singularization (which in this case refers to the prevention of these locomotives being broken up and scrapped) is also of interest, since Kopytoff (1986:73) suggested that such processes were usually "the hand-work of the state". Furthermore, the important role played by enthusiasts in this process problematizes the boundary between the professional and the amateur and

perhaps suggests that the practice of the Pro-Am- defined by Leadbeater and Miller (2004) as an “emerging group” of “innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards”- has an historical trajectory which needs to be accounted for.

#### **6.4 The locomotive listing process, 1958-1960**

A list of 27 additional locomotive types to be preserved was released to the public in February 1961 (figure 11) forming part of a compilation of 71 locomotives which had been preserved by the BTC and its predecessors. According to the accompanying memorandum, written by Scholes, these machines represented “examples of outstanding developments in locomotive design”; the complete collection of 71 locomotives would “trace the history and progress of the British steam locomotive right from its earliest days to its replacement by electric or diesel motive power”<sup>119</sup>. Many of these locomotives were still in service, and Scholes inaccurately predicted that it “would be many years before the last of them becomes available for preservation”. In fact, steam traction was withdrawn much earlier than Scholes had anticipated, with the last steam-hauled train on British Railways running in August 1968.

Examples of three of the locomotive types on the list were displayed at the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, which opened in two phases in 1961 (six galleries of smaller exhibits) and 1963 (larger exhibits), and will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. However, Scholes did not disguise the fact that there was not enough space to house all of the

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<sup>119</sup> ‘Preservation of steam locomotives’, memorandum by John Scholes, NRM Box 66.

locomotives on the list- they were, in fact, a set of exhibits looking for a museum:

“Accommodation for these large historical relics has yet to be found but it is hoped that some will be exhibited in museums, and that suitable places will be found to house and exhibit the remainder well before the last of the locomotives becomes available to complete the collection.”

LOCOMOTIVES SCHEDULED FOR PRESERVATION 1960.

Date Built	Locomotive	Description
1874	L. & S.W.R.	2-4-0WT "3298" class
1891	N.E.R.	0-6-0 "c" class No.1576
1897	L. & S.W.R.	0-4-4T M.7 class
* 1899	L. & S.W.R.	4-4-0T T.9 class
1904	G.W.R.	0-6-0T P.57 class No.87
1919	N.E.R.	0-6-0 class T.3
1920	G.C.R.	4-4-0 class 11F. No.506 "Butler Henderson"
1921	L. & N.W.R.	0-8-0 class G.2
1923	G.W.R.	4-6-0 Castle class No.4073 "Caerphilly Castle"
1924	L.M.S.R.	0-6-0 class 4F
* 1925	S.R.	4-6-0 "King Arthur" class
* 1926	S.R.	4-6-0 "Lord Nelson" class
* 1926	L.M.S.R.	2-6-0 class 5
* 1927	G.W.R.	4-6-0 "King" class No.6000
1930	S.R.	4-4-0 "Schools" class
1934	L.M.S.R.	4-6-0 class 5
1935	L.M.S.R.	2-6-4T class 4 (3 cyl.)
1936	L.N.E.R.	2-6-2 class V.2
1937	L.M.S.R.	4-6-2 class 7P. No.6235 "City of Birmingham"
1938	L.N.E.R.	4-6-2 class A.4 No.4468 "Mallard"
* 1942	S.R.	0-6-0 class Q.1
1945	S.R.	4-6-2 "West Country" or "Battle of Britain" class
1947	G.W.R.	0-6-0 PT class 94xx
1951	B.R.	4-6-2 class 7 No.70000 "Britannia"
* 1954	B.R.	4-6-2 class 8 No.71000 "Duke of Gloucester"
* 1956	B.R.	4-6-0 class 5 (with Caprotti Valve Gear)
1960	B.R.	2-10-0 class 9 No.92220 "Evening Star"

\* Added by BTC.

Figure 11. List of 27 locomotives scheduled for preservation in 1960 (released to the public February 1961), with annotation showing those added by the BTC. NRM Box 65.

Discussions about which locomotives should be listed had been taking place since 1958, yet what was remarkable about the process was the briefness with which certain types were added or excluded from the listing. The original list of 19 machines produced by the Consultative Panel does appear to have been produced through a process of consultation and discussion, yet the addition of eight more machines by the BTC themselves occurred simply through the recommendations of the General Managers for each region and of centrally-based engineering staff- which, initially at least, were seemingly accepted without question.

The list perhaps had a greater importance at the time it was made because the depth of interest and level of success of enthusiast groups at preserving steam locomotives during the course of the 1960s and 1970s would not necessarily have been anticipated. There was a sense of urgency behind its' production, since although some of the locomotive types listed were, it seemed, going to last in service for a long time, others were rapidly disappearing, with the number of individual machines in the class already down to penny numbers. As Secretary B.D.J Walsh wrote in the Consultative Panel's covering letter (alongside the list of locomotives to be preserved) to Public Relations Adviser J.W. Brebner in February 1960: "this panel felt that a Final List of steam locomotives for Preservation could now be prepared, and indeed should be prepared at once if some of the locomotives involved were to be saved from the scrap heap" (NRM Box 65).

This is symptomatic of a common cultural discourse whereby locomotives are described as an 'endangered species' (Revill 2012). Indeed, at the end of

his letter, Walsh asks the BTC, through Brebner, to ensure that none of the locomotive types on the list “are allowed to become extinct by scrapping”. The very act of dividing locomotives into particular classes- which are groups of engines built to a particular design for one railway company- is somewhat taxonomic in nature, with individual locomotives being assigned into particular groups, by their manufacturer (which was often also the railway for which they ran) according to the particular characteristics of their design- from larger features such as wheel arrangement, power classification and whether they carried their own fuel or water through to smaller nuances such as the design of the chimney. As we shall see, the urgency to preserve ‘endangered’ locomotive classes was symptomatic of a tension at the heart of a list which was outwardly presented as a rational, thought-out depiction of locomotive development, but which was composed partially by means of brief missives and also fuelled by the desire to preserve locomotive types as quickly as possible, before no more examples of these classes were left.

Arguably, by the time that the list was eventually released in 1961, the listing process itself was starting to be overtaken by events. During 1959, three smaller locomotives were preserved- No. 68846 by Captain Bill Smith (as mentioned above), No. 58926 (figure 12) by a group of enthusiasts headed by J.M ‘Max’ Dunn- the first engine to be brought through public subscription through the Webb Coal Tank Preservation Fund (though Dunstone (2007) suggests that this occurred in 1960)<sup>120</sup> - and No. 52044 by Tony Cox, a founder member of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Society (*Heritage*

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<sup>120</sup> Skeat and Platt were on the Committee of the Webb Coal Tank preservation fund, whilst R.C. Riley was a subscriber. The preservation of this locomotive was itself discussed at the Consultative Panel Committee meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> January 1960 (NRM; Box 68).

*Railway 2011*). However, the impact which the supply of locomotives from Barry scrapyard- with the majority of steam locomotives which were sent there for scrap (213 in total) ultimately being re-sold to private enthusiasts between 1968 and 1990- would have on the locomotive preservation movement as a whole could, of course, not have been foretold.



Figure 12. Locomotive No. 58926, preserved by the Webb Coal Tank Preservation Fund in 1959. *Author.*

It could be contended that the basis of today's National Collection was decided upon by one man's musings in Holland Park, West London, during Christmas 1958. W.O. Skeat, along with his fellow committee members, was asked to prepare "a list of modern locomotive types for preservation" at the Panel meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1958 and had duly completed this by 27<sup>th</sup>

December (Figure 13)<sup>121</sup>. The list of 12 types did not include those types already scheduled for preservation by Scholes (for which the latest list was dated 1957) and factored in the “possibility of a large modern locomotive being housed eventually in Science Museum extensions”- although

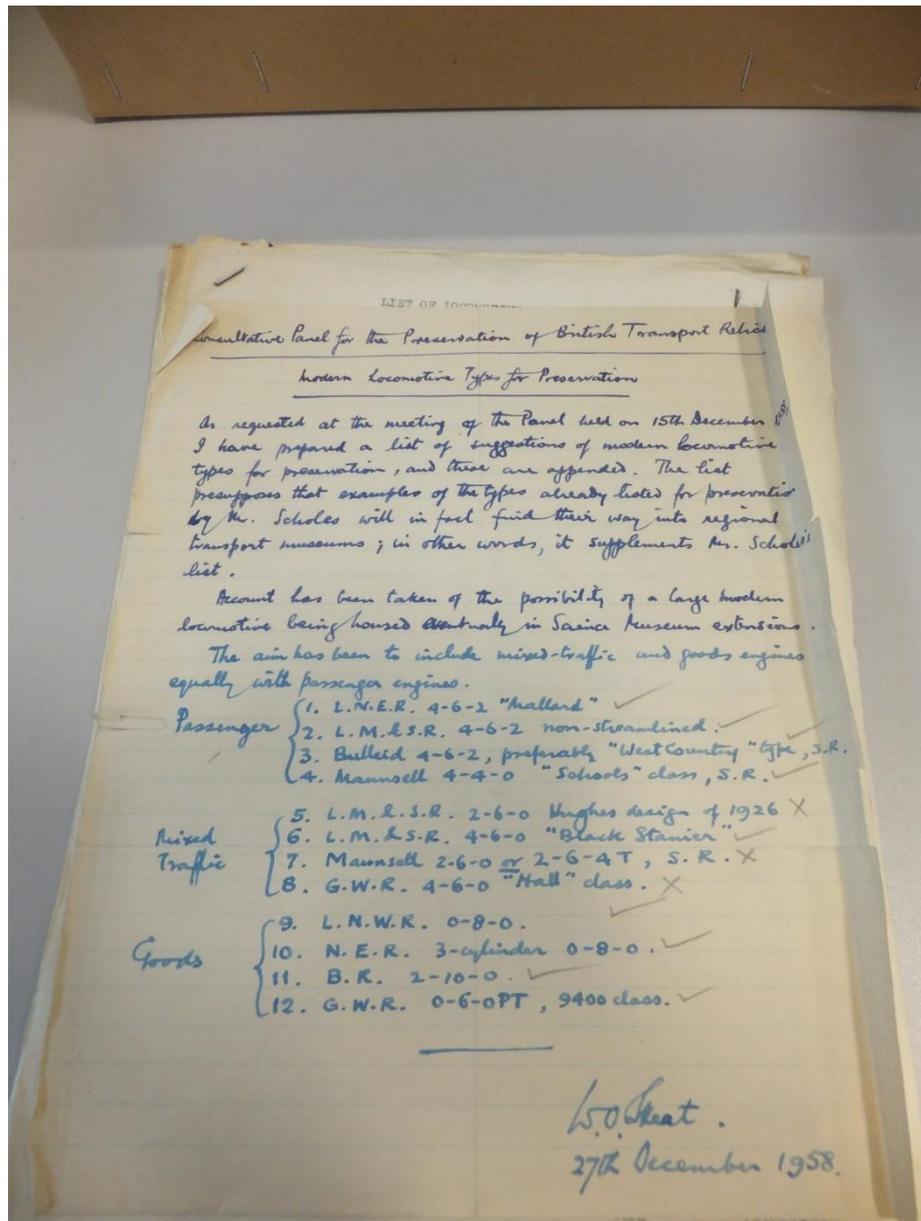


Figure 13. List of locomotive types recommended for preservation by W.O. Skeat, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1958. The ticks and crosses show those which were subsequently recommended for preservation by the Locomotive Sub-Committee of the Consultative Panel. NRM Box 65.

<sup>121</sup> Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics (NRM Box 68) and Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics: Modern Locomotive Types for Preservation (NRM Box 65).

the locomotive which was ultimately chosen to be placed in the museum (and was moved there in June 1961) - Great Western Railway locomotive No.4073 *Caerphilly Castle*- did not feature.

It is unclear the extent to which there was a direct causal link between his Skeat's recommendations and the locomotives which the Panel recommended for preservation in February 1960, although the ticks and crosses which have been placed next to his selections perhaps suggests that they were debated. He was one of the three-man Committee which decided upon the choices for locomotive preservation, thus his suggestions perhaps carried more weight than those of most of his fellow committee members. The majority of his choices- nine of the eventual nineteen- were ultimately put forward by the Panel as being worthy of preservation in February 1960, becoming in turn part of the list (with eight additions) which was released a year later by the BTC, whilst one of the other types was removed by Skeat's fellow enthusiasts but added by the BTC themselves. Thus more than a third of the eventual list of locomotive types to be preserved (ten of 27 locomotives) released in 1961 dated from Skeat's original listing- although there were, of course, only a finite number of locomotive classes to choose from and many railway enthusiasts would undoubtedly have reached the same conclusions as Skeat.

Although Dunstone (2007: 35) suggests that "loyalties and interests were reflected in the listing", Skeat's own interest in the Great Eastern Railway- he was described in his obituary in the Stephenson Locomotive Society Journal as a "fervent admirer of all things Great Eastern" and was a founder member of the Great Eastern Society- was not reflected in the list which he produced.

This could be explained by his remit to suggest “modern locomotive types for preservation”, which contrasts with the list produced by the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee in 1948, which contained only locomotive designs which were more than 25 years old. The Great Eastern Railway ceased to exist after the 1923 grouping, although Skeat does include two types of goods locomotive from this pre-grouping era on his list. The oldest locomotive type on Skeat’s list was the ‘N.E.R (North Eastern Railway) 3-cylinder 0-8-0’ which were built in two batches in 1919 and 1924, whilst the newest, British Railways’ own 2-10-0 goods locomotive, was still being built at this time- indeed the locomotive eventually chosen, No. 92220 *Evening Star* (the last new steam locomotive to be built for use on British Railways) did not enter traffic until 1960. *Evening Star* is sometimes described as having been designated for preservation from the time it was built but, whilst it was ultimately preserved, this was far from a clear-cut process. In his speech at the locomotive’s naming ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1960, Western Area Board Chairman R.F.Hanks stated merely that he was

“*Reasonably sure that 92220 will never see the breaking-up yard but that, when her useful days are over, she will take an honoured place with the “City of Truro”, “Lode Star”, one of the old “23s”, and, if I have my way, certainly a “King” and a “Castle” in our own “Western” museum here in Swindon.*”  
(Italics added).

In fact, when the list of specific railway locomotives to be preserved was released in March 1961, it was another locomotive, No. 92000 (the first of the class), which was initially selected.

The second Consultative Panel history suggests that locomotive types suitable for preservation were chosen in a systematic fashion by the Locomotive Sub-Committee which had been established for the purpose, with public opinion being gauged by inviting members of all participating societies to recommend types of engine which should be preserved. The final decision on which locomotives should be chosen for preservation was made at some time between the meetings of the main Panel on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1959- when Walsh noted that some members had not sent him their personal list of locomotives which they felt should be preserved, and asked that they send this to him by the end of November- and 28<sup>th</sup> January 1960, when Walsh read out the final list of locomotives recommended for preservation, and it was recommended that the list and its accompanying cover letter should be approved and sent to the BTC<sup>122</sup>. The list covers a mixture of locomotives, including the types recommended for preservation by representatives of British Railways' Regions, and those specifically selected by particular museums for display. Whilst there seems to be no surviving record of the meeting at which the final decision was made on which locomotives should be chosen, but we can get some idea about the reasons behind these choices from a contemporaneous set of descriptions of the locomotives classes which had been preserved (see table 4). This was produced by Skeat in 1961, after the selections of locomotives had been made.

However, the discussions surrounding the deletion of three locomotive types from Skeat's list, and the addition of a further ten- in fact a further

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<sup>122</sup> Consultative Panel meeting minutes, Box 68.

twelve machines, as the February 1960 list included one machine which was working for the National Coal Board and another which had in fact already been destroyed- do not exist in their entirety, although some of the letters which do survive from this era shed light on these processes.

Henry Maxwell, who as mentioned above had catalysed the letter-writing campaign in the pages of *The Times* which had led to the establishment of the Panel, campaigned to save examples of the M.7. Class in two letters written on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1959 (to Skeat, which also mentioned his own preservation of the Pullman carriage *Topaz*) and 5<sup>th</sup> October 1959 (to Panel Secretary Walsh). This was clearly a subject on which Maxwell had written before, since his first letter comments that he had “so often stated” the reasons why an M.7. class locomotive should be preserved, although his long poem *The Ballad of the M.7.*, which was mentioned above, was not published until at least 1964 (the exact publication date is unclear, but one of the captions describes an engine as having been in service between September 1897 and May 1964).

In his first letter, Maxwell made a series of arguments in favour of the M.7.'s preservation, perhaps uncomfortably combining arguments which related to the uniqueness of this particular design with those which placed it within the wider spectrum of locomotive development within the UK. He emphasized the Britishness of the design, drawing on a sense of national idiosyncrasy to justify the preservation of an example of the M.7. Class. Whilst Maxwell, on the one hand, suggested that the M.7 type's 0-4-4 wheel arrangement is “the most characteristically British of any” and that it represented the work of the Drummond Brothers “whose influence on

British Railways (and even Continental) Railways was as great (or greater) as that of any other mechanical engineer of their time”, on the other he points out that the M7s were the only tank engines of their type to handle both express and local work and also, in a comment which mixed fact and opinion:

“They were the biggest and by far the finest looking of any Class and also the longest lived and least altered”

Maxwell later expanded colourfully on the M.7. Class' longevity in *The Ballad of the M.7.*, drawing, as did many other railway authors, on the concept of the Victorian and Edwardian era as a kind of 'golden age' - or at least as a less complex time free from both the new opportunities (space exploration) and the grim disasters (blanket and atomic bombing and the Holocaust) which he associated with the onset of modernity:

“Their birth was when a speeding train

On earth knew not a rival;

They lived to see the aeroplane

Imperil man's survival.

They lived to witness atom-bombs

And lunar exploration,

And 'progress' marked by hecatombs

Beyond imagination.”

Skeat passed Maxwell's first letter to Walsh, suggesting that he should "peruse it and acquaint Scholes of the contents". He asks whether it would be possible for an M.7. to be held at Eastleigh works, implying that Skeat empathised to some extent with Maxwell's argument.

Having heard about a meeting being held in the near future to "finalise recommendations on the remaining steam engines which ought to be preserved", Maxwell wrote to Walsh on 5<sup>th</sup> October to again stress the case for the preservation of an engine from this class, arguing that the overarching type of engine to which this class belonged, the 0-4-4 wheel arrangement tank engine, is "the most uniquely British class there ever was" (with very few examples being built on the Continent or in the USA). According to Maxwell, the 0-4-4 tank was "ubiquitous, characteristic, and extremely efficient". Within this type, the M7 was, according to Maxwell, "the most outstanding", again due to its' large size, lack of alterations and good looks. He concludes his arguments about the M7 by suggesting:

"I really cannot think of any other engine type that has so strong a claim for preservation, and if no 0-4-4 tank is preserved at all there will be a grievous gap in the story of the evolution of the British steam engine."

Perhaps for reasons of brevity, the letters written by Maxwell to Skeat and Walsh are lacking in the geographic dimension which comes through in *The Ballad of the M.7*. Here, members of the class became a part of the landscapes through which they ran:

“Beside the sea-flats of the exe  
 And russet bluffs and headlands,  
 ‘How far a cry from Middlesex!’  
 They paced the Devon-red lands

On Hampshire highlands ploughed and sown,  
 Through green New Forest clearings,  
 By Dorset hedgerows overgrown  
 They made their glad appearings”

Similar canvassing was undertaken by G.H. (Geoffrey) Platt of the Historical Model Railway Society (who represented this Society on the Panel). In a letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 1959 (Box 65), referencing an earlier letter of 24<sup>th</sup> May, he writes in order to reiterate his suggestion that a North Stafford 0-6-2 tank engine should be added to the list of locomotive types to be preserved, suggesting that this would “serve to represent the smaller English railways” and recommending that it be “kept somewhere in the Potteries”. He also notes that his suggestion of preserving a London and North Western Railway 0-8-0 type “has been made also in letters to one or two railway periodicals”, and argues for the addition of the last Webb coal tank to the list if the private efforts to preserve and restore it were not successful (which, as mentioned above, they were).

The surviving Consultative Panel paperwork does not include any other such correspondence, or records of discussions about, the preservation of

any other locomotive type, during the period of just over a year between the production of Skeat's list in late December 1958 and the sending of the final list to J.H. Brebner, British Railways' Public Relations adviser, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1960. However, the covering letter which was sent alongside the list in February 1960<sup>123</sup> does offer some general justifications for the warp and weft of the list, without going into the details of why particular types were chosen, although Walsh does note that the Panel would be prepared to "explain fully if required their reasons for the selections which they have made".

Furthermore, in July 1961 Skeat produced a series of descriptive notes on the locomotives which had been preserved, which give some indication, albeit 'after the fact', of why particular types of machine had been listed. A selection

Table 4. Selected descriptions of locomotives preserved by the BTC, prepared by W.O. Skeat in 1961 (from NRM Clapham Correspondence files Box 5: Consultative Panel Locomotive and Rolling Stock Sub-Committees).

Locomotive Class	Description
N.E.R (sic) 4-6-2 No. 4468 (BR No. 60022) "Mallard". Gresley 1938.	No locomotive has earned greater fame than this most renowned of all the members of a famous class. The Gresley Pacifics have been in the forefront of express train operation on the East Coast Route to the North for nearly forty years. The exploits of this locomotive are known among all knowledgeable railwaymen or railway enthusiasts; it is unnecessary to enlarge on them.

<sup>123</sup> Copy of letter sent by B.D.J. Walsh, Honorary Secretary/Treasurer, to J.H. Brebner, Public Relations Adviser, British Transport Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1960. NRM Clapham Correspondence files: Box 65.

<p>N.E.R 0-6-0 Class J.21 T. Worsdell 1896.</p>	<p>When the hoped-for reorganisation of the York Railway Museum comes about, the inclusion of this (and the next) item will give better balance to the collection of large exhibits by the inclusion of typical goods locomotives, which handled, over some 70 years, the freight traffic that produced the bulk of the North Eastern's very considerable revenue. This locomotive is really an enlarged version of the old "Y.14" (now "J.15") class of the Great Eastern Railway; it will also be one of the few examples, for preservation, among the most numerous and popular of all British goods-engine designs.</p>
<p>L.S.W.R. 2-4-0WT 0298 Class Beattie 1874.</p>	<p>Three of these very interesting links with past locomotive practice have survived in Cornwall long after all the others of the class have been scrapped. Their survival is an almost incredible piece of good luck, as they represent typical light-duty tank engines of the 1870s, which in those days worked a great proportion of the L.S.W.R. suburban services. No comparable opportunity is likely to occur again of preserving any locomotive of such antiquity. The fact they are tank engines is an additional interest, as much fewer tank engine</p>

	<p>types than tender engines are being preserved. The layout of cylinders, valves, slide-bars, leading axleboxes, and leading-axle suspension are of great interest as belonging to a lost era.</p>
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Walsh gives two broad justifications for the preparation of the list. The first of these, the need to include “certain older locomotives representing British locomotive practice not already covered by the original list”, perhaps helps to explain the increase in the number of locomotive types from Skeat’s list, which explicitly focussed on modern types. Thus whereas the oldest locomotive on Skeat’s list dated from 1919, the list produced by the Consultative Panel in 1960 contained several locomotives built before this, including Henry Maxwell’s beloved M7 class (built between 1897 and 1911). Whilst this was a laudable, seemingly rational aim, it perhaps points, in essence, to the failure of the earlier listing process of 1953 as referred to in the letter (which was in turn informed, as mentioned in the Chapter 4, by the discussions of the Joint Locomotive Preservation Committee in 1948). There appears to have been a requirement to ‘fill in the gaps’ in the display of earlier locomotive practice- which had supposedly already been represented in the 1953 list. Yet by this stage, some of these earlier classes, had already been scrapped during the course of the 1950s. In fact, some of the Panel’s selections were essentially rare survivors- a case of, essentially, grabbing what was left before it was scrapped- though the fact that examples of these types had survived at all perhaps indicates that they were of an exemplary standard

of design and therefore worthy of preservation. For example, Skeat suggested in his descriptive notes that the survival of a London and South Western Railway was “an almost incredible piece of good luck”, and that “no comparable opportunity is likely to occur again of preserving any locomotive of such antiquity” (Table 4). Meanwhile the listing process took on something of an opportunistic nature when recommending that Taff Vale Railway 0-4-2T Class A No.407 (BR No. 394), dating from 1914, should be preserved; the notes suggest that “This locomotive was withdrawn in July, 1956, but has been observed at Swindon in recent months” and requests that the locomotive is earmarked for preservation as it is the only survivor of its class. Whilst a Taff Vale Railway locomotive was preserved as part of the National Collection, it was not the machine which appeared on the list.

The Consultative Panel’s selection process favoured successful designs over technical ‘dead ends’, with the Panel’s history listing “Popularity as exemplified by renowned performance in service” as one of the Guiding Principles of the Locomotive Sub-Committee’s preservation process. Thus, the NER Class J.21 0-6-0 was according to Skeat (Table 4), “amongst the most numerous and popular of all British goods-engine designs”. The Panel had also sought, according to Walsh, to incorporate locomotives built between 1910 and the present, “bringing the original list up-to-date so as to cover the whole history of the steam locomotive in this country”. Thus the list included locomotives from both the Grouping era- four types from the LMS and two each from the Great Western, Southern and London and North Eastern- and also two of British Railways’ Standard Designs, introduced from

1950. The majority of the locomotives are listed by type only, but in five cases- the Taff Vale 0-4-2T mentioned above, and also British Railways No.70000 *Britannia*, LNER A4 type 4468 (BR No.0022) *Mallard* (which had set the world speed record for steam locomotives in 1938; a feat which, according to Skeat was “known among all knowledgeable railwaymen or railway enthusiasts”, LMS 4-6-2 express engine No. 6235 *City of Birmingham* and Great Western Railway 4-6-0 No. 4073 *Caerphilly Castle*- the specific engine to be preserved was named.

*Caerphilly Castle*, and it appears *City of Birmingham*, had already been requested by the Science Museum and Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry respectively, whilst engine Number 2818, of the Great Western Railway- a member of the ‘2800’ class recommended for preservation in 1948- was accepted by the City Museum in Bristol (who had it seems initially wanted one of the express passenger locomotives *Colston Hall* or *Bristol Castle*)<sup>124</sup>, and was delivered to a warehouse in Avonmouth, after restoration at Eastleigh Works, in 1967, pending the construction of a new museum (though this ultimately never occurred, and the engine was instead moved to the NRM in time for its opening in 1975)<sup>125</sup>. Fred Lebeter, Keeper of the Science Museum’s Department of Transport and Mining, wrote a letter to Walsh on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1959<sup>126</sup> in which he requested that ‘Caerphilly Castle’ “be added to the existing list of locomotives that are to be preserved by the

<sup>124</sup> Letters, Alan Warhurst (Director of the City Museum) to W.O. Skeat, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1963 and to John Scholes, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1963 (copy) in NRM Clapham Correspondence files Box 67.

<sup>125</sup> The City Museum, Bristol: Director’s Report for the Period 3<sup>rd</sup> July- 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1967 (including Curator’s Quarterly Reports for April, May and June 1967); Bristol Record Office Museum and Art Gallery Committee Minute Book M/BCC/MUS/1/16.

<sup>126</sup> NRM Clapham Correspondence files; Box 65.

Commission”, and offered a “permanent resting place”, to the engine, which would be placed into “the re-designed Rail Transport Gallery that will form a part of the new Centre Block extension now in course of construction”. The locomotive moved to the museum in June 1961, and played an important role in museum space for more than 30 years (until the Gallery closed for redevelopment in 1996), as a machine which represented “the steam locomotive at the zenith of its success in this country” (Simmons 1970: 37). *City of Birmingham* moved to the Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry in 1966.

Geographically, the list was, “in view of the Commission’s policy of establishing regional museums”, divided into a section for each region; the two British Railways Standard locomotives were placed under the Regions where they had most regularly worked. Skeat suggests that an example of the North Eastern Railways’ Class J.21 should be preserved in a reorganised York Museum, since they handled the freight traffic which produced “the bulk of the North Eastern’s very considerable revenue”.

The Scottish Region was not represented at all on the Consultative Panel’s list; the Panel felt

“satisfied that the locomotive already preserved by that region... together with a G & S.W.R 0-6-0 locomotive which it is understood that the Region may be able to acquire, will be fully representative of steam locomotive development in Scotland, and will need no additions.”

As shall be explained below, this was not a view shared by locomotive enthusiasts in Scotland. As Thomas (n.d.) suggests in his booklet documenting

the preservation of No. 828, “there was a strong feeling among Scottish enthusiasts that a disproportionate number of English engines had been consigned to Clapham” leading to the establishment of the Scottish Locomotive Preservation Fund in 1962. Even before the list had been finalised in 1961, the Scottish Area of the Stephenson Locomotive Society had written to Skeat to “ask that the first Drummond 0-6-0 tender locomotive of the Caledonian might be preserved”, in June of 1960<sup>127</sup>, although the idea of preserving a locomotive from this class was later discounted and instead a locomotive of the same railway’s later 812 Class of 1899 was, following the raising of the necessary funds, preserved and restored before being put on display at the Museum of Transport in Glasgow (the machine was subsequently returned to running order and is now based at the Strathspey Railway) (Thomas, n.d.).

Curiously, the members of the Panel also carried out an act of rejection in their list, requesting that the LNER Class K3 2-6-0 locomotive be removed from the list of locomotives to be preserved, as its’ preservation was not “considered essential in addition to the items now recommended in the enclosed Supplementary List”. This illustrates the extent to which these enthusiasts took their task seriously- or at least, wanted to be seen to be taking their task seriously- in terms of considering the limited amount of space available for storing locomotives. Beyond this, there appears to have been, at least in the mind of some Panel members, an inherent privileging of the careful selection and display of engines, perhaps beyond spatial

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<sup>127</sup> Letter, W.O. Skeat to B.D.J. Walsh, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960; Clapham files Box 65.

constraints- the second of the two Consultative Panel histories noting the “need to judge how many types to recommend, too many being as ill-advised as too few”. Thus not only had they “rigorously pared” the suggestions which had been offered during the selections, they had also gone back and pared previous selections and removed a type which was not essential in telling the story of British steam locomotive development.

### **6.5 Amendments to the list 1960-1961**

Following the Panel’s preparation of a list of locomotives to be preserved, Scholes agreed with Brebner to send the Consultative Panel’s list to “Mr. Bond and Mr. Harrison for comment and also circulate the Regional General Managers with regard to their particular reference”<sup>128</sup>. Affirming that the composition of the list was “fair so far as public opinion is concerned” Scholes made some strong arguments regarding the preservation of locomotives, drawing upon patriotic sentiment and urging the Commission to look beyond the short-term economic costs involved in selecting locomotives for preservation, as well as underscoring the way in which impending technological changes would increase the interest in steam locomotives, resulting in profitable returns from the Commission’s museums:

The Commission may consider that the cost of retention of these locomotives as historical objects, added to the cost of housing restoration and maintenance will be excessive in relation to their worth but I would point out that this country produced and developed the steam locomotive throughout the world and, therefore, it is reasonable to expect Britain to

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<sup>128</sup> Memorandum, Scholes to Brebner 18<sup>th</sup> February 1960; National Records of Scotland BR/RSR/4/1716.

keep, for posterity, a collection which would prove this mechanical achievement. In a few years time, electrification will make the steam engine unique and I have no hesitation in claiming that the receipts from the various transport museums to be eventually inaugurated by the Commission, and which will display these locomotives, will more than cover the preservation costs of the locomotives involved.

The two men the list was sent directly to were J.F. Harrison, who was the overall Chief Mechanical Engineer of British Railways, and R.C. Bond, who held the position of Chief Mechanical Engineer, British Railways Central Staff. The list was sent out to the General Manager of each Region by J.H. Brebner on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1960, alongside a covering letter explaining the circumstances through which it had been produced- i.e. the establishment of the Panel and the need for the list to be produced given that “there will be no further steam locomotives designed for use on British Railways” and asking for “observations, especially with reference to the locomotives concerned in your region”. The letters to Harrison, Bond and the General Managers of six British Railways Regions led to the recommendation of a further eight locomotives for preservation, four of which were recommended by D. McKenna, Assistant General Manager of the Southern Region, one by David Blee, General Manager of the London Midland Region, one by the Western Region, and two by unknown parties (only copies of the responses from the London Midland, Southern, North Eastern and Scottish Regions are held in National Records of Scotland file BR/RSR/4/1716; copies of responses from the other Regions are missing). Illustrating the rather uncertain nature of what was later

purported to have been a systematic process, David Blee also suggested the preservation of a Class 7 2-8-0 Freight Tender '04' locomotive; this wasn't included on the final list but one example was ultimately preserved by British Railways in any case. The Great Western Railway 'King Class' was recommended by the Western Region according to Scholes (speaking at the meeting of the Consultative Panel held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1961<sup>129</sup>), whilst the unique prototype locomotive No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*, and the Type 5 with Caprotti valve gear, are reported by Scholes to represent the London Midland Region, though they are quite likely to have been recommended by J.F. Harrison, since he was heavily involved in the design of these locomotives (though this is purely conjecture). The eight additional locomotives recommended for preservation by British Railways staff tended to be the target of suggested modifications to the list of preserved locomotives later in the 1960s, yet six of the eight locomotives added did ultimately become part of the national collection, with the exceptions being the two newest machines, both of which were chosen at least partially because they possessed the unique British Caprotti steam valve gear. Ultimately, the BTC decided to remove this gear from *Duke of Gloucester* for preservation and send the rest of the locomotive for scrap; it was, however, later saved by a private preservation group from Barry scrapyard and restored to working order.

The letters sent back to Brebner ranged from short, almost terse missives to lengthier descriptions of the merits of particular locomotive classes. However, even in the case of the latter, the level of importance subsequently

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<sup>129</sup> Meeting Minutes, NRM Clapham Correspondence Files Box 68).

attached to what, in essence, are a few cursory sentences is higher than one might perhaps anticipate. Illustrating Bruno Latour's argument that "nothing has a bigger appetite for paper than a technology of steel and motor oil" (p.222) - though in this case switching motor oil to engine oil- the material fate of an object was essentially decided upon in one paragraph of a memorandum.

James Ness, General Manager of the Scottish Region, did not feel that he needed any other examples of historic locomotives than the those which he already had (although the ex-Highland Railway locomotive *Ben Alder* was mouldering in storage at Forfar), save for an example of a Glasgow and South Western Railway machine, although arrangements were in hand (by Scholes) to preserve an engine built by this company and working, by this time, at a colliery in Denbighshire. Ness writes: "We have a very fine collection of locomotives of the pre-grouping Railway Companies with the exception, as you know, of the former Glasgow and South Western Railway. There is nothing I need add to what is stated in your letter"<sup>130</sup>.

H.A. Short of the North Eastern Region was rather more verbose in his descriptions but expressed his general approval of the selections for his region, and also expressed his hope that the preservation of *Mallard* would be approved, "as this is a fine example of Gresley design which gave outstanding performances during what will, no doubt, be regarded as the peak of the steam locomotive era".

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<sup>130</sup> 'Preservation of Locomotives', letter from James Ness to J.H. Brebner, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1960. NRS BR/RSR/4/1716.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, David McKenna, Assistant General Manager of the Southern Region (writing on behalf of General Manager C.P. Hopkins), and David Blee, General Manager of the London Midland Region, added examples of steam locomotive types to the list (despite there already being more locomotives representing the latter Region than any other). Their letters were still relatively brief, yet the contents appear to have been, at least initially, unchallenged and examples of all of their suggestions were ultimately preserved by the State. Blee's letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> May is perhaps the more extraordinary of the two since he does not give any justification for his selection of particular locomotive types for preservation, simply giving a very brief history of the two classes he has chosen. His recommendation of a Class 5 2-6-0 Mixed Traffic Tender- "This parallel boiler locomotive, designed and built by the LMS, is still in service, and may not be completely withdrawn for some years"- is of particular interest as this particular locomotive type had initially been recommended for preservation by Skeat in 1958, but was subsequently taken off the Consultative Panel's list which was sent to the regions. Blee's short recommendation led, ultimately, to the preservation of the first locomotive in this class, which is currently on display at the NRM (two other locomotives were preserved privately). As mentioned above, Blee also recommended the preservation of a Class 7 '04' or '8K' locomotive- a type which, whilst not included on the February 1961 list, was ultimately preserved as part of the national collection.

David McKenna- son of Liberal MP Reginald McKenna, recommended the preservation of four locomotives in a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> June 1960 (Figure 14),

based on their particular technical characteristics, although we cannot now know the extent to which he was acting on his own initiative or as, in essence, the scribe of his manager C.P. Hopkins<sup>131</sup>. McKenna's letter, which is written in the first person- suggests that he had "no comments to make" on the locomotives which had already been recommended for preservation by the Panel in connection with the Southern Region, but suggested that "consideration might be given" to the preservation of a Bulleid Q1 class 0-6-0 locomotive- a "unique design producing an exceptionally high power/weight ratio"- a 'Lord Nelson' class 4-6-0- "with cranks set at 135° and 45° to give 8 impulses per revolution of the driving wheel" and potentially a "King Arthur" class locomotive and an ex-London and South Western Railway 'T9'- although he was less certain about these, suggesting that the "arguments in favour are not so strong... being based mainly on their trim appearance and their ability to be "maids of all work". He suggests that a decision could be taken on these when the last of each class was withdrawn. Ultimately, examples of all of these four classes of locomotive were preserved as part of the national collection. At the time of writing, three of these are in working order.

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<sup>131</sup> Copy of letter from D.McKenna to J.H.Brebner, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1960; NRS BR/RSR/4/1716.

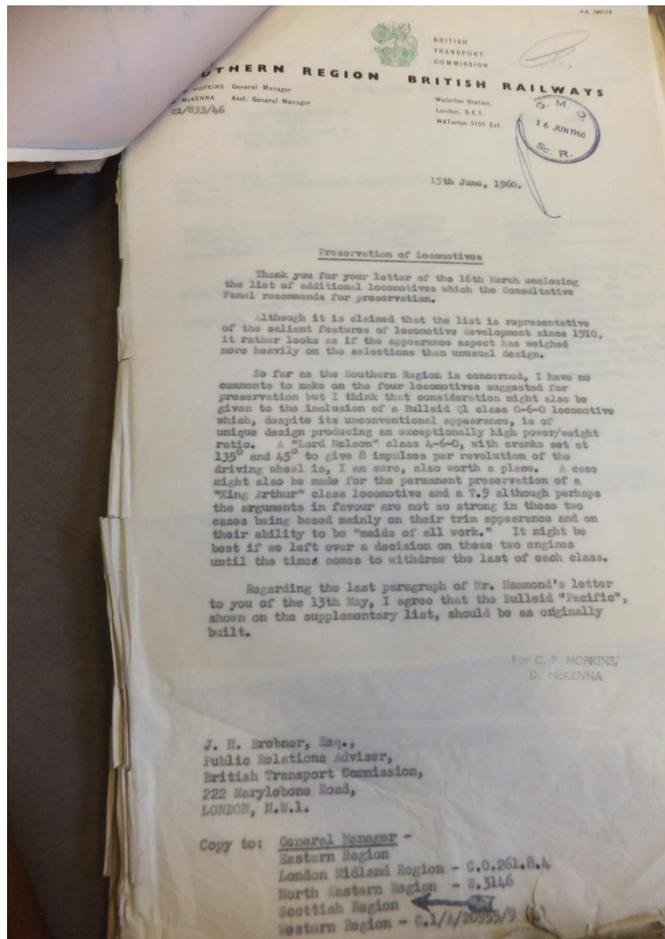


Figure 14. The preservation of Southern Railway 'King Arthur' Class No. 777 *Sir Lamiel*, pictured below at Rothley on the Great Central Railway, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 (author's photograph), can be traced back to this letter (Scottish Region copy shown) from David McKenna, Assistant General Manager of British Railways' Southern Region, to J.H. Brebner, Public Relations Adviser at the British Transport Commission, on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1960 (*National Records of Scotland, BR/RSR/4/1716*).



The balance of power between the Consultative Panel, Scholes and British Railways staff is of interest here; it was in these relationships that the fate of particular objects laid. Panel members made a clear, and ultimately successful, attempt to remove the Class 5 locomotive with Caprotti valve gear from the list and replace it with a former Great Eastern Railway Class J17 0-6-0 goods engine. Scholes wrote to Harrison on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1961<sup>132</sup>, suggesting that the Chairman of the Consultative Panel (Jack Boston) had reported discussions about the preservation of the Class 5 at the April meeting of the Panel, in which it was “felt that no case could be made for the inclusion in the list of this engine”, given that the only possible reason (as they saw it) for preserving

<sup>132</sup> NRM Clapham Correspondence Files, Box 65.

an engine of this class was the Caprotti valve gear, which was fitted to the *Duke of Gloucester* in any case. In its stead, they recommended the J17 class as this type would “strengthen the number of classes of goods engines that have been or will be set aside, this aspect of locomotive preservation having been admittedly slightly neglected”. Whilst it was undeniable that there had been something of a dearth of goods engines recommended for preservation- very few of the 27 extra locomotives scheduled for preservation in 1960 could be described as ‘goods engines’ as such- it is perhaps questionable as to whether this was the true motive behind this suggestion, and why this particular locomotive type should be preserved (rather than a Goods engine of a different company). Dunstone suggests that Walsh had “argued for the saving of two Great Eastern locomotives which might otherwise have been considered unworthy”, including the ‘J17’ and the ‘J69’ type which had been included on the February 1961 list.

It was not until December 15<sup>th</sup> that Harrison responds, suggesting that the issue is “still outstanding” and that it would be “preferable for replacement to be made by an L.N.E. Pacific”- he specifically suggests No. 60102 *Sir Frederick Banbury*, an A1 Class express passenger engine of the same type as *Flying Scotsman*. This selection is fascinating, as it reveals much about Harrison’s career. Revill (1994: 705) tracked the geography of individual careers over time within the Midland Railway, tracing, in his words, “the relationships between the large-scale public geography of the railway corporation and the intimate private geography of individual biography”. Here we can see some of Harrison’s biography in his choice of engine, since this type was designed by

Sir Nigel Gresley, whom Harrison worked under in the 1920s. Similarly to Gresley, he had started his career working for the Great Northern Railway, thus it is surely no accident that the locomotive he picked was named after the GNR's last Chairman (although it was also the case that the locomotive had just been withdrawn).

In this instance at least, Scholes sided, to a certain extent, with the Consultative Panel rather than his employers, commenting, in a rather perfunctory manner:

“The alternative suggestion has been noted and will be considered but in the meantime I should be obliged by your observations on the advocacy by the Consultative Panel of a J.17 Class 0-6-0 of the former G.E.R”

Harrison grudgingly accedes to the Panel's request, as mediated through Scholes, in a brief memo of 3<sup>rd</sup> January of 1962 commenting:

“I would raise no objection to a J.17 G.E. 0-6-0 being earmarked... although I would have doubted the preference for the inclusion of this locomotive, as an example of outstanding development on locomotive design.”

On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1962 that Scholes informed Jack Boston personally that the Chief Mechanical Engineer had supported his suggestion that a J17 type locomotive should be preserved. Skeat replies, saying that Scholes' news has “pleased me very much” and will be “excellent news to all the many admirers of the Great Eastern Railway”- which perhaps suggests that the Panel's decision to preserve a locomotive of this type was motivated, as Dunstone suggests, motivated more by personal interest in the Great Eastern Railway

than by the need to preserve a representative goods engine. He recommends the preservation of locomotive No. 65567 from this class, and suggests that the news could be released in connection with the centenary of the Great Eastern in 1962; these suggestions are noted by Scholes, although he advises caution given that this is a change to the published list; thus they would “have to be careful how this matter is handled, otherwise there may be some misunderstanding with the ordinary enthusiast”.

Thus the list of locomotives to be preserved which was released in February 1961 was by no means a *fait accompli*, and in some cases the specific engines ultimately chosen for preservation were different from those which it was initially assumed would be chosen. For example, in relation to the Schools Class of locomotive, first-built No.900 (British Railways 30900) *Eton* was initially selected, but this was ultimately changed to No. 925 *Cheltenham* because No. 900 was non-standard compared to the majority of the class (the first ten locomotives being of different design to the later batch of 30) and, having suffered a fractured cylinder, had been withdrawn and stored in the open for some time, leading to its deterioration. At this time, restoring a locomotive to its original condition- essentially obliterating its individual biography in service- was a keystone of preservation. As Sykes *et al.* (1997:172) have noted, “For Scholes, locomotives were of significance insofar as they contributed to the technological development of the steam engine and thus their essential nature lay in their original forms”.

In this case, however, such a restoration would ironically have resulted in a locomotive which looked entirely different to the Schools Class with which

most enthusiasts and railwaymen associated (in particular its lack of smoke deflectors), since the modifications made to the engine over its working life had made it more similar, yet still not identical, to the locomotives in its class. Correspondence from this time shows that Consultative Panel members chose No. 925 as an alternative to No. 900- importantly this locomotive was still “in all major respects “as built””<sup>133</sup>

### **6.6 ‘Railway preservation is not within our terms of reference’: Relationships between the Consultative Panel, the BTC and other railway enthusiast groups**

Despite its antagonistic beginnings, the members of the Consultative Panel very quickly became allies and supporters of the BTC’s preservation policy, in which they increasingly played a key part. An example of this was the Committee meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1961:

“The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed unanimously, that the Panel’s thanks be offered to the British Transport Commission in respect of historic locomotives recently preserved and placed within the Clapham collection, in particular the Great Eastern Railway 2-4-0 No.490 and the Metropolitan Railway 4-4-0 tank engine No. 23. In particular the Panel felt that congratulations should be offered to Mr. Scholes for his work in that direction. The Commission’s acceptance of the Panel’s recommendations for future steam locomotives for preservation was also most satisfactory, and could be regarded as establishing a firm link between the Panel and the Commission.”

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<sup>133</sup> Letter, Sykes (Chief Mechanical Engineer, Southern Region, to Scholes, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1961); NRM Clapham Correspondence Files Box 66

Thus the Panel's members approved both of the fact that the BTC was, after many years of seeming inaction (following the 1951 publication of the report on The Preservation of Relics and Records) delivering on its promise to preserve and display British transport artefacts, through the establishment of the museum at Clapham, and also that they had worked with the Panel in recommending locomotives to be preserved in the future. The thawing of relations between the societies represented on the Panel and the BTC was perhaps represented by the formal handing over of the locomotive *Gladstone*, preserved privately by the Stephenson Locomotive Society in 1927 and placed in the York Museum, to the BTC in 1959, though a 1997 article by Nathan suggests that this had more to do with the cost of repainting the engine. There also appears to have been a close personal relationship between members of the Panel (particularly Skeat, Boston and Walsh) and John Scholes.

At the Consultative Panel's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1968 he was presented with personal gifts of a cigarette box and a series of photographs of himself in different parts of the museum and undertaking different roles (figure 15, see also chapter 7). After Scholes' death on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1977, the Panel organised the John Scholes Memorial Fund and sought to commission a painting of the Clapham museum and Scholes, although ultimately this was altered at the Science Museum's suggestion to a series of lightning sketches, in order to avoid, as a report to the Panel put it, "the

pitfall, so often suffered, of commissioning a painting which turns out to be totally unsuitable''<sup>134</sup>.



Figure 15. Cigarette Box presented to John Scholes on the occasion of the Consultative Panel's tenth anniversary dinner, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1968.

In addition to the close personal relationship between Scholes and members of the Panel, there was a certain importance attached to Clapham as a place- the Panel, Scholes and Clapham were interlinked actors in the same network, prospering and suffering together. As the first of the two Consultative Panel histories suggests, the Panel's base at Clapham proved to be a boon to its activities, as success bred success:

The choice of this meeting place (Clapham) undoubtedly gave inspiration to the members of the Panel for on their way to and from their meetings

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<sup>134</sup> NRM Clapham Correspondence files: Folder labelled 'Main Panel up to 1969' (which in fact contains the minutes of meetings held after 1969 as well as up to this date): Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July 1977.

around them they could see the results of their work slowly accumulating. To be working in such surroundings gave point to their labours and provided regular proof that their efforts were not in vain.

Poignantly, the Panel continued to meet at Clapham even after it had closed permanently on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1973, holding their last meeting at this location on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1975. The Panel were thus based at Clapham both whilst it was being assembled and whilst it was being demolished, and the images produced as a memorial to Scholes in 1977-1978 evoke the ghostly space of the museum, which had been closed by this time and converted back into a bus garage.

The period between 1958 and 1962 was perhaps the apogee of the Panel and BTC's efforts; as Dunstone (2007:35) notes the Consultative Panel process "declined with the demise of the BTC". This brief moment, which was indeed something of a purple patch for UK transport museums in general, was captured at the International Commission for Transport Museums' annual conference in September 1961, which included events held at the then newly opened Land Transport gallery at the Science Museum and Museum of British Transport at Clapham; for example at Clapham on 12<sup>th</sup> September talks were given by the Curator and staff on the "collection, Preservation, Presentation and Inspection of Public Transport Relics in Britain". It also included a visit to the Montagu Motor Museum at Beaulieu (including an hour long address by Lord Montagu)- which had constructed a new building only two years previously (Beaulieu online) combined with a trip to Buckler's Hard (the site of a shipyard which built many ships for the Royal Navy in the eighteenth and

early twentieth centuries), and, intriguingly, also a two and a half hour talk, or set of talks, by The Earl of Northesk (Chairman of the Talylyn Railway) and Boston and Walsh from the Consultative Panel, entitled 'The Enthusiast and British Transport'. Meanwhile, the Pullman carriage Topaz, which had been saved through the financial generosity of Henry Maxwell, was presented to the Museum by Maxwell, the Deputy Chairman of the BTC Sir John Benstead and the Managing Director of the Pullman Car Company, at a post-luncheon ceremony on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1961<sup>135</sup>.

Given the close intertwining between the Panel and BTC preservation policy, it is perhaps understandable that members of the Panel reacted strongly whenever the BTC was criticised in the press, and Panel members, experienced and in the know, took a somewhat 'holier than thou' and aloof attitude to other enthusiasts which, with the benefit of hindsight, looks somewhat misplaced. I do not seek to discuss the private railway preservation schemes of this era in detail here; it suffices to say that, organisationally, the 1960s were tumultuous times for the railway preservation movement, with societies and schemes for the preservation of locomotives and of sections of closed railway track being formed and re-formed, clashing with one another and occasionally collapsing or disappearing altogether (Dunstone 2007; Carter 2008).

Organisations such as the Transport Trust and the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (ARPS) attempted to consolidate these activities, providing an overarching source of funding, support and guidance. However,

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<sup>135</sup> 'Presentation of the Pullman Car 'Topaz' to the Museum of British Transport, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1961' programme in Pullman Car 'Topaz' object file, accessed at NRM.

the Trust was forced to differentiate itself from other societies, pointing out that it was interested in all forms of transport (rather than just a particular type) and that “its foremost function is to raise money for preservation rather than physically carry out the restoration itself” (Transport Trust News Bulletin Summer 1967). The Trust and ARPS were, in turn, forced to differentiate themselves from one another, as it was “obvious from various enquiries... that some societies are not clear about the difference between the ARPS and the TT, and a few say that they find difficulty in knowing to which they should belong” (Transport Trust News Bulletin Spring 1969). The difference between the two, according to this article, was that whilst the ARPS “concerns itself with the problems of active railway preservation”- particularly in terms of bargaining with BR to get the best price for a particular locomotive- the TT concentrated on raising funds for the preservation of all forms of transport. The article ends with the rather contradictory assertion that they were “different bodies with separate objectives, although both aim to help railway preservation”. The fact that even attempts to, in effect, bring the transport preservation movement together resulted in conflict and confusion and the duplication of activity serves to illustrate the rather chaotic way in which railway preservation (mal)functioned at this time.

The Consultative Panel tended to distance itself from the esoterically burgeoning railway preservation movement; referring to the formation of the Railway Preservation Association (a forerunner of the ARPS), which was proposed in 1961 (with its first meeting being held on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1962),

Boston suggests to Skeat that, “while railway preservation is not within our terms of reference, perhaps you, David Walsh or myself might attend the projected meeting... as an observer”. Thus, whilst the members of the Panel all represented enthusiast societies- societies which had been, or still were, actively involved in preservation schemes for railways or other forms of transport- the SLS had, after all, been behind the first private locomotive purchase in 1927 (although it had relinquished this locomotive in 1959), whilst the Tramway Museum Society was in the process of establishing a museum at Crich in Derbyshire- the members of the Panel separated themselves from the emerging railway preservation movement of this time, which was, in organisational terms at least, becoming somewhat murky and tense. In July 1962, the Panel released a Press Notice suggesting that railway and locomotive preservation societies should join the Railway Preservation Society in order to take advantage of the advice and experience it could offer, particularly that of its Chairman W.G. Smith- the first person to buy a locomotive from British Railways and restore it to working order- but also noting that “The recent upsurge of railway-and locomotive- preservation schemes all over the country includes some really worth-while projects, also some which have little chance of succeeding”<sup>136</sup>

New societies accepted onto the Panel tended to be more generalised in nature- such as the Railway and Canal Historical Society or the Electric Railway Society- or to be overarching societies seeking to consolidate, represent and/or assist the interests of many smaller organisations- such as

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<sup>136</sup> ‘Railway and Locomotive Preservation Schemes’- Press Notice July 1962; NRM Clapham Correspondence Files Box 65.

the Transport Trust and the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (ARPS) rather than societies seeking to preserve a particular locomotive or stretch of track (though this would in any case have resulted in an unworkably high number of representatives). The Consultative Panel effectively placed itself- and was placed by others- on a pedestal; as the very pinnacle of transport preservation. When Ron Wilsdon was in the process of forming the Transport Trust in 1964 he sought the advice of Scholes and Boston whom he saw as “at the heart of the preservation movement”. The two men were broadly supportive of his ideas, without wanting or, in the case of Scholes, being able to, get involved themselves, and Wilsdon later commented that

Had these two men shown strong disagreement or antagonism to my proposals or discovered some major flaw in them I would have had to give serious thought about whether it was sensible to continue bearing in mind their considerable knowledge and experience of the transport preservation movement (Wilsdon, n.d.).

Thus, the members of the Consultative Panel removed themselves from the mud and bullets of the railway preservationist trenches, both organisationally and often in terms of the physical labour which this entailed – Skeat and Boston, in particular, appear to have been literally ‘hands off’ on the whole, and perhaps represented a different type of railway enthusiast when compared to the likes of L.T.C. Rolt or Smith, who combined their roles on committees (Rolt as Chairman of Tallylyn Railway Preservation Society, and Smith as Chairman of the RPA) with the physical work on engines, carriages and track work which was required to restore them to working order.

Geoghegan (2008: 226) has described technological enthusiasm as “practical and embodied”. However, whilst Skeat had some practical knowledge and experience of steam locomotive mechanics from his time spent at the LNER in the 1920s, he was perhaps more of an enthusiast on paper, possessing historical and technical knowledge of the subject area but not necessarily actively engaging in the tinkering, operating and resurrecting which Geoghegan suggests are key facets of technological enthusiasm.

Skeat clamped down strongly on those who sought to decry the preservation efforts of the BTC, in which the Consultative Panel had often been involved. William Alfred Tuplin, then a Professor of Applied Mechanics at Sheffield University and a regular contributor of articles to publications such as *Railway World*, *Railway Gazette* and the *Journal of the Stephenson Locomotive Society*, sent a letter to the editor of the *Railway Observer* on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1961, criticizing the lettering on the tender of the restored Great Central Railway ‘Director’ Class locomotive- No. 506 *Butler Henderson*<sup>137</sup>. He commented that the over-largeness of these letters took them “from dignity to the threshold of vulgarity”, and sent a copy of this to Skeat, perhaps expecting him to sympathise with his argument. Skeat, however, took exception to Tuplin’s short missive, both on the grounds that he should be more grateful about the BTC’s efforts, and that in any case he should not seek to publicise his discontent, but rather he should have taken the matter up with Scholes personally. On the preservation of locomotives, he writes

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<sup>137</sup> Copy of letter from Tuplin to Hon. Editors, “*Railway Observer*”; 21<sup>st</sup> November 1961: Skeat has handwritten a reply, and also a letter to the *Railway Gazette* which responds to Tuplin (both dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 1961), on the bottom of this. NRM Clapham Files; Box 65.

Generally speaking, the restorations done on behalf of the British Transport Commission's collection of locomotives are extremely well done, and even if they weren't so good, I personally would still feel that we would be very lucky to get some locomotives preserved in any shape or form.

Illustrating again the close bond between himself and Scholes, Skeat effectively tries to protect the Curator and his reputation, suggesting that Tuplin should "be a bit cautious before sending a letter for publication in a railway society's journal". He recognises that "John Scholes stands to be shot at by everyone", but wonders if "you could not have taken the matter up with him personally, instead of publicizing it". In another letter to the editor of the *Railway Observer*, Skeat, in effect, draws upon his personal experiences, in particular his dealings with the railway authorities in connection with the preservation of historic locomotives, in order to point out the churlishness of Tuplin's observation:

When one remembers the official attitude on the preservation of any locomotives, say, ten years ago, and compares it with the enlightened policy of to-day, and when one remembers the efforts that had to be made to persuade the authorities of the public interest in transport relics, it is a matter for considerable gratitude that one learns of a number of famous locomotives being reprieved for restoration for the national collection.

Skeat concludes his letter by suggesting that "those readers who are pleased that a 'Director' has been preserved should write to Mr. John Scholes and tell him so!" Thus Skeat is both defending and promoting the official processes of preservation in which he has been involved, and also, by

extension, John Scholes. Tuplin, chastened by Skeat's response, said that he was "very sorry indeed that you feel so deeply on this subject"<sup>138</sup>.

Skeat again took up his politely-worded cudgels in defence of the BTC in February 1962, although in public he and W.G. Smith were rather less well-mannered in their conversations with one another. An R.Bell, Honourable Secretary of the Princess Elizabeth Preservation Fund, wrote in to *The Telegraph* to not only outline the Fund's scheme to restore this 4-6-2 express passenger locomotive (built by the LMS for its London-Glasgow service in 1933 and named after the then seven-year old Princess who became our present monarch) to the LMS company's Crimson Lake livery and place it on public view, but also to, in effect, criticise the BTC's preservation policy. He mentions that the list of locomotives to be preserved "omits three of the most famous engines that have ever run- the Flying Scotsman, the Royal Scot and the Princess Elizabeth"<sup>139</sup>. Drawing upon national pride- and linking, implicitly, his argument to Britain's pivotal role in railway development- he suggested that "these engines of international repute are to be broken up as scrap metal".

Connecting to the still raw emotions aroused by the demolition of Euston arch and Great Hall, Bell writes "Not only will Euston Arch and Great Hall be demolished, but also the most famous locomotives that are ever likely to run from it". This was slightly disingenuous, since one of the locomotives named by Bell- *Flying Scotsman*- ran from King's Cross rather than Euston. The phrase

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<sup>138</sup> Letter, W.Tuplin to W.O. Skeat, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1961.

<sup>139</sup> Press clippings: Letter from R.Bell to *The Daily Telegraph*, entitled 'Famous Engines', published 16<sup>th</sup> February 1962, and letter from W.O. Skeat to *The Daily Telegraph*, also entitled 'Famous Engines', published 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1962; NRM Clapham Correspondence Files Box 66.

'ever likely to run from it' was redolent of the 'end of the halcyon days' argument that was somewhat prevalent at this time amongst both enthusiasts and, surprisingly, British Railways itself to some extent. Reduced perhaps to a supporting role in the nation's transport network, railways were in future supposed to be functional rather than famous, robust rather than romantic. Even the guide to the Clapham museum (see next chapter), written under the auspices of the BRB, suggested this when it commented that "Railways will never lose their usefulness, but their golden glamorous age is past" (Morgan 1963:21). In respect of the locomotive which his Fund was seeking to preserve, Bell does note that the BTC has been "extremely helpful" and has "quoted a most reasonable figure in the sum of £2,160" in order to purchase the locomotive- though he of course sought subscriptions and donations to raise this amount.

Skeat was angry about Bell's criticism of the BTC, and he sent in a letter to *The Telegraph* which sought to set out the facts of the matter at hand. When this was not immediately published (it was not printed until 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1962, just over two weeks after Bell's submission), he sent a copy of this letter directly to Bell, commenting "if you will bear in mind the points I have made, then I will feel that my efforts have not been wasted"<sup>140</sup>. In response to Bell's criticism that *Flying Scotsman* was not preserved, Skeat points out that the BTC's list did include the Gresley Pacific *Mallard* (i.e. very roughly speaking the same type of locomotive, designed by the same man), and argues that *Mallard*, the setter of the World Speed Record for steam locomotives, ranked

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<sup>140</sup> Copy of letter from W.O. Skeat to R.Bell, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1962; Clapham Correspondence Files Box 66.

“higher in public esteem than the *Flying Scotsman*”, which had derived its fame from the fact that its name matched that of the express train service which it often hauled, and the fact that it had been displayed at “the Wembley Exhibition in 1924”. Skeat also dismisses the claims of the *Royal Scot*, which also got its name from the service which it ran, whilst “much of the general layout of the design was derived from a study of the Southern Railway’s Lord Nelson class by the staff of the North British Locomotive Co., who built her”.

He then uses a similar argument to that which he made about the *Flying Scotsman* in relation to the *Princess Elizabeth*, pointing out that a later ‘Coronation’ type locomotive, again a locomotive of the same basic type designed by the same man- William Stanier- was being preserved. He concludes that “the Commission has been much more attentive to the preservation of famous locomotives than Mr Bell suggests”. Nevertheless, he is broadly supportive of the scheme itself- he “does not wish to decry” Mr Bell’s plans, and wishes him “every success”.

Bell later responded to Skeat’s criticisms in detail (1<sup>st</sup> March 1962<sup>141</sup>) and, whilst expressing “the greatest admiration for the results that have been achieved by the Panel”- in terms of the number of engines which had been preserved- he did draw upon the hole in Skeat’s argument insofar as he had not referred to the fact that, whilst they were of the same basic design and were indeed designed by the same person, *Flying Scotsman* and *Princess Elizabeth* were mechanically different from the later machines which had been

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<sup>141</sup> Letter from R.Bell to W.O.Skeat, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1962; Clapham Correspondence Files Box 66.

preserved, effectively representing an earlier stage of development. As Bell put it in relation to the LMS:

“When the preservation scheme is complete there is a complete gap in express engines from Midland Compound to City of Birmingham thus creating the illusion the LMS Company had no express engines. Of course this goes right back to the cutting up of the Cardean, the Georges, the Precursors, the Princes, the Claughtons, the Patriot etc. all of which... has nothing whatever to do with the Consultative Panel.”

Bell further suggested that the Coronation type which had been preserved- *City of Birmingham*- had only been preserved due to the kind offer of space by what he terms the ‘Birmingham Science Museum’ and was a poor choice because it couldn’t authentically be restored to LMS maroon (as, when it wore those colours before, it had been encased in streamlining which was later removed), it had “hideous gaps in the footplating” due to being rebuilt and “no particular claim to fame”.

Independently of Skeat, W.G. Smith, in his capacity as Chairman of the Railway Preservation Association, wrote to Bell on February 20<sup>th</sup>, in an attempt to, as he later explained in a letter to Skeat (enclosing his letter to Bell), “draw them within the influence of the RPA thereby bringing them under some sort of realistic control”<sup>142</sup>. His letter to Bell is polite though at the same time emphasises his own expertise in this matter, as the first and at the time only private individual to have preserved a locomotive and ran it on British Railways’ network. He notes

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<sup>142</sup> Letter, W.G. Smith to W.O.Skeat, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1962; copy of letter sent from W.G. Smith to R.Bell, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1962; NRM Clapham Correspondence Files Box 66.

“If the painful experience and disappointment which I have from time to time experienced can be turned to the advantage of your own preservation efforts I shall be delighted to do all I can.”

He suggests that the Railway Preservation Association may be able to help, in an advisory capacity, since most private railway operators and preservation societies were affiliated to it and, as such, “we... have a wide field from which to draw valuable experience which may prove of assistance to you”.

Speaking more candidly than they did in their often more public correspondence with Bell himself, Skeat and Smith were, to say the least, dismissive of the scheme and those who ran it. Bell had replied to Smith by the time of Smith’s letter to Skeat, and the tone of his response clearly angered the Captain. He comments that his initial letter to Bell would have been “very blunt” had he been writing as a private individual- rather than as Chairman of the RPA- because “their letter in *The Telegraph* annoyed me intensely”. But Bell’s response clearly upset Smith even more:

This morning I have received the most amazing letter from him a copy of which is enclosed. It fills me with amazement, disgust and horror at the thought of someone in the B.T.C. having their leg pulled once again by a bunch of clots!

Smith, who suggests that the matter should be discussed at the next RPA meeting, in order that “an effective solution to this ridiculous situation” can be reached, was clearly worried about the reputation of the private preservation movement- the use of the term ‘again’ in his letter suggests that there had been similar schemes which had not come to fruition, and it was

perhaps the cumulative effect of more and more ambitious schemes being proposed that in part led Smith to react in the way that he did- particularly as the *Princess Royal* class to which this locomotive belonged was the largest ever built for the British Railway network. However, considering Bell's letter to Smith (of which a copy was sent to Skeat), another reason for Smith's anger perhaps lies in Mr Bell's rather crude appeal for the RPA to give the society money, which was perhaps not meant to be taken entirely seriously: "We would be grateful for financial help in the shape of more than all your members can afford! Interest free loans may possibly be of help"<sup>143</sup>.

Thus Bell had responded to Smith's offer of assistance by asking directly for money- which is arguably something of a social *faux pas*. Aside from this Bell's letter appears to be a sensible one, laying out the problems which his fund faces in a rational way and recognising that preserving the locomotive as a static exhibit will be a necessary first step before the Fund will be able to restore the locomotive to working order. It is his reference to the B.T.C.'s offer to repaint and repair the engine which Smith is perhaps referring to when he refers to the BTC having its' 'leg pulled'.

Skeat, in response<sup>144</sup>, empathised with Smith's position, suggesting that he was "far too polite" and that "they (the Princess Elizabeth Preservation Fund) are probably too dim to carry out a practical appraisal of the situation after receiving your advice". It is their criticism of the BTC which appears to irk Skeat the most, however: he suggests that it "really is too bad of them to

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<sup>143</sup> Copy of letter from R.Bell to W.G. Smith, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1962; NRM Clapham Papers Box 66.

<sup>144</sup> Copy of letter from Skeat to Captain Smith, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1962; NRM Clapham Papers Box 66.

twist the honest intentions of the BTC in this way". Ultimately, Princess Elizabeth Preservation Fund became one of the resounding success stories of preservation; the locomotive is still owned by the same group- now known as the Princess Elizabeth Society- and on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 the locomotive's whistle was used to start the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant<sup>145</sup>.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has documented the formation of the Consultative Panel and analysed its activities during its most fruitful period, between its establishment in 1958 and the passing of the Transport Act of 1962 when, as shall be detailed in the next chapter, the successor organisations to the BTC- and in particular the BRB, which took over responsibility for the transport museums in Swindon, Clapham and York- saw the preservation of obsolete items as superfluous to their aims of their business (and in particular the desire to make a profit), and to some extent only engaged with the Panel insofar as it could recommend particular items for removal from the list of preserved machines. I have concentrated on the creation of a list of steam locomotives for preservation, as this process is most heavily (though still not completely) represented in the Panel's surviving correspondence and perhaps represents this organisation's longest lasting and most tangible legacy.

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<sup>145</sup> Incidentally, the other two locomotives mentioned by Bell, *Flying Scotsman* and *Royal Scot*, were both also preserved, respectively, by the wealthy chemical industries heir Alan Pegler and Butlin's Holiday Camps (*Royal Scot* was displayed at Skegness between 1963 and 1971). *Flying Scotsman* ultimately became part of the National Collection in 2004 having passed through the hands of two more owners (Sir William McAlpine and Tony Marchington), famously returning to service after a ten year overhaul in 2016, whilst *Royal Scot* is now owned by the Royal Scot Locomotive and General Trust, and returned to mainline service in December 2015.

The individual enthusiasts of the Panel- and particular W.O. Skeat and Jack Boston- were, in effect, transformed between 1957 and 1962, from antagonist outsiders who were critical of the BTC's poor record on preservation to important insiders who in effect sought to protect the BTC and Scholes- and by extension themselves- from the criticism of others. They had become the co-authors and enthusiastic cheerleaders of the BTC's preservation policies.

**Chapter 7 “The sight hits you hard in the solar plexus”: Britain’s  
Transport Museums in the 1960s**

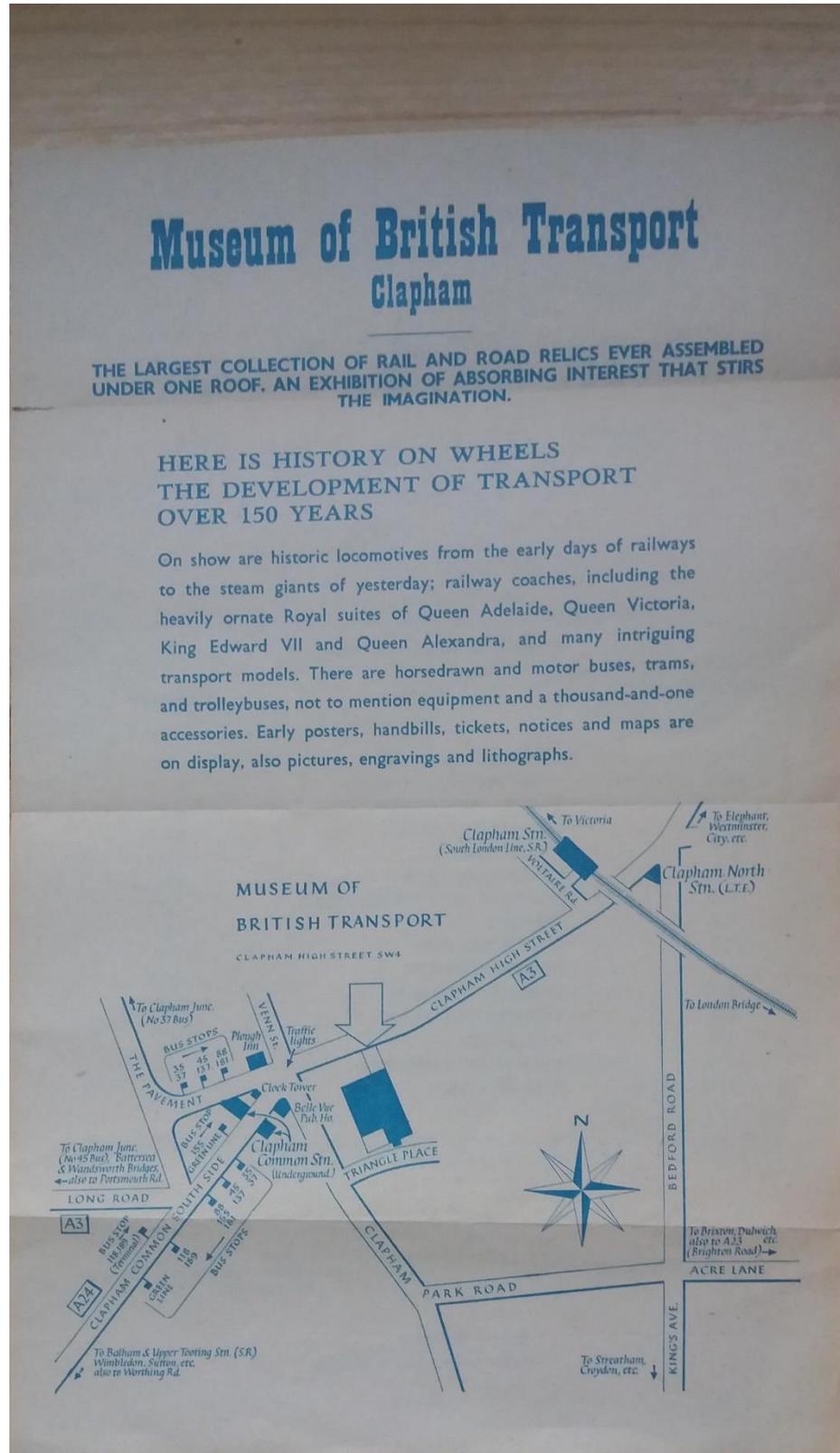


Figure 16. Promotional leaflet for the Museum of British Transport, Clapham, dated September 1964. Author, Kind gift from Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, East Midlands Branch.

On Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 1963, the Museum of British Transport, in Clapham, South West London, was fully opened. The first section of the museum had opened exactly two years and two months previously- Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 1961- in the office block part of the former bus depot and had consisted of six galleries of smaller exhibits: “models, pictures, maps, crests, tickets, timetables, uniform buttons, badges, posters, and many other small items tracing the evolution of transport through two centuries”<sup>146</sup>. The May 1963 extension into the depot itself entailed the display of larger exhibits, including 16 locomotives, 13 passenger coaches, buses, trams and trolleybuses. It was, the *Railway Magazine* (July 1963) noted, “Probably the largest collection of rail and road relics ever assembled under one roof”.

Coincidentally, this was the same day on which the first section of the M2- 13 miles between “just west of Stroud to a little east of Faversham” (McKenzie 1963) - was officially opened by Transport Minister Ernest Marples, and it is instructive to make some comparisons between what might be termed the cultural capital of the two openings. This new road, which “curves its way through some of the ‘Garden of England’s finest scenery, sweeping down to broad vistas of valley orchards, climbing by great leaps into the wooded hills”, offered freedom of movement, a “road with a cruising speed of 70 mph to replace that notorious bonnet-to-tail Medway crush” (MacKenzie 1963)<sup>147</sup>. Peter Merriman (2007) has suggested that motorways were “celebrated as exciting, experimental, modern landmarks and sites of

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<sup>146</sup> Press release, March 1961; NRM Clapham Files Box 65.

<sup>147</sup> This being said, *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* journalist W.A. Mackenzie did raise doubts about the adequacy of a motorway with only two lanes even at the time of its opening (the M2 was ultimately widened between 2000 and 2003).

travel in the 1950s and 1960s"- by contrast, the Clapham Museum was commonly viewed as a site of nostalgia, and, as shall be detailed below, had an uneasy, if not entirely antagonistic relationship to contemporary culture.

This icon of mobility contrasted with the "gloriously cluttered" (Williams 1975; Divall and Scott 2001) space of the Clapham Museum, in which, as Nairn (1966:192) was later to remark, mechanical energy was "halted into atmospheric stillness". That being said, however, the museum did not, at least according to its guidebook, *view itself* as a 'still' space: on the contrary it is suggested there that the museum is a "work in progress" in which objects "move around from time to time" (Morgan 1963: 3). As an audit was later to disclose, items did indeed move into and out of the museum, almost at will; indeed some items left the museum and never came back.

As Bryan Morgan suggested in the accompanying guidebook to the Clapham Museum, *Transport Preserved*, Clapham was at the centre of a proposed regional network of museums, in which each of British Railways' six Regions (Scottish, North Eastern, London Midland, Western, Eastern and Southern) would be represented:

"The plan is... for the building up of a reference collection of smaller exhibits (at Clapham) and for physical decentralisation of larger ones, with new Regional branch-museums being set up on the York pattern" (Morgan 1963: 37)

Ultimately, however, this plan was abandoned with only Clapham and two other museums in place. One of these was the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon- representing the Western Region and established in

collaboration with the Corporation of Swindon- which opened in June 1962. The other was the Railway Museum in York (representing the North Eastern Region)- which, with the exception of the Second World War, had been open since 1927, and which provided the pattern, as Morgan terms it, for other museums to follow.

The passing of the 1962 Transport Act, in which responsibility for the three transport museums transferred to the BRB, following the dismemberment of the BTC, ended any possibility that the regional museum plan would be fully enacted. The BRB did publish an Historic Relics Scheme- which argued that BR had a duty to preserve the relics it had inherited and provide accommodation- yet Dr Beeching unsuccessfully appealed to the government for financial assistance, and there was a climate of uncertainty surrounding the museums at York, Swindon and Clapham at this time: the formation of the Transport Trust, which held its first meeting on June 27<sup>th</sup> 1964, was partially motivated by this, and proposed establishing its own National Transport Museum. On October 30<sup>th</sup> 1964, a BRB spokesman was quoted by the *Guardian*, in an article about this scheme, as saying that, whilst there were no plans to immediately close the museum, they should be financed by the Treasury like other museums: "We agree that they (the three transport museums) should be kept but we would like to be relieved of the burden of running them". In such a climate there was of course no possibility that any new museums would be established, and thus that the regional museum plan would be fully enacted. As W.O. Skeat, writing for the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (ARPS), suggested in circa.

1966, “The regional idea didn’t fully materialize, though it would have done if the Commission had continued... other policies were adopted under the Beeching regime, and nowadays the economic aspect is regarded as paramount”<sup>148</sup>. In addition to wanting to relieve itself of the financial burden of running the three museums, MacClean (2015) suggests that at this time the BRB “was trying to project an image of modernity” and there was “little desire to be involved in railway preservation within the highest levels of the company”. This rebranding exercise, carried out from 1964 onwards, sought to eradicate the regional identities under which British Railways had previously been marketed- which the museums at York and Swindon, in particular, fed into- in favour of a single livery and branding (see Bradley 2015). The situation was later altered by Section 144 of the 1968 Transport Act, which allowed the BRB to dispose of its relics and records to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and led to the establishment of the NRM in York.

This chapter will firstly analyse the cultural conceptualisations which lay behind the displays and management of the museums at Clapham, Swindon and York in turn- placing this within the broader context of 1960s culture. To assist me describing the collections at these three museums I will use Peter Williams’ photographic book *Britain’s Railway Museums*, published by Ian Allan in 1974, which forms a useful pictorial record of the displays at all three of the museums I am describing here. The author had, according to the book’s dust jacket, “been taking photographs for a quarter of a century in all parts of

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<sup>148</sup> ‘The Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics’, short article (marked ‘Article for ARPS’) presumed to be written by W.O. Skeat; NRM Clapham Files Box 66.

Britain and overseas” and had published two books on preserved lines<sup>149</sup>. The book consists of largely black-and-white photographs- but also 16 pages of colour plates- of the Railway Museums at York, Leicester and Swindon, and of the railway collections at the Science Museum, the Museum of Science and Technology at Birmingham, the Glasgow Museum of Transport and the Museum of British Transport at Clapham (the bus exhibits at the latter being either expunged altogether or, where this was not possible, placed at the back of the shot)<sup>150</sup>. It thus combines the major collections of railway material held within railway, transport or technology museums but does not include preserved railways, privately-run museums, such as the Yieldingtree Railway Museum which then existed at Bleadon and Uphill station near Weston-Super-Mare, or smaller municipal railway collections such as that at Liverpool. Published after the museums at York and Clapham had closed- photographs of which, when combined, far outnumber representations of any other museum in the book, perhaps partially because they held the lion’s share of railway exhibits- the book has an elegiac feel, with some (though not all) of the captions for York and Clapham being written in the past tense. Indeed, the inside of the book’s dust jacket suggests that it meets the need for a “lasting record” of the museums at York and Clapham, portraying “a selection

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<sup>149</sup> These were *Rails from Ravenglass: A Pictorial Study of La’al Ratty* (1972) (about the 15 inch gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway between Ravenglass and Dalegarth in the Lake District) and *Rails in the Worth Valley: A Pictorial Study* (1973) (focussed on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway line between Keighley and Oxenhope in North Yorkshire). He went on to produce a joint pictorial study, with David Joy, of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (then running between Pickering and Grosmont in North Yorkshire) in 1977. All of these were published by Dalesman.

<sup>150</sup> A small railway museum, containing four locomotives, existed at the former Stonegate tram depot in Leicester between 1968 and 1975 (see Simmons 1968).

of the best exhibits as they were to be found in museums throughout the country prior to their reorganisation”.

This chapter will go on to describe the gathering storm for transport preservation which accompanied the BTC's abolition and the transfer of responsibility for the three museums to the BRB. This evolved into a new set of concerns- about the adequacy and appropriateness of the site at York chosen for the new National Railway Museum, and the fate of London Transport's historic relics- following the passing of the 1968 Transport Act.

### **7.1 Establishing a network of regional museums**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1959, at a special meeting held at Charing Cross Hotel, Scholes reported back to the Consultative Panel on, amongst other matters, the progress made in establishing regional museums. In relation to the Eastern and Southern Regions, he notes that they “are unable to find premises at present, suitable for museum purposes, and it might well be that the premises at Clapham will have to serve these regions for the time being”.

In fact, as the reconstituted Relics and Records Committee (made up, as detailed in Chapter 5, of the individuals who had written the 1951 report *The Preservation of Relics and Records*) had reported in around 1958 (the document, in National Archives ANI57/383, is not dated) the Eastern Region wanted to establish a museum only in partnership with the other London based regions (the Southern, Western and London Midland) - and thus reduce the regional diversification which Robertson had proposed. For their part, the Southern Region felt that “its larger relics would not form a museum collection by

themselves". The Committee noted that there was not enough storage space even for those items which this Region did have.

However, the Western Region favoured setting up their own Regional Museum- a preference which led to the establishment of the museum in Swindon- whilst the London Midland Region did not initially make any comments, but later Scholes suggested that this Region 'hoped' "to recommend the use of a locomotive round-house at Derby which will take the extensive collection of locomotives formed by the L.M.R. prior to nationalisation"<sup>151</sup>. The Scottish Region, meanwhile, were "still actively searching for a suitable site". Ultimately the Glasgow Museum of Transport, another joint initiative between the BTC and a local authority, was established- though on a different set of terms to those at Swindon (Simmons 1970). Whereas the engines at Swindon remained owned by the BTC, before being transferred to the Department of Education and Science and thus becoming part of the National Collection (see below), the majority of those at Glasgow were, and remain, owned by the Museum itself.

There was a tension inherent within the process of establishing regional museums, which were described by John Scholes as "small regional transport museums" yet were intended to house larger pieces of rolling stock (Swindon housed five locomotives); the fact that railway regions were placed in charge of establishing them perhaps jeopardised the possibility of their playing a role in displaying other forms of transport<sup>152</sup>. Meanwhile the devolution of

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<sup>151</sup> The Roundhouse remained in use until the closure of Derby Works in 1990; along with the adjoining workshops and offices, and a nearby stores building (all of which are Grade II listed) it is the only part of the Works which has survived, and is now part of Derby College,

<sup>152</sup> Report to the Consultative Panel, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1959, Box 65.

decision-making which accompanied this process meant that some regional managers simply refused to partake in this process altogether, and/or disagreed over the correct approach to take.

Furthermore, although the negotiations surrounding the opening of the Swindon Museum- which was opened in partnership with Swindon Corporation- were conducted by the Western Region, who also bore the initial costs of expenditure, its operation was administered centrally (Swindon Corporation were also represented on the Management Committee), by the Department of Historic Relics under John Scholes. York was managed entirely by John Scholes' department, with no input from the local authority.

Nevertheless, the exhibits in Swindon and York were, for the most part, focussed on items relating to the area in which they were located, and in respect of Swindon, to the Great Western Railway and three of the famous engineers associated with it- namely Sir Isambard Kingdom Brunel (its first Chief Engineer, 1838-1859), Daniel Gooch (Locomotive Superintendent (1837-1864, Chairman 1865-1899) and George Jackson Churchward (Locomotive Superintendent 1902-1915; Chief Mechanical Engineer 1915-1922). Whilst the York museum had acquired exhibits from other parts of the country- due largely to its status as the sole British railway museum between 1927 and 1961- Rolt suggested in his 1958 guidebook that such exhibits would "eventually be transferred to more appropriate locations when the plans of the British Transport Commission mature, and the York Museum will then be exclusively devoted to relics of regional (i.e. North Eastern) significance".

As suggested in the previous two chapters, the decision to establish regional museums- taken by BTC Chairman Sir Brian Robertson- was born out of practicality as much as ideology, as it was seen as more feasible to establish several smaller museums rather than one very large one. Moreover, the location of railway museums has always been pragmatic, or even serendipitous, to some extent, being governed by the availability of buildings in which to house the larger exhibits (Cossons interview 05/02/16).

Nevertheless, I think it is useful to analyse the way in which the museums at York, Swindon and Glasgow reflected particular forms of regional or national identity- which, in the case of Swindon and Glasgow, was overlaid and connected to a sense of municipal pride in the declining engineering traditions of the locality in which the Museum was based. Thomas *et al.* (2013) have noted that regions are spaces which have been historically constructed through specific sets of social relations, and challenge the idea that the region is a “territorially discreet thing”, pointing to the “multiplicities of territorial practices that sometimes predate, and co-exist alongside” (p.85), more recent regional formulations. The railway regions which were in 1958 charged with the responsibility of preserving relics and establishing museums were, in some respects, a continuation of the pre-nationalisation and in some cases pre-grouping identities of private railway companies, although certain services were transferred between regions or rationalised in an attempt to create a more efficient operation. Thus the Western Region was, in terms of both the space which it occupied and its operating ethos, essentially a state-owned variant of the Great Western Railway, whilst the Southern Region was a new incarnation of the Southern Railway, and the London Midland Region

operated over the territory of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in England and Wales.

As Divall and Scott (2001) have noted, the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon was - as its name suggested- essentially a company museum for the Great Western Railway (even though, as a legal entity, this had ceased to exist some 15 years previously). As shall be detailed below, the Museum- containing five locomotives which had been built at this company's Swindon Works- became the focus of nostalgic mourning for the past in the midst of protests about this Works' potential closure. The nostalgic cultural capital of the Great Western Railway remains strong in today's privatised railway industry- within which as, Strangleman (1999) has argued, companies often 'annexe' their heritage, and particularly their more distant past, for marketing purposes at the same time as rubbishing the nationalised company they replaced. First Great Western rebranded itself as Great Western Railway from 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015 (to coincide with its new franchise), though in its case it was perhaps seeking to move away from its own association with late running, overcrowding and industrial action and the low levels of customer satisfaction which this caused.

Like Clapham, the Museum at Glasgow was located at a former tram depot – in Pollokshields- and it also opened in two phases, with the initial section being opened by the Queen Mother on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1964, and an extension housing six locomotives opening on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1967. One of these locomotives was Caledonian Railway Locomotive Number 828, which as mentioned in the last chapter was preserved by the Scottish Locomotive

Preservation Fund, and was later moved out of the Museum in around 1981 and put into working order at the Strathspey Railway (pers. correspondence with Strathspey Railway, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014). The other five locomotives became part of Glasgow Museum's collection in 1966, and were displayed at Pollokshields until the Museum moved to Kelvin Hall in 1987.

The Glasgow Museum of Transport's extension, containing six engines which had all been built in the city, was in some respects a commemoration of Glasgow's locomotive building industry- which, unlike that at Swindon, had consisted of several privately owned locomotive works rather than one large site- at the point of its death. Simmons (1970: 176) suggested that the locomotives formed a "noble and handsome memorial to one of the city's chief industries, now almost defunct", whilst in the accompanying 'History of the Railways in Scotland and... descriptive guide to Scottish locomotives', it was noted, in the foreword by the Director of Museums and Art Galleries Stuart M.K. Henderson, that, since the term Clydebuilt was associated with locomotive manufacturing, "it is only right... that the Museum of Transport in Glasgow should house a group of Railway Locomotives which in addition to being locally built were also owned by Scottish railway companies". The six locomotives were all constructed prior to the 1923 grouping for use by one of the five, largely geographically discrete, major railway companies in Scotland in this era- the Caledonian, the Glasgow and South Western, the North British, the Highland and the Great North of Scotland Railways (the Caledonian Railway being represented by two examples)- and thus each of them represented the regionally situated identity of one of these firms, as was

illustrated in the accompanying guide by the categorisation of each engine into a company grouping, and the provision of maps showing the lines over which individual companies operated (see Figure 17). Thus municipal pride in Glasgow's tradition of locomotive building was, at the Glasgow Museum of Transport, combined with the regionally situated company identities- as shown by the liveries of each engine- whilst the locomotives were also seen to depict railway history at a national scale, illustrating "some of the most important types of engine employed by each of the principal railway companies in this country".

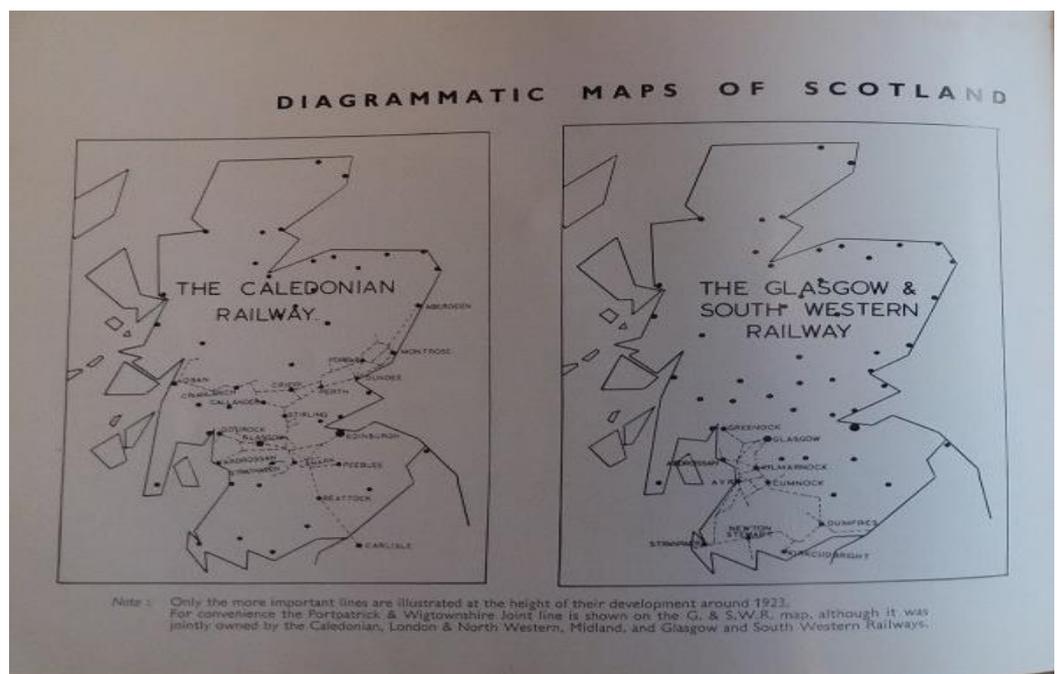


Figure 17. *The Glasgow Museum of Transport: Scottish Railway Locomotives* contained diagrammatic maps showing the areas served by the five major pre-grouping railway companies.

## **7.2 Thinking regionally about the railway, within and beyond the academic literature**

Thinking regionally about the museums which were promoted- either fully or in part- by British Railways in the 1960s also allows this chapter to be positioned in relation to the different perceptions, and the concomitant debates (within academia and beyond) about, the impact which the development of the nationwide railway network from the 1830s onwards (marking, for social and economic historians of the 1960s, the beginning of the Railway Age- see below) made on regional identity- which itself can be defined in social, economic, environmental and/or political terms.

Langton (1984: 145) suggested that, across the disciplines of geography, economic history, social history, historical demography and anthropology, the common assumption was that “England ceased to be a patchwork of regionally distinctive environments, economies and societies due to the nationally pervasive effects of industrialization”. He challenged such ideas, arguing that “there were important regional as well as local differences in pre-industrial England, and it is at least arguable that, far from eradicating them, the process of industrialization both intensified them and heightened people’s consciousness of their existence” (Langton 1984: 147).

The railway- at least in the form of a nationwide system with a recognisable form of track, rather than as a technology of a less efficient form which simply connected mine shafts and forges with waterways in order to necessitate the onward travel of goods- was a relative latecomer to the industrial revolution, only developing from the 1830s onwards. This perhaps

explains why most of Langton's paper covered the era before the spread of the railway network, looking at the way in which regional fragmentation continued, and to some extent deepened, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a relatively short section towards the end entitled 'The early effects of railways'. In this section, Langton (1984:163) concedes that "Long-term processes of integration were set in motion" by the railways, but suggests that "greater national integration... would at first throw into sharp relief the differences between the regional economies and cultures that had been evolving for nearly a century in relative isolation" (1984:164), citing the regional novel and the splitting apart of national unions and associations as evidence for this. Freeman (1984) suggested, in effect, that Langton had not gone far enough in his comments about the continuance of regional fragmentation after the development of railways, suggesting that early railway development and operation was characterised by the proliferation of smaller companies who favoured short-distance trade between areas of production and coastal ports.

Langton was perhaps exaggerating when he suggested that most authors across the disciplines of history, geography and anthropology had viewed the region as a concept entirely without purchase in the period of the industrial revolution- of which the advent of the railway network was a later development. In fact it could be argued that the railway- which, as we have seen, fitted rather uneasily into Langton's argument- was seen to have a reciprocal relationship with the region in this period, with some authors suggesting that it provided a means of better understanding regional

differences, and others using the relationship between a railway and its region- and the differences inherent to the region itself- as a practical means of comprehending this form of transport.

Andrew O'Dell, in his 1956 book *Railways and Geography*, suggested that "In Europe... railways were built in each country to serve either local or regional needs". Unlike in the United States and Canada, where railways were part of the process of extending the nation across the continent, O'Dell argued that, in Europe, "the primary purpose of railways... was to link already existing towns and/or industrial needs", although ultimately "railway systems grew into national networks", which "increased national political solidarity". Nevertheless, O'Dell colourfully suggested that the railway represented a means of 'getting under the skin' of a region; a means to ascertain its economic and social characteristics:

Railways sum up the human meaning of a region. Railway systems symbolize the human significance of a region and the life of the society which occupies it. They hint at a people's poverty and their wealth; they show how and where they work and play; their goings out and comings in. They discover a people's fears and betray also their ambitions. They are as it were a nervous system laid bare and they reveal the sensitive springs of action.

For authors writing in a UK context- and looking beyond the strictly academic sphere to which Langton refers- regional differences were seen by some authors to have merely been eroded, not entirely destroyed, by the coming of the railway. The transport historian Michael Robbins, in his monograph *The Railway Age*, suggested that: "uniformity of time was a

symptom of a much closer conformity of manners and social life throughout the country, as travelling, and especially touring, brought the remoter and more backward districts into constant touch with other parts". However, he goes on to suggest that "the railways did not ever look like imposing anything resembling uniformity of speech and manners throughout the whole country. It has been left to broadcasting and television to do that."

For writer and publisher David St John Thomas, intra-regional differences provided a means of analysing the history of the technology itself. In the 'Regional History of the railways of Great Britain' series, edited by Thomas, the aim, as stated in the 'General Background' to the first book on 'The West Country' (which Thomas wrote himself) was to show "something of what railways have meant in social history" by means of dividing the regions into self-contained areas, "not necessarily corresponding to those served by the individual railways" (Thomas 1960, p.2). Thomas termed this a "practical or applied" history, "in contrast to academic or pure railway history". Thus the region becomes a container of individualised areas, which is also differentiated from other regions. Thomas portrays the railway as a technology which bound the West Country together as a region, suggesting that, where there had been "no economic, social or other unity about the West at the dawn of the railway age", this technology had "broadened horizons even at the local level, allowing organizations of all kinds to develop on a regional scale". In the second book in the series on Southern England, by H.P. White, which differentiates the passenger-dominated lines of the South with the predominantly freight-carrying lines of the North; White(1961:1) suggests that

“a higher proportion of the population served by the Southern is on the move, and on the move by train, than in other parts of the kingdom”. The series ultimately ran to some 15 volumes, which were published at regular intervals between 1960 and 1989.

Thus for Thomas the division of history into intra-regional segments was a matter of empirical practicality. Yet it was also apposite- and, one could speculate, perhaps not entirely accidental- that the first title in this regional history series was one of the first books to be produced by the David and Charles publishing house (though its earlier works appear to have been published under the auspices of Phoenix House in London), which Thomas co-established on a Devon fruit farm with canal historian Charles Hadfield, a venture which, as his obituary commented, sought to cater for “a nation of enthusiasts and hobbyists who were, he felt, being neglected by the big London publishing houses” (*Daily Telegraph* 2014). David and Charles was differentiated from other publishers not only by its desire to cater for enthusiasts, but also its location, which seems likely to have fostered a certain degree of parochialism. Such local and/or regional sentiment can also be detected in some of the Railway Museums of this period.

### 7.3. 'A noble zoo': The Museum of British Transport, Clapham



Figure 18 Invitation to attend the Private View of the opening of the Large Exhibits Section at the Museum of British Transport, Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 1963 (NA ZSPC 11/690/37).

The lead *Clapham Observer* article for Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 1963 reported the opening of the Museum of British Transport on the previous Wednesday. There was no official ceremony because, as the newspaper journalist suggested, “the opening is treated officially only as an extension”. That being said, there had been a private viewing the day before for museum and transport preservation professionals and specialists (see figure), whilst the museums’ opening in 1961 had been barely reported in either *The Clapham Observer* or *The South London Press*, both of which ran features about the opening of the museum’s extension in 1963. Similarly *The Railway Magazine*

ran a feature about the 1963 extension but not about the museum's initial opening in 1961, although the opposite was true of the *Railway Gazette*<sup>153</sup>.

A report filed at the time, copied to the Publicity Officer, shows that the Museum was also well-documented on television, radio and film<sup>154</sup>. The London-Brighton run of the Museum's K-Type bus on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May was used to promote Clapham prior to its opening (the bus carried an advert for the museum on its side). This was part of the Heritage Commercial Vehicle Society's London-Brighton run (nearly 100 vehicles took part in this event in total)- an equivalent to the earlier London-Brighton car run, which had been taking place since 1896- which started from the Museum in its early years. A newspaper report in the *Clapham Observer* suggests that the Museum actually entered two vehicles into the 1963 event- the K-Type bus and a Green Line coach, and that the buses carried the TV personalities Nan Winton (a news reporter and interviewer, and the first female newsreader), BBC Radio 2 and World Service Presenter Colin Hamilton, and Shaw Taylor, the presenter of both BBC radio programmes and the TV show *Police 5*. The operation of the bus was seen as a boon for the Museum because it circumvented its fundamentally static nature, which was seen as "one of the problems in broadcast coverage of the museum"<sup>155</sup>. The opening of the Museum itself was covered extensively on the BBC Home Service, BBC TV and ITV, both before, on and after the day of its opening- with the museum's opening

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<sup>153</sup> *The Railway Magazine* June and July 1963; *The Railway Gazette* April 7<sup>th</sup> and April 14<sup>th</sup> 1961. Accessed at NRM.

<sup>154</sup> 'Radio, Television and Cinema coverage of British Transport Museum', Memorandum written by unknown author (appears to be Chief Publicity Officer), 13.6.63. Copy in NA AN111/13.

<sup>155</sup> 'Radio, Television and Cinema coverage of British Transport Museum', Memorandum written by unknown author (appears to be Chief Publicity Officer), 13.6.63. Copy in NA AN111/13.

covered in seven sound and seven TV recordings, as well as appearing in Pathe newsreels. The TV programmes included, on BBC TV's 'Wednesday Programme', a repeat of a telerecording by John Betjeman which had originally been shown on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1961 on the TV show 'Sometimes on Sunday'- it is noted that this recording had been shown to the Queen Mother during her visit to the then newly opened Television Centre on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1961. Children's author and journalist Elisabeth Beresford, later of The Wombles fame, reported from the Museum on its opening for the BBC Home and World Service<sup>156</sup>.

Around five hundred visitors attended the opening of the Clapham museum's extension. The *Clapham Observer* reported the opening in a somewhat anti-climactic vein: "There was no queue outside the museum when it opened its doors to the full exhibition for the first time at 10a.m. First visitor was a Yorkshire farm worker, Mr J.A. Smith "Fascinating" he said".

No more is heard from the seemingly taciturn Mr Smith, although some more information is recorded about him in the document about the radio, television and cinema coverage of the British Transport Museum mentioned above- he was John Alan Smith, 25 years of age, of Brafford Hall, Raywell, Cottingham, near Hull. The fact that the Smith had heard about the Museum both through an article on television and had read about it in his newspaper was seen to demonstrate "the value of the two-prong attack through the mediums of broadcasting and the press". Deputy Curator Mr L.J. Clay (who must have been contacted on Friday 31<sup>st</sup>) was reported as being happy with

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<sup>156</sup>Her son Marcus Robertson, is himself a railway enthusiast who established the railway touring company Steam Dreams, operator of the Cathedrals Express service, in 2000.

the visitor numbers, and was expecting them to increase over the following, Bank Holiday, weekend: "I think there is a good chance we will be really busy tomorrow (Saturday) and Monday. With the schoolchildren on holiday I don't see how we can help but be". The article points to the popularity of the other two museums at York and Swindon as evidence of what could be achieved at Clapham, whilst it is reported that school parties had expressed an interest in visiting.

Even at the time of its full opening, the Museum's future appeared to be shaky- remarkably, the possibility of the withdrawal of financial support, and thus of closure, was mooted even in this first article, at the very moment of its opening:

"The museum is financed by the British Railways Board, and Mr Clay feels it is important that they can show the Board the public are keenly interested in the museum so that they do not withdraw support.

"But so far the Board have been very generous" he added."

A feature on the museum was included in the same edition of the *Clapham Observer*. Written by Gloria Walker and entitled 'Museum fully opened- Golden Age of Transport', the article is largely a description of the larger exhibits and does not fully elucidate when this 'Golden Age' occurred, although it does offer some clues. The first paragraph of Walker's article is of interest as it describes two discrete visitor types to Clapham and other transport museums: that of the curious child and the nostalgic enthusiast: "A whole generation of children are growing up who have never seen a tram in action, or ridden in a train pulled by a steam engine. But for them, as well as

for transport enthusiasts who remember bygone days with nostalgia Clapham is a fascinating place.”

Thus Walker polarises the museum’s clientele into innocent children who have no knowledge, let alone memory, of steam locomotives and trams, and enthusiasts who relive their memories through the exhibits. Walker uses the figure of the child as a motif to illustrate the passing of time and the changes in transport technology which had been, or were, taking place (the last London trams had been withdrawn in 1952, with every first-generation tram system except that at Blackpool being closed by 1962, whilst the withdrawal of steam locomotives was still ongoing). Simmons (1970: 73), wrote along similar lines, suggesting that children would be “more and more astonished, with every year that goes by, at these strange steam locomotives and trains, the likes of which they have never seen in their world”.

The remainder of Walker’s article is descriptive rather than opinionated, and begins with a section on the museum’s organisational history. She describes how 100,000 people have visited the museum since it had first opened in March 1961. Now that the larger objects had been added, the museum was “the largest collection of its kind in the world”. She goes back to describe how “Up to a decade ago Britain had no museum devoted to transport history such as existed in many countries” - this is actually rather misleading, since Britain still had no museum as such devoted to transport history between 1953 and 1961; rather, as detailed in the Chapter 5, a series of temporary exhibitions were held at Euston. Walker describes the establishment of the Office of the Curator of Historical Relics in 1951, the

goal of which was to “ensure the systematic preservation of all material of historical interest” although she emphasises that much of the material had been collected by the formerly independent railways, roads and canals or by interested members of the public.

Walker links the museum’s exhibits into a wider, Whiggish history of transport, suggesting that 1829 was the “real beginning” of public transport, being both the year in which George Stephenson’s *Rocket* locomotive- of which a full size, simplified replica was on display- won the Rainhill trials to determine which type of locomotive would pull trains on the Liverpool- Manchester Railway, and also the year in which George Shillibeer started the first omnibus service in London (Walker uses the latter to lead into a description of the Museum’s bus collection). She notes that the locomotives in the museum have been “selected for the historic importance of their design” and that “in the gleaming liveries of former railway companies they make an impressive and colourful display”. The restoration of locomotives into their original condition- including the livery- was, as mentioned in the last chapter, a key feature of the BTC’s preservation policy as enacted by John Scholes, and the majority of the locomotives in the museum dated from the late Victorian and Edwardian era, belonging to a plethora of different companies which existed at this time. Two locomotives are singled out for detailed description by Walker on account of their being “particularly unusual in design”: these were the engines *Cornwall*- the driving wheels of which were eight foot six inches in diameter, “the largest ever tried on the standard gauge” and *Old Coppernob*, “which was saddled with a huge copper dome not

unlike a giant beehive”. Other exhibits mentioned by Walker in the tumultuous last nine paragraphs of her article included a replica of the original travelling post office van dating from 1838 (and a later van built in 1885), the collection of royal carriages, a horse breaking cart of 1895 from the Caledonian Railway, a full size replica of a second class coach of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, a model of a compressed air locomotive which demonstrates particular patents (a photograph of this is used to illustrate the article) and a model of the cab of a standard British Railways locomotive from 1954 (one of the few (relatively) contemporary exhibits on display).

The *South London Press* (Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1963) ran a feature on the Museum by Graham Odd. It was entitled “As I was saying, when I spotted the Euston Flier back in 08...” The piece was accompanied by a picture of locomotive chimneys at the Museum because, as the caption-writer (one can presume this was Odd himself) rather lasciviously suggests, “There’s nothing like a well-turned funnel to send up the nostalgic’s temperature”. He continues: “The Victorians engineers were divided between those who favoured “stove-pipes” and those who preferred elaborate flanged “skirts”.

Odd goes on to describe the funnel in the foreground of the picture, from one of William Stroudley’s Terrier Class tank engines, without disclosing whether it is of ‘stove-pipe’ or ‘skirt’ design. He extends this description to the locomotive itself, and also to the landscape in which this design ran: “Its copper cap and slender black stem were a regular sight on the South London line from Victoria to London Bridge, where Stroudley’s tiny tank engines- nicknamed “Terriers”- hauled trains of varnished mahogany coaches until the

end of the century”. The caption ends rather abruptly: “Behind are the funnels of other famous engines”.

The piece itself began with the humorous story of a man who remarked to an “absent companion” that he remembered standing at Paddington as a boy and seeing a particular engine. He is perhaps referring here to Metropolitan Railway Number 23, which would have worked through Paddington.

Separating professionalism and enthusiasm, Odd notes that, whilst the private view of the museum was intended to be for “the press, the professional and the specialist”, in fact “a good deal of enthusiasm was penetrating the professional reserve as guests... strolled round the burnished copper, varnished teak and inch-thick paint work of the exhibits”. He later noted that everybody could take part in this “show” because “everyone last Tuesday seemed to have his own fund of railway stories and no-one was too over-awed to tell them”.

Odd notes that the Museum largely contained exhibits from the Victorian and Edwardian era- suggesting also that the act of assembling such a vast array of exhibits was itself an exercise reminiscent of the Victorian era (perhaps a reference to the establishment of several major London museums, including the Science Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and Natural History Museum, at this time): “The Clapham collection, assembled on a truly Victorian scale, is what we now take to be the symbol of everything Victorian and Edwardian, good and bad. Railways, highly polished, ornate, punctual and class-ridden have come to epitomise the Empire at its height”. Later in the article, Odd notes that “there is a distinct tailing-off of railway exhibits after

the Edwardian era". The newest locomotive on show at this time was the Great Central Railway machine *Butler Henderson*, dating from 1919; later, room was found for the world speed record-breaking A4 Pacific locomotive *Mallard*.

Unlike Walker, who as we have seen, was approving of the 'impressive display' of colourful locomotive liveries, Odd is critical of the pristine nature of the exhibits at Clapham, which, as he sees it, distorts the past by making it seem more orderly and perfect than it actually was: "The colours and cleanliness of the exhibits is so far removed from the well-used trains of today that there is a distinct danger that visitors may see the past through a mythical gloss". He goes on to suggest that the sparkling, clean locomotives were "monuments to safety and security and not reminders of the appalling train crashes which marked the turn of the century", whilst the brass and copper were "redolent of a better age, not the men who cleaned it and the bitter disputes they fought for shorter hours and tolerable conditions".

Odd undermines what he sees as the nostalgic discourse which the Museum was trying to convey- he notes, for example, the 'chink in the Victorian Age' hinted at by the fact that underground trains for the South London Line were fitted with electrical equipment made in Germany, whilst the Piccadilly Line's original "gate stock" was constructed in Hungary- thus demonstrating, according to Odd, that Britain had by this stage fallen behind other nations in respect of industrial progress. This reflected contemporary concerns: Britain, despite scientific advances and rising living standards, was nevertheless viewed by many as a "doddering relic, hidebound by privilege

and struggling to keep up with its younger competitors” (Sandbrook 2006: 50). Such insecurities about Britain’s industrial prowess had their roots in the era in which the machinery described by Odd had been built, yet by the early 1960s, this narrative had “arrived at the point where Britain was being left behind in what amounted to a third industrial revolution, this time based around space-age technologies, automation and advanced methods of communication” (Donnelly 2005: 48).

Divall and Scott (2001) portrayed Clapham as an example of a “mass exhibition” which “forces visitors to rely almost entirely on their own resources if they are to make any sense of the past”- thus Clapham juxtaposed “all kinds of vehicles according to no system”, and was therefore of little assistance in helping the visitor understand the social context in which it ran- which is slightly different to Odd’s point that an *inaccurate version* of history is portrayed at Clapham. However, in Morgan’s guide book to the museum, the transport industry- and by implication the exhibits at Clapham- are seen to convey knowledge about the societal conditions of the past, which, for Morgan, appears to be inherent in, and readable from, the objects themselves: “No other industry affords such intimate testimony of the way men lived- which kind of history is the only one that really matters” (Morgan 1963: 9). Nevertheless, the Museum did unashamedly present the somewhat rose-tinted image of a past ‘golden age’, as this quote from elsewhere in the guidebook suggests: “The diesels and electrics have taken over- useful, economical beasts, but as unlikely to inspire great affection as are the clean, impersonal station-buildings and track-works of the present age of

modernisation. The railways will never lose their usefulness; but *their golden glamorous age is past.*" (Morgan 1963: 9, italics added).

Elsewhere in his review, Graham Odd describes the royal coaches- which, he suggests, would for many people be "a highlight of the museum", and would serve to "dispose for all time of the slander that the Victorians and Edwardians were entirely tasteless". He states that "the display is large, but not so large that it cannot be walked round comfortably in an afternoon" and that "there is no over-concentration on actual rolling stock". In relation to the smaller exhibits, he suggests that "there are plenty of exhibits-signs, small engines, and station equipment- so quaint that it is a mystery that they were ever constructed, let alone allowed to survive".

Odd's comments about the plentiful, and somewhat bewildering, 'quaint' exhibits were later expanded upon in reviews by Neil Cossons (1968:87), who suggested that it was "impossible to describe the variety of small railway exhibits at Clapham... almost anything which is capable of bearing those sacred initials of railway companies can be found somewhere", and Jack Simmons (1970:68), who commented on the "varied display of small railway exhibits"; a miscellany which "helps to make plain how infinitely multifarious were the tasks the railways performed". In a sense, the nature of Clapham's display inadvertently anticipated the more recent trend towards establishing a store-like atmosphere in parts of museum space, in order to both fit more objects into that space and educate the visitor as to the range of objects which a museum holds and the conditions in which the majority of these are kept. The key example of this in a UK railway museum context is the

Warehouse at the NRM, in which 10,000 “unconserved and uncontextualised” items are displayed (Zeilinger (2001: 761).



Figure 19. Interior of the Museum of British Transport, Clapham, from *Britain's Railway Museums* by Peter Williams.

Odd finished his article with a quip on railway catering- and, to some extent, the desire to replicate past experiences verbatim- suggesting that “what is wanted is a replica waiting room with replica buffet, and a replica waitress to work the tea urn, spill tea between thick china cups and offer sandwiches from beneath flyblown glass covers.” However, he notes that this

“need not put off visitors entirely” because “they can always find a proper tea room somewhere else”.

Architectural critic Ian Nairn included the Museum of British Transport at Clapham in his work *Nairn's London*, which as the preface stated, was “simply my personal list of the best things in London” (Nairn 1966:13); the book had 450 entries in total. Nairn was noted for his work *Outrage* (initially a special issue of the *Architectural Review* in 1955 and later a book (1956)) in which he coined the term Subtopia to describe what he saw as the drab new developments, often at the edge of cities, which had led to localities losing their individuality and sense of place. *Nairn's London*- though largely taking the form of a guide rather than a polemical commentary- was fuelled by a similar sense of outrage and also loss. The book is written against the backdrop of a city, as Nairn saw it, being riven apart by new building developments and the changes in social structure- and the structure of the city- which accompanied them. As he argued in the Introduction: “everywhere the cockneys are pushed out and the cockney streets are pulled down... Just as topographical London is a vast twenty-mile saucer of people with a rim of low hills, so human London is a central goulash with its rightful inhabitants forming an unfashionable rim.” Nairn (1966: 13) seems somewhat distrustful of modern development-noting only that he has “tried to give modern buildings the benefit of the doubt”- so it is unsurprising that he casts a somewhat nostalgic eye over the Museum of British Transport, suggesting that visitors “have a far-away look in their eyes” because the locomotives, in particular, “represent man's ingenuity and self-respect at one of its highest levels”. Nairn (1966: 14)

had noted in the preface that he didn't "believe in the difference between... fine art and engineering"; here he describes the locomotives as "supreme art" precisely *because* they are "free from all thought of 'art' or 'industrial design'" - they are a natural response to the problem of applying steam propulsion to movement, and have become aesthetically pleasing almost by accident. As Revill (2012: 182) has more recently suggested: "British steam locomotive design from the late nineteenth century onwards seems to have developed a balance of simplicity and elegance that disguised the physical effort of movement, producing a simplified and in a sense purified concept of locomotion". For Nairn, the Museum of British Transport was a "noble zoo", a description which once again tallies with the 'biomorphic analogy' of the locomotive as an iron horse, as was identified by Revill (2012: 234).

Nairn singles out Queen Victoria's carriage, built in 1869, for especial praise, describing it as "one of the loveliest sequences of rooms the nineteenth century ever created" (1966: 192). He describes the "awful declension from this to Edward VII's carriage in the next row; mostly refitted under the supervision of Queen Mary in the 1910s" - in this carriage, as Nairn sees it, "taste and thought have replaced being and feeling" (1966:192). In contrast to Simmons (1970:73) who, as described below, suggested that "simple people" were "deeply moved' by the exhibits in a nostalgic sense, as "a part of their daily lives that has now vanished for ever", Nairn suggests that "The far-away look in those other visitors eyes holds something more durable than nostalgia. Like *Quattrocento* architecture, Jacobean poetry, German Baroque sculpture, this was It." (1966; 192). For Nairn, then, nineteenth

century railway design represented a high-water mark in cultural taste; an almost undefinable ‘It’ or zeitgeist capable of arousing strong emotions in those who witness its outcomes.

#### **7.4 ‘An interim statement’: *Transport Preserved* by Bryan Morgan**

*Transport Preserved*, the accompanying pamphlet to the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, portrayed itself not as a “conventional museum guide-book”, but as an invitation to the exhibition, an explanation of its aims and origins, and a souvenir of a visit. Thus it largely concerned itself with a general history of transport rather than a description of the exhibits. Simmons (1970: 280), in his *Transport Museums in Britain and Western Europe*, later suggested that “Mr Bryan Morgan’s *Transport Preserved*, which surveys the museum at Clapham, is the best introduction that any of our thirty-four [museums described in his book] can show”.

Museum exhibitions, as Macdonald (1998) suggests, tend to obscure the circumstances of their genesis, although since the 1990s the inclusion of open storage in museum space- such as the *Warehouse* at the NRM mentioned above- has “allow(ed) the public to understand more fully what museum work is like and how many resources it requires” (Zeillinger 2001:761). As noted above, Clapham had a store-like atmosphere in its own right, whilst in his accompanying booklet Morgan was surprisingly sincere about the way in which the museum had been established, and downbeat about the nature of the exhibition he was describing.

Macdonald (1998: 2) suggests that “the assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents that lead to a finished exhibition are generally

hidden from public view: they are tidied away along with the cleaning equipment, the early drafts of text and the artefacts for which no place could be found.” At Clapham, however- or at least inside the pages of the guide book- the museum’s pre-history, its assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents as Macdonald termed them- were described; the Museum’s ‘dirty washing’ was hung out for all to see, perhaps because many of the debates surrounding its formation had been played out in public.

Morgan is honest about the failure to preserve items relating to transport until what were then relatively recent times, listing as reasons for this failure the range of items covered by the field- incorporating not just larger objects such as locomotives but “many thousand different types of smaller objects” (Morgan 1963: 6) - the complex nature of transport history and British individualism (as people tended to collect objects privately). Beginning immediately after the end of the Second World War, Morgan describes ‘The Job’ facing the BTC following nationalisation (in much the same way as I did in Chapter 4). Interestingly, Morgan deliberately attempts to dispel any idea that the Commission’s historical collections (and thus the museum) might be railway-centric, reminding the reader that the former London Passenger Transport Board was part of the BTC ‘family’, and that even the former ‘Big Four’ companies were “involved with far more than the business of pulling things around on rails” (1963: 10).

Morgan (1963: 11) paints a picture of the Commission as a carer which “had a duty to at least *know about*” the “near 1,000,000 objects of importance to the history of world transport” which it had inherited. According to

Morgan (1963: 11), the Curator, described by him as “a professional museologist in charge of a staff of true enthusiasts”, had two tasks- cataloguing the relics which the Commission had inherited, and also scheduling for preservation “the objects which might soon *become* relics” (italics in original)- with the difficulty in the first instance being the large, widely dispersed body of material, and in the second what Morgan terms “the fickleness of fashion and the need to divorce sentiment from true historical appreciation”. Morgan thus implies that the Curator has to tread a fine line, ensuring that some objects are preserved rather than falling prey to the “fickleness of fashion” - but not saving objects simply for the sake of ‘sentiment’<sup>157</sup>. At the same time, the seemingly magnanimous Commission “never thought of itself as having a monopoly over any transport relic”; it “realised that some of its own exhibits logically belonged in longer-established museums”.

In Morgan’s version of events the Commission, and in particular the Office of the Curator for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, appears to be relatively toothless in terms of its powers of acquisition:

All the Curator could do was to ask the various member undertakings of the Commission to put their neglected badges- or locomotives- under his expert care, and point out to private enthusiasts that an ancient copper foot-warmer or padlock might be worthy of wider appreciation (Morgan 1963:11-12).

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<sup>157</sup> He specifically references the destruction of the Great Western Railway’s last broad-gauge locomotive, *North Star*, which had supposedly been laid aside for preservation, in 1906,

Later, he suggests that, whilst “much brilliant detective work for important relics... sometimes ended in their being snatched from the scrap-heap”, certain subjects had been lost and could only be represented by models made by engineering apprentices. Thus, despite Morgan’s rationalisation of ‘The Job’ at hand, the image he projects of the Department of Relics is of an organisation which is in some ways rather weak, requesting that items be preserved, saving objects at the last possible minute and making models of items which had already been lost (this was a task which appears to have never been completed).

In terms of the more detailed pre-history of the museum, Morgan’s description is again surprisingly revealing, given the general trend, as Macdonald (1998) suggested, towards the obfuscation of the evolution of museum exhibitions by the Curators responsible for establishing them. That being said, he does gloss over or inaccurately portray certain aspects of the story. He mentions the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, yet suggests that this came about through the “building-up of a network of communications with individual experts and groups of amateurs of transport” (Morgan 1963:12). As we have seen, the Panel actually arose specifically out of the furore surrounding the scrapping of three transport artefacts at Stratford Works, the condition in which preserved items were being housed in general, and plans to demolish part of the York Railway Museum. However, the pamphlet is surprisingly open about the difficulties of selecting a site for a transport museum, a problem exacerbated by the size and shape of the museum’s “prize specimens”: “It would be an

exaggeration to say that in 1957 the Department of Historical Relics was nearing the end of its tether; but certainly the difficulties of finding a site for its long-awaited headquarters appeared insuperable.” (Morgan 1963: 31)

Interestingly, given the ultimate relocation of the railway exhibits to York, Morgan (1963:31) suggests that, “with all respect to the railway-fervour of the north and west, the pull of the London area was inescapable for a collection which aimed to attract the casual visitor as well as the dedicated student”. Morgan (1963: 31) cites central London land values, the need to have road and preferably rail access, the need for a site with clean air which was not “too heavily laden with corrosive chemicals” and planning requirements and public safety regulations as constraints to the planning and opening of the museum, and notes that even the Clapham site eventually chosen had its drawbacks. The Clapham site’s history made it an appropriate site for a museum- “in itself it epitomised London’s transport history” (Morgan 1963:33) - since it had been used to house horse trams, electric trams and diesel buses before its conversion into a museum site. However, Morgan (1963:35) is strangely scathing about the nature and location of the Clapham site itself: “It was not, of course, ideal for conversion into a museum: it was a little on the small side, the lack of rail connection meant that massive locomotives would have to be delicately man-handled into position, and Clapham itself was no longer a fashionable area”. The booklet was reprinted several times- the latest impression was in 1968- and it cannot have helped the cause of those who, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were campaigning to save the Museum and prevent the relocation of its railway exhibits to York

(see below), when even the museum's own accompanying pamphlet was downbeat about the nature of the site.

Elsewhere in the booklet Morgan oscillates between optimism about the nature of the museum and the possibilities for its future, and an air of dismissal, almost disdain, about what the museum currently shows. He somewhat uneasily juxtaposes hope for the future- specifically suggesting that Clapham might "become the world's first college of transport history"- with a cautious description of the museum's current situation, noting that there was "no possibility that all the available treasure will all be available at the same time" (Morgan 1963: 37). Furthermore, in colourfully noting the need to continue to preserve objects, Morgan is impliedly critical of the "store of relics" housed at Clapham:

Time still takes its toll; less than a generation hence the fires will be dying under the last *Britannia*<sup>158</sup> and even a *Deltic* will be a train-spotters' rarity. And it is part of the task of the museum to see that historians of the future have a richer store of relics of the present than historians of the present have of relics of the past (Morgan 1963:37).

More explicitly, Morgan suggests that the museum is "essentially a collection of those which happened through the accidents of history and politics to come under the Commission, rather than fully representative", suggesting that a visitor "could be pardoned for wondering why there were no stage-coaches, vintage cars, steam traction engines, balloons, aircraft or

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<sup>158</sup> Actually the last *Britannia* class locomotive, No. 70013 *Oliver Cromwell*, was taken out of service on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1968 after hauling the last steam passenger train prior to the abolition of steam traction on British Railways.

polar sleighs on show” (Morgan 1963:37). Thus Morgan is to some extent anticipating Cossons’ and Simmons’ characterisation of the Clapham Museum as a jumbled miscellany, and questions the ‘richness’ of an unrepresentative collection. The problem was perhaps not the number of objects on show at the museum, but the nature of the objects which were displayed, which had not been selected in an orderly fashion and did not represent all types of land transport- whilst there were many objects on display, these were the *wrong type* of objects. Cossons (1968:87) makes a similar point- in addition to pointing out the variety of objects on display, he wonders “how many of the more recent additions have any real historical significance”, whilst Simmons, in his generally positive review of the museum, describes the smaller items as the “engaging bric-à-brac left by the railways”. This was perhaps not intended to be derogatory, yet the term bric-à-brac is perhaps hardly suggestive of a representatively restrained display. Elsewhere, he suggests that British Rail’s museums, taken as a whole, have neglected the display of more run-of-the-mill, workaday exhibits, in favour- it is implied- of pioneering, unusual and/or more visually interesting exhibits:

In the British Rail museums, where over thirty locomotives are displayed, only one example of the standard six-couple goods engine is to be seen, not a single open goods wagon nor one brake van. Yet these were the chief instruments by which the railways of this country earned their bread and butter for the best part of a hundred years (Simmons 1970: 278).

### 7.5 Displaying the Railway Age at Clapham and beyond

In the historical discussions which occupy the rest of Morgan's booklet, he repeats the discourse of the 'railway age'- or what Morgan (1963: 37) terms a "non-road age, reaching from 1840 to the early years of the present century". The idea of a 'golden' railway age, in which railways were not only the dominant mode of transport but also the foremost influence on Britain's cultural and economic life – was a relatively common device used by social and economic historians in the 1960s and 1970s, although the term appears to date back further. The term was notably used by Michael Robbins in his book *The Railway Age* (1963:11): "The term has been often used: sometimes by English writers, as a rough equivalent to the Victorian Age; sometimes, by Americans, to indicate the great era of expansion after 1865 and the final triumphant settlement of the West."

In fact, one of the first English uses of the term in the title of a book was by the economic historian Sir John Harold Clapham, which is perhaps unsurprising given that, as was detailed in Chapter 5, economic historians were amongst the first academics to be interested in transport history. The first part of his three volume *An economic history of modern Britain*, published in 1926, was entitled 'The early Railway Age' and covered the years 1820-1850. Whilst his book does give an in-depth account of the way in which the railway impacted upon Britain's economic and social life, Clapham doesn't elucidate what the railway age might be in any more general sense, and at times seems to focus more on the railway's lack of impact and limitations (seemingly debunking myths about the railway's prowess) - albeit within an overall

pattern of success- rather than its epoch-defining characteristics. He points out, for example, that “The locomotive engine did not win an easy victory; nor, in its early form, did it altogether deserve one” (p. 381). Clapham thus uses the term Railway Age in a more descriptive sense. Robbins, however, does give a brief description of the Railway Age in his book, prior to expanding on the precise description of a railway in the rest of the first chapter:

“There was a Railway Age. It began with the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 and lasted until the First World War. If responsibility for it is to be assigned to one man, that man was George Stephenson. The age has left its mark on the physical landscape, on social organization, on political groupings, and on the map of the world. The railway, with its allies the electric telegraph and the steamship, virtually annihilated distance and became at one bound the most potent physical influence on the development of the world in the nineteenth century. Since the First World War, the Railway Age has developed into something much more complex.” (Robbins 1961: 11)

The economic historian Harold Perkin drew upon a similar conception of history in his TV series ‘The Age of the Railway’ (1963; later published as a book in 1970) whilst Jack Simmons later suggested (perhaps influenced by Morgan) that “there was, somewhere between 1830 and 1914, a ‘Railway Age’, when railways did regulate in a substantial measure the economic and social life of the communities they were built to serve.” (Simmons 1970: 21).

In his infamous report *The Reshaping of British Railways*- also written in 1963- Beeching drew to some extent on the idea of a ‘Railway Age’- and its

subsequent transition to the Road Age, portraying a transition from the profitable times of the past, in which “the unknown degree of cross-subsidisation involved in carrying bad traffic on the back of financially good traffic was very largely ignored” (BRB 1963: 4), to the present day, in which the forcing down of rates of good traffics due to increased competition meant that such cross-subsidisation, and moreover “the burdening of good traffics with costs arising from bad ones” (BRB 1963: 4), was no longer sustainable. Similarly, the duplication of main line termini by competing railway companies- a relic of the Railway Age- no longer made sense now that the Railways were operating as a single entity, with other forms of transport representing their principal competitors. The railways had been an opportunistic, capitalist venture (Cossons interview 05/02/16) but needed drastic alterations to meet present-day demands and the pattern of ownership.

The conception of a glorious ‘Railway Age’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century- in which railways were not only profitable but at the heart of the nation’s, and indeed the Empire’s, economic and social life- was reflected in the nature of the exhibits which were displayed at Clapham and British Railways’ other museums at Swindon and York- in which, as was noted above, nearly all of the locomotives dated from the Victorian and Edwardian era. That being said, it is perhaps questionable as to whether the economic and social drivers for, and manifestations of, this Age- in other words the defining characteristics which marked it out from the Ages which occurred before and after it (which were, according to Morgan, the Canal Age and the Road Age) could be fully conveyed by many of the technological objects which were on

display. This is in fact precisely where Morgan's accompanying booklet comes in-as a provider of historical context which the objects alone cannot provide; for example he suggests that the railway age was "an economic watershed comprised of the inflation of the Napoleonic period, the shortage of capital which followed it, and then a return to balance about 1830" (Morgan 1963: 15).

It is difficult now to ascertain the level of detail contained in the object descriptions at Clapham, and the way in which Museum staff sought to socially contextualise its exhibits, yet the 'mass exhibition' style did not perhaps lend itself to explanation. How was the uninformed visitor to understand such a diverse range of objects, sometimes from different points in history, all brought together in one place? John Scholes and his team appear to have perhaps not felt the need to place the exhibits in their museum in a wider social context in a way that the 'casual visitor' would understand. An implicit divide was made between such visitors, who seem merely to gawp at the objects in the museum- and perhaps come away slightly better informed- and 'students of transport history', who will naturally have a fuller appreciation of the exhibits.

This divide was made clear in a paper entitled 'Methods of Research connected with restoration in the museum services of the British Transport Commission', given at Clapham by Mr Dymant, one of John Scholes' assistants, as part of the London Conference of the International Commission for Transport Museums in 1961 (the paper was later reproduced under John Scholes' name- with the words 'The British Transport Commission')

substituted for the words 'The British Railways Board'- in the summer 1970 News Bulletin of the Transport Trust)<sup>159</sup>. In setting out the case for the restoration of locomotives- the principal object of the paper- into original condition, the piece implies that a lot of information can be read off from the detail of the locomotive- but only by "students of transport history". The paper suggests that "To the casual visitor the preserved locomotive will seem but an old fashioned example of a disappearing object, to the student of transport history it will mean much more". The paper goes on to list a variety of cultural and economic factors which may be 'read off' from a locomotive's design by those who, crucially, *know what they are looking for*. Not only will the locomotive carry the individual mark of the man who designed it, but also "the railway that built it, the type of traffic it was intended to work, the type of country it was to cross, the type of coal that it would burn and even the policy of the Company that owned it in its attempt to defeat its competitors" (the article is perhaps rather stretching the point when it suggests that "Bright liveries... indicated the optimism or depression of the Board of Directors").

Morgan (1963) made a similar division between students and the casual visitor. Speaking retrospectively about the need to establish a railway museum, he notes that whilst such a museum would attract students from "across the world to find in it a repository of great reference points", it should, primarily, "give information and delight" to the "casual visitor who dropped in for a 'look-see'" (1963:9). Such casual visitors are seen, in effect, to 'gawp' at the exhibits, which are in themselves seen to provide the

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<sup>159</sup> Research paper located in NRM Clapham Files Box 65.

entertainment value; thus a casual visitor would find himself “over an hour later, still engrossed by the workmanship of a station-bell, or by a notice threatening trespassers with seven years’ transportation- and who, in retrospect, found his sense of the past, present and future excitingly enriched” (Morgan 1963: 10).

Later in the booklet, Morgan suggests that, as well as showing “the visitor to Clapham what the railway age of Britain- which became the railway age of the whole world- was about”, the Museum attempts to “inform the specialist, to excite the enthusiast, and to charm all those who have a sense of the past” (Morgan 1963: 39). There was thus a subtle divide here between those who, to some extent *knew what they were looking at-* and who would be interested in learning further information about the exhibits- and those who would simply be ‘charmed’ by those who had a near-teleological ‘sense of the past’.

### **7.6. Organised chaos or “rearguard action”? Running the Museum of British Transport**

Describing the nature of Scholes’ regime at Clapham- and indeed the nature of Scholes himself- is a task of some complexity. On the one hand, some of the correspondence from this era, now housed at the National Archives, portrays Clapham as a somewhat chaotically administered museum. This was borne out by an audit carried out in 1974 which found that “There has been a complete lack of control in managing the custody and accountability of relics when the museum was open to the public and subsequent to its closure”<sup>160</sup>. Scholes himself appears to be disorganised,

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<sup>160</sup> Audit Report A1/4, 16<sup>TH</sup> April 1975; NA AN111/563.

taking a long time to reach decisions, and to be deferential to his superiors. On the other hand, Scholes was remembered, in his obituaries, as a “doughty warrior” (Skeat 1977) who fought a “rearguard action” (Cossons interview 05/02/16) to preserve collections of historic railway artefacts at a time when they were threatened by budget cuts and the disinterest of British Railways’ management.

Triangulating the correspondence relating to the Museum of British Transport- available at the National Archives- with a first-hand account from a friend and colleague, paints a picture of Scholes as a somewhat enigmatic figure, at once self-deprecating and often bowing under pressure from those whom he worked under, yet also a figure who, on occasion, stood up for himself and the Museum, someone who was domineering when they needed to be (Cossons 05/02/16). Scholes has been recalled as a small, round, red-faced, jovial and emollient figure, a dapper man in smart dress who had a dislike of public speaking but could stand up for himself (Wilsdon n.d.; Cossons interview 05/02/16). However, he suffered from both an arterial condition (Skeat 1977) and mental illness. This illness was described, in a covering letter to the scathing audit of the site carried out after his retirement, as “grave sickness involving mental disorder”<sup>161</sup>. In an obituary written about him by Skeat in *The Railway Magazine* (Skeat also wrote an obituary for the Stephenson Locomotive Society’s Journal), he is described as a “doughty warrior”- a militaristic depiction which was mirrored in Neil Cossons’ description of the way in which Scholes fought a “rearguard action”

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<sup>161</sup> David McKenna to Chief Internal Auditor, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1975 NA AN111/563.

(Cossons interview 05/02/16)<sup>162</sup>. However, the *Railway Magazine* obituary also notes that in 1957- i.e. at the time of the establishment of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics- “it was clear that both societies and individuals would have to give him organised support”; support which, when forthcoming, “gave him tremendous encouragement”. Thus Scholes is described as being at once a strong figurehead and driving force, yet also an individual requiring support and encouragement. This is supported by the fact that, on several occasions-and particularly after 1968, when the future of the Clapham collection was in doubt, he passed on to Merrill letters he had received from the public in which the Museum was praised, tellingly stating in the memo accompanying one of these (22<sup>nd</sup> August 1968): “I thought you would like to see a recent letter which I have received from an admirer- just in case you think I haven’t got any!”<sup>163</sup>. Merrill does not seem to have responded to these letters; in the correspondence which I have seen he only praises Scholes once, following an Open Day in October 1966, commenting:

“A very good effort indeed- I could only wish that the television and newspaper publicity had been about new services!!

I seriously think all concerned deserve a warm pat on the back.”<sup>164</sup>

The Consultative Panel, however, often recorded their praise for his efforts, and, as mentioned in Chapter 6, at their tenth anniversary dinner on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1968 they presented him with an engraved cigarette box- a “tribute of esteem and affection by the Societies represented on the Panel”-

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<sup>162</sup> *The Railway Magazine* September 1977; accessed at NRM.

<sup>163</sup> Memorandum, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1968; NA AN111/611.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum 12<sup>th</sup> October 1966; NA AN111/610.

and an album of photographs showing Scholes within museum space, as a “souvenir of the occasion”<sup>165</sup>. The photographs, now broken up and held at the National Railway Museum, are worth further analysis as they depict Scholes as an authoritative and knowledgeable individual, obscuring the more chaotic, lackadaisical nature of his museum management. The photographs depict a smartly dressed Scholes in a series of different poses within the Clapham museum, each of which places him in a position of authority, whether talking to a group of schoolchildren, relaxing with his arms crossed staring thoughtfully at an unseen object or simply striding across the space between exhibits. Scholes’ persona takes on an air of almost effortless control- the museum is his domain, and a space which he is comfortable in and knowledgeable about.

In one image (labelled Number 3; now object number 2012-7223 at the NRM; Figure 20), Scholes, in the centre of the shot, strides past one of the



Figure 20. Image of John Scholes within the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, presented to him on the occasion of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics’ tenth anniversary dinner, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1968. NRM object number 2012-7223.

museum's most famous exhibits, Number 4468 *Mallard*, with an air of authoritative casualness; this is *his* domain; these are *his* relics. In this photograph, Scholes, as the Curator, has a particular aura, a particular presence, which is demonstrably felt by all around him. In all of the photographs, the museum appears to be a clean, bright and well-ordered space.

The chaotic nature of the regime under which the Department of Historic Relics, and its Museum, were run can be evidenced in the correspondence between John Scholes and his superiors - who, as noted in the Chapter 4, were always from the Public Relations/Publicity division of first the BTC, and later the BRB. However, as well as illustrating the idiosyncratic nature of the Clapham regime, the correspondence also shows the pressures, social as well as financial, which Scholes was under. Within the sprawling bureaucracy of the British Railways organisation, in which the responsibilities of multiple departments overlapped, even the smallest decisions could occasionally become complex, whilst Scholes was perhaps not always treated with the utmost respect by those who managed his department. Crucially, the fact that the Museum was state-owned enabled those who disputed decisions made by Scholes or his superiors to make dark and dangerous utterances about raising "questions in the House" when they were dissatisfied. That being said, it is perhaps the case that the correspondence only reflects particular low points of the Clapham Museum- experienced to some extent by all museums- and not, necessarily, its day to day business.

John Scholes' direct manager from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1965 was Eric Merrill, the Controller of Public Relations and Publicity, who features most heavily in the Clapham correspondence. Prior to this date-since 1951- the Curator's Office had come under the auspices of the Publicity Officer; the change of emphasis to Public Relations from 1965 was explained partially by the uncertainty over the Museum's future at this time: as a memo describing the change suggested, "the whole question of the future of the museums is becoming more and more a Public Relations matter"<sup>166</sup>. Furthermore, it was noted that efforts to publicise the museum were "well established" and could thus continue "on a service basis". Thus the subtle change in emphasis from publicity to public relations can in itself be seen as to some extent symptomatic of the lack of interest of the BRB in its museums by this time, as it ceased attempting to promote them and instead sought to manage the public response to its attempts to offload its responsibility for running them.

Merrill, for whom the museum was only one of his many responsibilities- and not necessarily one of the more important-lost patience on several occasions with what he saw as Scholes' "procrastination" and his failure to follow correct procedures and make, as he saw it, sensible decisions<sup>167</sup>. This ranged from larger, contentious debates such as those detailed below, through to smaller matters such as mistakes in the classification of correspondence and the poor quality of posters produced by Scholes for his open days. Furthermore, the necessity to be as economical as possible meant that any request to spend money on improvements to the museum, or for

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<sup>166</sup> Memorandum 'Organisation and Responsibilities', 18<sup>th</sup> December 1964; NA AN111/13

<sup>167</sup> Memorandum, Merrill to Scholes 13<sup>th</sup> September 1968; NA AN111/611.

Scholes to fulfil his duties as Vice-Chairman of the International Commission of Transport Museums, was scrutinised very closely.

Two examples which illustrate the chaotic nature of the museum's operating procedures were the circumstances which occurred when an S.L. Poole, who had donated some smaller items (photographs, photographic negatives and smaller items relating to buses) to Scholes prior to moving to South Africa in the 1950s, decided in 1968, upon hearing about the break-up of the Clapham collection, that he would like certain items returned, and the earlier dispute between Scholes/Merrill and David St John Thomas of David and Charles publishers.

In 1966, a dispute occurred between Scholes/Merrill and David St. John Thomas, who as mentioned above was the Managing Director of David and Charles Publishers (assuming full control after his working relationship with Charles Hadfield broke down), over the cost of reproducing photographs held at Clapham for R A Williams' book on the London and South Western Railway. At this time there was no clear policy relating to the reproduction of photographs held at Clapham, although this was in the process of being established. A year previously O.S. Nock had, according to a letter from Scholes, made a "fuss" about the reproduction fees for photographs for his own book on the London and South Western Railway, and as a response to this, "in view of his previous press connections with the Board", he was allowed to reproduce the photographs he required for free, on the instructions of Merrill<sup>168</sup>. Unfortunately for Scholes, Nock told Thomas about

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<sup>168</sup> Letter, Scholes to Merrill, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1966; NA AN111/610.

this, which meant that he was perhaps understandably upset that Williams, who himself was on the administrative staff at Waterloo, was asked to pay two guineas per image to reproduce photographs for his book.

Despite the fact that Merrill had inadvertently created this problematic situation by agreeing to waive reproduction fees for Nock, on the grounds of his “previous press connections with the board”, he doesn’t respond to Scholes’ requests for him to intervene in the matter. Dunstone (2007: 30) notes that Scholes “proved to be somewhat out of his depth”, and his requests for Merrill to intervene perhaps demonstrate this, whilst the letter he did write to Thomas (11<sup>th</sup> November 1966) was not entirely convincing, since he claimed that he had “no idea who the person referred to in your letter (O.S. Nock) is”- which is unlikely given that Nock was one of the most famous railway authors of the time (indeed, of all time)<sup>169</sup>. He also attempts to placate Thomas with flannel, claiming that, whilst another British Railways department may be able to use photographs for a smaller fee, he is “credited eventually with the cost due to my museum”- which, in the case of Nock at least, also appears to be untrue. He got a very negative response, with Thomas commenting that “what you say in the context of the South Western Railway is so absurd that if I so wanted, I could get a very nasty question raised in the House itself”, and that the situation “is so demonstrably unfair that... I could make a very nasty nuisance of myself indeed”<sup>170</sup>. An apparently panicked Scholes tells Merrill of the “interesting letter in return” that he has received in a memo 16<sup>th</sup> November 1966, and also suggests that “At this stage

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<sup>169</sup> Copy of letter from Scholes to Thomas, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1966; NA AN111/610.

<sup>170</sup> Copy of letter from Thomas to Scholes, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1966; NA AN111/610.

I think it would be better for you to write to David St John Thomas yourself”, but Merrill again refuses to get involved in the matter, noting that he does not propose “at this stage at any rate, to enter the lists with David & Charles or David & Goliath.”<sup>171</sup>

Merrill’s hand was later forced, however, when Thomas wrote to him directly, ostensibly to thank him for reassuring him, in another set of correspondence, that the Railway Record Office (he is presumably referring here to the archives at Porchester Road) will remain open on Tuesday evenings, but also about the matter of the reproductions<sup>172</sup>. Thomas comments that he has “joined the rather large ranks of people who seem to find the service at Clapham rather distasteful at times”, suggesting that, rather than being an isolated incident, this episode was symptomatic of a broader dissatisfaction with, and perhaps more deep-rooted problems relating to, the Museum of British Transport’s photographic services. After some discussion, it seems to have ultimately been decided, in December 1966, that the reproduction fee would be 10 guineas for the 25 photographs which were ultimately required, plus a charge of 5/ per copy<sup>173</sup>. There is no confirmation that this figure was agreed upon, but the correspondence does seem to have ceased after Merrill had suggested this figure.

S.L. Poole, author of *The ABC of London Transport Railways* and *The ABC of London Transport Buses and Coaches* in the early 1950s but by this time working as a Surveyor in South Africa, enquired in 1968 about the objects he

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<sup>171</sup> ‘Reproduction fees’ memo from Merrill to Scholes, 1th November 1966; NA AN111/610.

<sup>172</sup> Letter, Thomas to Merrill, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1966; NA AN111/610.

<sup>173</sup> Memo from Scholes to Merrill: ‘Reproduction Fees: David & Charles, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1966; NA AN111/610.

had donated to the Curator of Historical Relics in the 1950s, i.e. before the museum was built, and was both told that some items were not available at the museum, and had others returned to him in what he considered to be poor condition. In fact, even in 1957 Poole appears to have been distrustful of Scholes' (lack of) progress in cataloguing the items which he had donated to the museum, to such an extent that in one letter to Merrill he suggests that he had requested "my collection to be returned to me in order that I might destroy it before I left England, as I feared that some of it would be lost (if it was donated to Scholes)" (which is a somewhat contradictory statement)<sup>174</sup>. In an apparent response to Mr Poole's concerns over the future of the items in his collection, the items which he had donated were "spread out on a table for me to see on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1957, a week before I left England, in an endeavour to persuade me that nothing of the collection had been lost". He adds, however, that his fears for the future of the collection "appear to have been very well founded".

In the years between 1968 and 1970, complex and acrimonious letters were exchanged between Poole and Merrill or Scholes, involving disputes over which particular items had been donated, and when exactly these donations occurred. The episode was later referred to as the 'Poole inquiry'. There was often no record that particular items which Poole wanted to be returned had actually been given to the museum in the first place, and the museum was under no obligation to return them, yet at the same time it was clear that certain items had been lost or damaged. The discussions were

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<sup>174</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> September 1968, NA AN111/611.

perhaps not helped by the fact that, due to his residence in South Africa, Poole was unable to meet Merrill and Scholes in person, although he did make one visit in March 1969.

In a letter to Merrill soon after the matter was first raised by Poole, Scholes- though describing Poole as “a very difficult person to deal with” who was “constantly bringing things, leaving them with us and then taking them away”, admits that “a number of small items have been lost” during transfers between sites in the 1950s, and then to Clapham in 1959<sup>175</sup>. Merrill, who had a penchant for the soundbite, made clear his displeasure at Scholes’ attempt to involve him in this particular business:

“As a breeder of dogs you appreciate, I am sure, the wisdom of leaving them to do the barking.

I have no desire to bark with or at Mr Poole.

Your memo ZH/18 in reply to one from Bill Newton, on my behalf, of 26 August is, in my view, pure procrastination.

WILL YOU PLEASE DEAL WITH MR POOLE’S REQUEST.”<sup>176</sup>

At length, Poole sought the help of two MPs on the matter, including Sir Derek Walker-Smith, MP for East Hertfordshire and also a barrister, who wrote to the then Chairman of British Railways, Sir Henry Johnson, on his behalf. Poole became increasingly angry at the lack of progress made in finding the items which he wanted- he had been told that trying to find the missing items would be like “looking for a needle in a haystack’- and also by the way

<sup>175</sup> Letter, Scholes to Merrill 12<sup>th</sup> September 1968; NA AN111/611.

<sup>176</sup> Memorandum, Merrill to Scholes 13<sup>th</sup> September 1968; NA AN111/611.

he had been treated by British Railways in correspondence- “a constant repetition of half truths and mis-statements, going on since I first wrote to Mr Merrill on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1968”, and by the poor condition of those items which had been returned to him-with pages ripped out of his reference books and their binding torn, and photographs with missing frames which had been re-mounted on what he describes as ‘grubby’ cardboard. In a letter of 4<sup>th</sup> December 1969 he threatened, in a letter to Walker-Smith, to commence “proceedings in London with a view to obtaining a Court Order requiring the Railways Board to return the items”. The end of the matter is not recorded in the correspondence which I have seen; in the last letter in the available files, addressed to Poole, Merrill (12<sup>th</sup> January 1970) states that “we have not been able to trace anything other than those items already returned to you”<sup>177</sup>. However he also notes that the donated items were “accepted quite unconditionally and no promises were made about how they would be kept nor about returning them on demand”, and later that he had “been unable to prove” that all of the items which Poole had listed were received by Scholes. As explanation for the potential loss of items, he suggests that they may have “been integrated with collections of other relevant material and cannot now be identified”.

The correspondence which is available at the National Archives also reveals something of the physical condition of the museum itself at this time. The building seems to have been in an increasingly poor state of repair, with emergency works having to be undertaken to the leaking roof in 1966, and to

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<sup>177</sup> Copy of letter from Merrill to Poole, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1970; NA AN111/611.

the masonry and later the lighting in 1971/2. In the later years of its existence, the museum appears to have been unsafe, with parts of the masonry on the small exhibits section falling off on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1971, and one of the light fittings later falling onto the floor in the main hall (it was only through luck that neither of these took place whilst the museum was open).

### **7.7. Sparrows but no strippers: Quotidian and carnivalesque life at Clapham**

Whilst the railway rolling stock within Clapham was stilled, in one respect the Museum was livelier than its successor museum, the National Railway Museum at York. The Museum was home to sparrows, referenced by Ian Nairn in *Nairn's London*. He describes Clapham as a “big shed, with the right kind of unselfconscious steel roof, cram full of locomotives, buses and trams”, and goes on to mention the “sparrows walking about on the floor and quiet, enthusiastic attendants” (Nairn 1966: 192). They were later immortalised in a cartoon which appears to be by Denis Gifford (I have not been able to verify the signature), accompanying an article about the museum’s proposed closure in *The Guardian* on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1969. Though a small detail in and of itself, the fact that the museum was home to (perhaps) a colony of sparrows suggests that the Museum had not quite shaken off its’ bus depot roots, and was, in effect, a hybrid of exterior and interior space; it had not been hermetically sealed and drained of animal life. Whilst its successor the NRM is based in ex-railway buildings (former locomotive and goods sheds), these have largely been sanitised and, importantly, de-industrialised to a large extent. This seems to have largely occurred during the 1990-1992 refurbishment of the Great Hall,

a process which, as Gwynne (2015:40) suggests, “saw the end of the smoke hoods and other paraphernalia that had made the Great Hall look like the steam shed it once was”. The roof was replaced during this refurbishment, whilst one of the shed’s original two turntables was removed. Despite the colourful, densely packed exhibits, contemporary representations of Clapham show the Main Shed to be a stark, severe and dark space of concrete and steel (see illustration on page 3) - it betrayed its working roots to a much greater extent than the NRM currently does.

Meanwhile the exhibits at Clapham, deemed to by Nairn to be examples of “supreme art” in their own right, were in turn made the subject of artistic representation. The Wolverhampton College of Art produced a book entitled *British Transport Museum Clapham: Visual Observations of Second Year Graphic Design Students*, which aimed to “provide a light-hearted retrospective glance at some aspects of a fascinating subject”, containing images of “visually interesting” exhibits painted in the students’ ‘idiosyncratic’ styles (see figure 21). Meanwhile, during the late 1960s first year students from St Martin’s School of Art’s Graphic Design course spent two days a week for several weeks drawing and studying at the Museum, under the tutelage of visiting instructor Brian Haresnape, who was the author of the two volume tone *Railway Design since 1830*. An exhibition of their work was held at Clapham between Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October 1969 (see figure 22).



Figure 21. Illustrations from *British Transport Museum Clapham: Visual Observations of Second Year Graphic Design students*.



Figure 22. Poster for an exhibition of drawings by students of the Graphic Design Department, St Martin's School of Art, held at Clapham between June and October 1969. NA AN111/611.

Whilst the visual aesthetic of the Museum's exhibits was utilised and celebrated, the Museum's management had a rather less straightforward approach to the aesthetics of the human body, which serves in turn to illustrate its uneasy relationship to contemporary culture. It would be wrong

to say that the Museum had an antagonistic attitude to contemporary culture, that it had an 'anti-modern' bias. It would perhaps be incorrect even to state that it was culturally conservative, as the museum was, despite being located far from its West End heartland, incorporated into the contemporary, fashionable culture Swinging 1960s London- which Rycroft (2010: 8) has described as being characterised by “redefined modes of expression in art, media, fashion, architecture” and which, for him, was based on a less rigid, more elemental way of perceiving the world. This photograph (figure 23) from a 1966 photoshoot at Clapham, though it includes a mini skirt, illustrates the predilection for retro themes and materials in Swinging fashion and the way in which the Swinging scene represented a “juxtaposition of old and new London in terms of heritage and class and the classy and the crass” (Rycroft 2010:67).



Figure 23. Littlewoods fashion photoshoot at Clapham Transport Museum, 1966. Available at: <http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=171068&sos=0>

Nevertheless, there were limits as to what was to be permitted in museum space. When the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers proposed to hold a Ball at the Museum on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1969, there was some consternation from Eric Merrill, the Controller of Public Relations and Publicity, at the mention of strippers in early publicity material for the event<sup>178</sup>. Derek Jeffries, the Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Society, wrote to Merrill<sup>179</sup>, suggesting that the “the reference to strippers was an unfortunate error which arose from the urgency to produce a lively poster”; thus “whilst there was a suggestion that strippers, being a part of the contemporary London scene, might be portrayed”, Jeffries added that “no decision has been made to accept such a proposal and certainly no action has been taken to engage strippers”. Implicitly referencing the decision to close the Museum and the controversial proposed move to York, Jeffries noted that “the effects of adverse publicity for the Museum at the present time are now clearly understood”, adding that “the Society would not only wish to avoid causing embarrassment to other organisations but would also wish to act in such a way so as not to affect its own standing and reputation as a professional body” A relieved Merrill, in his reply to Jeffries, commented that “This may be alright in its place but I don’t think Clapham is the appropriate place for it”<sup>180</sup>. Nevertheless, the event was, as the Press Release suggested, to be

Sprinkled with the spice of London life from the period [presumably the Victorian and Edwardian period in which the vehicles at the Museum were

<sup>178</sup> Memorandum, Eric Merrill to John Scholes, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1969, NA AN111/611.

<sup>179</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> August 1969; NA AN 111/611.

<sup>180</sup> Letter, Merrill to Jeffries, 13<sup>th</sup> August 1969; NA AN111/611.

built] to the modern age. Jazz groups, a barrel organ, a pipe band, a happening, films, buskers, a pearly King and Queen, discotheques, mirror men, a whelks stall, and a cockney supper will be mixed into a cocktail designed to make its mark on the London scene that night.<sup>181</sup>

This event thus combined more traditional cultural icons- such as the pearly King and Queen- with a ‘happening’- a spontaneous, non-linear activity which represented a counter-cultural rejection of formalist convention. The Ball’s utilisation of a what was in essence a workaday, industrial space for a playful, multi-sensory event mirrored the fancy dress launch party of countercultural publication the *International Times* just under three years previously, a ‘Pop/Op/Costume/Masque/Fantasy-Loon/Blowout/Drag Ball’ which took place at a former locomotive Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, incorporating a multi-media performance by Pink Floyd and with Paul McCartney and Marianne Faithfull amongst the guests (Rycroft 2010).

### **7.8 “You are never likely to forget it”: the Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon**

The Great Western Railway Museum, located on Faringdon Road in Swindon, was opened by R.F. Hanks, Chairman of the Western Area Board of British Railways, on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1962. The building itself had been built between 1849 and 1852 as a “model lodging house” for craftsmen at Swindon railway works, before being converted into a Wesleyan chapel in 1869 (Rolt 1964). The last service was held at the end of September 1959, the Museum scheme was approved by the BTC- having been submitted by the Western

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<sup>181</sup> Press release from the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1969; NA AN111/611.

Region of British Railways- in December of that year, and in September 1960 the building was conveyed by its Trustees to the Swindon Corporation (Rolt 1964). The museum was initially a joint venture between the Corporation and the Borough of Swindon- which purchased the building, adapted it for its purpose (including paying for showcases and staging) and was, for the most part, responsible for its day-to-day running. The Commission provided the exhibits, arranged the displays and continued to play a role in the running of the museum through the meetings of a committee with the typewriter-straining title of 'Great Western Railway Museum Swindon Joint Management Committee'. Although the project was initially driven forward by the Western Region of British Railways, both the cost of its annual rent- which was raised by over £1000 p.a. for the first ten years (£3345 rather than £2340) after the costs of buying the building and preparing the displays were found to far exceed the original estimates- and also of preparing the five locomotives which the museum was to house for display and installing them in the museum, which cost nearly three times the original estimate (£20,500 compared to the original estimate of £7000), were transferred to the headquarters of the Commission itself, through the Department of Historic Relics.

As of 14<sup>th</sup> January 1963 (I have not seen all of the Committee meeting minutes, although some are included in the National Archives correspondence file on Swindon (AN111/616)), the Joint Management Committee was comprised of two representatives of Swindon Borough Council and four from British Railways, including John Scholes (three other

members of the Borough Council were also listed as present). The day-to-day running of the museum, however, was in the hands of the Borough Librarian and Curator H. Joliffe- according to a later memo from Scholes to Merrill the title of Curator was “insisted upon by the Borough when the agreement was drawn up during the inauguration of the museum”<sup>182</sup>. A notable member of staff in the early years of the Museum’s existence was ‘N. Cossons, B.A.’, who took up his duties as a Museums Assistant on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1962<sup>183</sup>. Neil Cossons, who was later knighted, went on, via posts at Bristol, Liverpool and Avonbridge, to become the Director of the Science Museum (1986-2000), and later the Chairman of English Heritage (2000-2007) and Pro-Provost and Chairman of the Council of the Royal College of Art (2007-2015).

The museum was, as noted above, essentially a celebration of the Great Western Railway, the organization whose first Chief Locomotive Engineer, Sir Daniel Gooch, had brought about the creation of New Swindon by choosing to locate the Railway’s locomotive works there. When New Swindon merged with the original market town of Swindon in 1900, the first Mayor upon its incorporation was George Jackson Churchward, a railwayman who as mentioned above later held the prominent Great Western Railway posts of Locomotive Superintendent (1902 -1915) and Chief Mechanical Engineer (1915-1922). The Mayor at the time of the museum’s opening, Councillor A.E. Cockram, was a railwayman, and suggested that every other Mayor, from Churchward forwards, had also been a railwayman (*Wiltshire Gazette and Herald* June 28<sup>th</sup> 1962).

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<sup>182</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> September 1965; NA AN111/616.

<sup>183</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Great Western Railway Museum Management Committee, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1963; NA AN 111/616.

As Divall and Scott (2001:17) noted:

The Great Western Railway Museum was... to all intents and purposes a company museum, celebrating achievements of an organization that had legally disappeared in 1948 but lived on in the traditions and operating practices of the Western Region of British Railways. These were important for the region's sense of identity; the Swindon of the 1960s was still largely a creation of the GWR.

As mentioned above, the museum was comprised of three main rooms, each named after a famous engineer or manager of the GWR: the Brunel Room, named after Sir Isambard Kingdom Brunel (its first Chief Engineer, 1833-1859); the Gooch Gallery, named after Sir Daniel Gooch (Locomotive Superintendent (1837-1864, Chairman 1865-1899), and the Churchward Gallery, named after George Jackson Churchward. The corridors and stairs between the Churchward Gallery and the Gooch Gallery contained printed material such as prints, photographs, maps, timetables, posters, cartoons and notices (Rolt 1964.).

Of the Museum's three principal rooms, the Churchward Gallery was the largest, containing five locomotives: a replica of the 1837, broad gauge<sup>184</sup>, *North Star* locomotive (the original locomotive had been scrapped in 1906 but a replica, using some salvaged original parts, had been constructed for the 1925 cavalcade of locomotives to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the

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<sup>184</sup> The Great Western Railway was originally built, on Brunel's instructions, to a larger, or broad gauge, with a 7 foot ¼ inch gap between the rails rather than the four foot eight-and-a-half inch gauge devised by George Stephenson. Ultimately the latter was adopted as the standard gauge, for everywhere except the South West, under the 1846 Regulating the Gauge of the Railways Act, and the Broad Gauge was gradually removed, with the last broad gauge track being ripped up over the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> May 1892.

Stockton and Darlington Railway, and subsequently displayed at Swindon Works), a Dean Goods locomotive of 1837- “the only example to be seen in any museum in England... of the standard British type of goods engine” (Simmons 1970: 102); the 1903 passenger locomotive No. 3717 ‘City of Truro’ (designed by Churchward), which was the first steam locomotive to be recorded travelling at 100 miles per hour; the 1907 passenger locomotive *Lode Star* (also designed by Churchward), and the 1947 Pannier Tank locomotive No. 9400- “among the last locomotives to be built by the Great Western Railway” (Rolt 1964:19). Smaller exhibits, including models, signals, a display of carriage door handles and photographs and diagrams of rolling stock were ranged around the locomotives- according to Simmons (1970:104) these “clutter(ed) up a splendid exhibition”.

The Gooch gallery contained a range of smaller exhibits- as Simmons (1970: 105) put it, “The exhibits are of miscellaneous character; their one common feature is that they are small”. These exhibits included an oil painting of Gooch himself, locomotive models, tickets, uniform caps and badges, painted crests and seals, ceremonial wheelbarrows and fittings from Queen Victoria’s royal saloon (Rolt 1964:29). Whilst the Gooch Gallery contained a mixture of some objects which were related to Sir Daniel Gooch, and some which were not, the Brunel room contained only items relating to him- these were relics in the truest sense of the word, if we take a relic to literally mean a “material object that relates to a particular individual and/or to events and places with which that individual was associated” (Walsham 2010: 11). The room was a veritable shrine to Brunel; as Simmons (1970: 106) suggested,

“Something of the essence of his work and personality can be felt quite distinctly here, in this small room at Swindon”. The exhibits included a painting of him by his brother-in-law J.C. Horsley, photographs of him, a model of the timber Ponsanooth Viaduct on the Falmouth branch which he designed, a section of piping from the failed atmospheric system of traction which he attempted on the South Devon Railway, and, perhaps most relic-like of all, some of his working instruments, his drawing board and his own preliminary drawings, to alternate designs, of what was to become his famous Clifton suspension bridge.

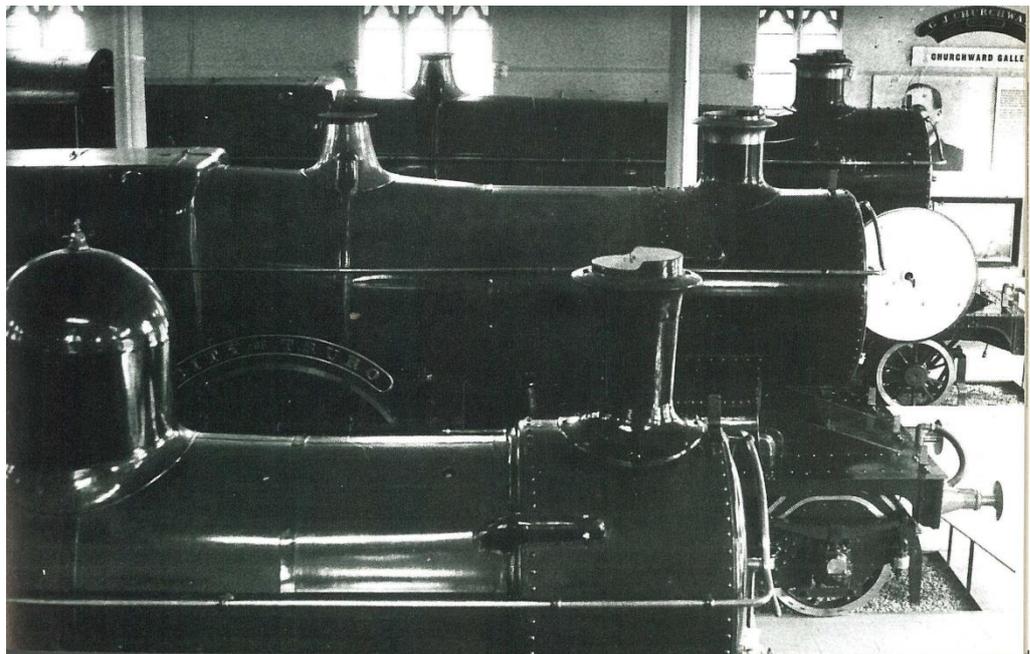


Figure 24. Photograph of the Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon, from Williams, P. (1974) *British Railway Museums*.

The exhibits in the Great Western Railway Museum, - and particularly the locomotives- were seen by Jack Simmons, writing in his *Transport Museums in Britain and Western Europe* as being, at one and the same time, three-dimensional ‘texts’ enabling one to learn about the Great Western Railway,

and also as objects of art to be admired for their sheer beauty. Without wishing to take this source out of context, it can be suggested that, representationally, the exhibits were seen by Simmons to be both affective and textual- and that this was not necessarily seen as a contradiction in terms. Simmons was effusive in his description of entering the Museum, detailing this in one of the most emotive passages which I have read during the course of my research:

The museum makes a forceful impact on you at the very moment you arrive. Turning in from Faringdon Road, you are suddenly confronted by a display of dazzling magnificence. Here are five of the Great Western's engines in the very pink of external condition, glowing in their rich green livery with its copper and brass ornamentation, disposed across the hall with a splendid amplitude. The sight hits you hard in the solar plexus. You are never likely to forget it (Simmons 1970: 102).

For Simmons, then, the Museum at Swindon- or at least the locomotives it housed- had a strong impact on him, showing the capacity of the locomotive to produce an instantaneous emotional response. Here, the locomotives are displaying what Jamie Lorimer has described as 'non-human charisma'- which is "defined as the distinguishing properties of a non-human entity or process that determine its perception by humans and its subsequent evaluation" (Lorimer 2007: 915). Here, the distinguishing properties are, simply, the visual beauty of the engines on display, the juxtaposition of colours and component parts.

Such was the impact of this display on Simmons that he actually wrote about it on two other occasions in his book, in the introduction and the conclusion. Simmons expects this personal response, this personal enthusiasm, to be replicated in others who are visiting the museum. In using the third person tense- 'you'- he suggests that his response to the exhibits is transferrable to all, which perhaps belies a typical enthusiastic trait of assuming that others are as enthusiastic about your topic of interest as you are. In the introduction, he suggests that most exhibits in railway museums "have, or can be given, a visual interest in their own right" and suggests that anyone who doubts this "should try walking unprepared into the Museum at Swindon; the effect made by the splendid machines in the entrance hall, displayed in an ample space, is overpowering)" (Simmons 1970:21). Similarly, in the conclusion he writes: "Many people must return in their minds over and over again, as I do, to the grandeur of the great hall at Swindon" (Simmons 1970:282).

Simmons seemingly saw no contradiction between his more affective response to the Museum and one in which history can be 'read off' from the objects themselves; as he writes about the Great Western Railway:

You can read MacDermot's magisterial 'History of the Great Western Railway', you can go behind the book to the company's archives, to newspapers and pamphlets and timetables; you can look at the railway itself as it stands today, a hundred years and more after it was built. But nothing will give you the same sense of actuality, of being in the presence of the thing itself, as you get from the first moment of your encounter with it in the

Museum at Swindon. For a railway, after all, is not an abstraction. It is an economic device that expresses itself in eminently tangible terms (Simmons 1970:281).

For Simmons, the locomotives and other exhibits acted as a kind of text by which the essence of the Great Western Railway could be ‘read off’: in his guide book to the Museum, Rolt (1964: 3) makes a similar argument, suggesting that the Museum represented “the history of the GWR in concrete form”. As was mentioned above, the locomotives at Clapham were seen in similar terms, being restored into their original state in order that those who were knowledgeable in the field of transport history could garner an accurate portrayal of the past- and, more specifically, of a particular designer and the company for which they worked. However, Simmons perhaps uniquely combined this portrayal of the Museum exhibits as textual objects with what might be described as more affectual, emotive description.

### **7.9 Progress? The Great Western Railway Museum as a space of post-industrial protest and melancholia**

The *Wiltshire Gazette and Herald* reported the Museum’s opening (June 28<sup>th</sup> 1962), with the headline ‘Perpetuating memory of Swindon engineers and craftsman’. R.F. Hanks is quoted as saying that the museum will provide:

An opportunity for those the world over... to see something of the past glories of the ‘Great Western’ and to appreciate, by contrast, the magnitude of the tasks which face so many in streamlining our system so that it may play the proper role in a new age in which transport facilities have been so

drastically changed by the advent of the mechanical road vehicle and the airplane.

Hanks' words- and particularly his reference to the 'proper role' of the railway- foreshadow those of the following year's Beeching report, in which it is suggested that railways are, and perhaps always were, ill-suited to the conveyance of particular types of traffic- namely services which conveyed small numbers of passengers or a small amount of freight over a short distance (a state of affairs which, it is implied in the report, was effectively covered up by their monopoly over land transport in the nineteenth century). It was this perception which led Beeching to propose methods of "eliminating... those services which, by their very nature, railways are ill-suited to provide"- i.e. branch line services- and, on the other hand, "enabling them (the railways) to provide as much of the total transport of the country as they can provide well"- namely point-to-point, fast moving flows of both passengers and bulk freight (BRB 1963:2). For Hanks, the contrast between the 'past glories' of the Great Western and the implied parlous state of the present network- and the changes in technology which had occurred between the 'glory days' of the Great Western and the present- enabled museum visitors to appreciate the need to streamline the system- a process which, as the Beeching report was later to euphemistically suggest, would "give rise to many difficulties affecting railway staff, the travelling public; and industry" (BRB 1963: 3). Hanks' remarks were perhaps redolent of an era in which, as Sandbrook (2006) has suggested, expert judgements informed government

policies such as the abolition of capital punishment, often in the face of public opinion.

Hanks was also perhaps aware at this stage of the proposed drastic cuts to the workforce at Swindon, which was already in decline- the depot stopped constructing new locomotives after 1965, and the number of people employed at the works dropped from 5000 in 1960 to 2,200 in 1973, having stood at some 14,000 in 1920 (Swindonweb, online). He suggested that:

We remember today, with particular affection and admiration, all those generations of Swindon engineers and craftsmen who, since the days of Brunel, have built up a wonderful tradition and have virtually kept the trains moving through all these years. Many of the exhibits in the museum will perpetuate their memory.

Just over six months later, on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1962, more than two thousand railwaymen did pay tribute, in the way Hanks had envisaged, to their predecessors at Swindon Works- yet in this case their actions were part of a nationwide strike protesting against railway redundancy. As the *Wiltshire Gazette and Herald* (October 4<sup>th</sup> 1962) reported, the railwaymen marched across the town bearing banners with titles such as 'Beeching must go'; 'Marples must go'; 'Modernisation not annihilation'; 'We demand all rail work for BR Workshops' and 'No dole queue for Swindon'. Significantly, the march paused outside the railway museum, where a two-minute silence was observed:

After marching five deep along Faringdon Road, Bridge Street and Regent Street, the procession circled the Town Hall and passed down Commercial Road before coming to a halt outside the Railway Museum.

There a two-minute silence was observed, with railwaymen packing the broad pavement in front of the museum.

Whilst the broad pavement outside of the Museum provided a convenient place for the marchers to gather, the symbolic nature of the site, with its five locomotives built at Swindon- displayed in the “very pink of external condition” (Simmons 1970: 102) - must, one would assume, have provided a symbolic backdrop for the protest, as a reminder of Swindon Works’ heyday and past productivity. In acting as a site of collective memory, a *lieux de memoire* at which visitors could recall the Great Western Railway and- perhaps more importantly- those who had worked for it, the Great Western Railway Museum implied a schism between the past and the present which was different from the concept of evolutionary progress which was portrayed in relation to other museums or historic objects. For example, when opening the extension to the Glasgow Museum of Transport, housing six historic locomotives, on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1967, W.G. Thorpe, Chairman of the Scottish Railways Board, looked at the “past in the context of the future”, arguing that “the age of steam may over but there will always be other ages”<sup>185</sup>. This perhaps partially reflected the precise historical moment at which the Museum was opened, and the position of Swindon Works in relation to this.

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<sup>185</sup> Draft of speech to be given at the opening of the extension to the Glasgow Museum of Transport, on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 1967, by W.G. Thorpe, Chairman of the Scottish Railways Board; NRS BR/RSR/5/358.

Just five years previously, *North Star*, then housed at Swindon Works, had been enlisted into a narrative of evolutionary development, in Terence Cuneo's painting *Progress* (figure 25) originally produced for a Unilever magazine but also reproduced as a poster and put on general display. Here the replica locomotive, shining in the background of Cuneo's image and illuminated by a convenient ray of sunlight, acts as the connection between the illustrious history of the Great Western Railway and the continuing industriousness of the works, repairing steam locomotives and constructing brand-new Warship Class diesel locomotives.

Unfortunately, and with the benefit of hindsight, the poster, when one analyses it in detail, actually serves to illustrate the continuing, sometimes misfiring, bullishness of the Western Region and its predecessors- a factor in Swindon's ultimate demise- the decline of British industry, and the profligacy which led in part to the failure of the modernisation plan. The locomotives being constructed in the foreground of the picture were based on the German V200 type- thus the engine being craned into the machine on the right was actually a German Maybach design built under licence in the UK. The haphazard means by which the modernization plan was implemented meant that many types of locomotive were ordered, and not all were successful or similar to one another. The diesel types initially ordered by the Western Region, including those of the Warship Class being built here, had a hydraulic transmission, unlike the majority of those ordered by the other five regions, which had an electric transmission system. There were thus certain parallels with the *North Star* locomotive, which was built to the Great

Western Railway's broader gauge and therefore incompatible with most other parts of the network. Their hydraulic transmission meant that the engines were non-standard- whilst it also proved to be impractical to upgrade this particular type of locomotive with newer equipment such as Electric Train Heating- and they were withdrawn after a much shorter working life than would have originally been intended. Thus the machines being built in the image were returned to Swindon for dismantling after only 10-15 years of service (one of the engines in the class was actually withdrawn just over a week *before* the last steam-hauled passenger service on British Railways).

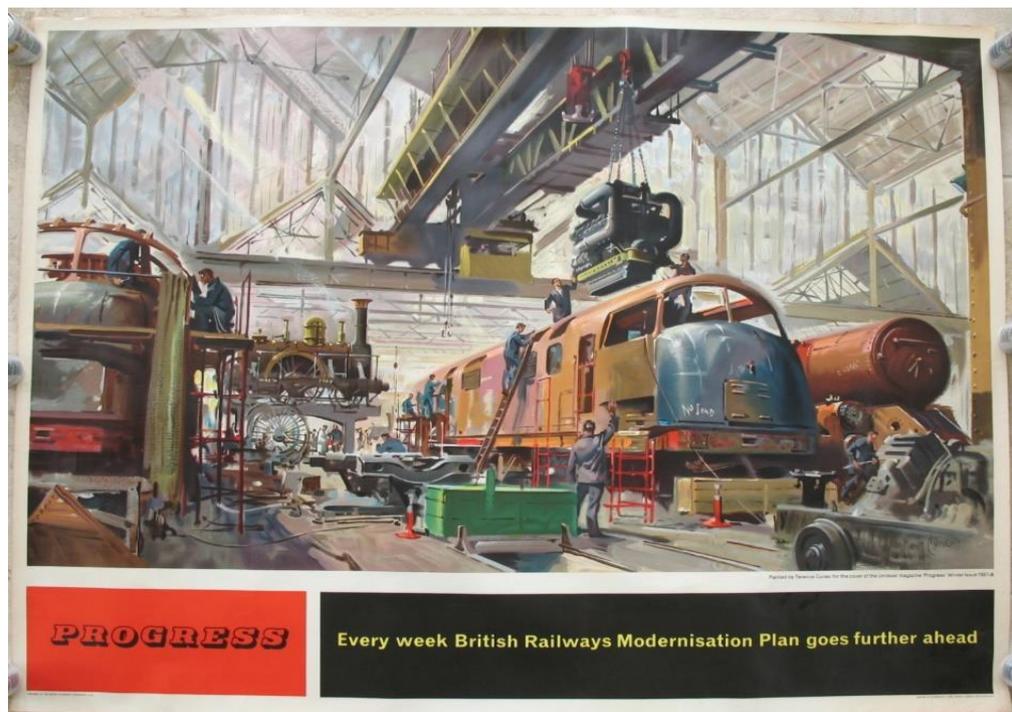


Figure 25. *Progress*, British Railways poster using Terence Cuneo's artwork (*North Star* is depicted in the background of the image).

By the time that the Great Western Railway Museum was opened, the Modernisation Plan was widely acknowledged to be a failure, and the BTC itself was slated for abolition under the terms of the 1962 Transport Act,

which was then passing through Parliament (the Act received Royal Assent on 1<sup>st</sup> August). Thus *North Star* and the other four locomotives in the museum were enlisted in a melancholic conception of history which was about remembering and honouring an implicitly ‘lost’ past, rather than the evolutionary progress from the past to the present and future engineering and enterprise. During the 1960s, Swindon Works itself underwent the transition from being a manufacturer of new locomotives and rolling stock to being a site at which outmoded rolling stock was dismantled, leading to its inexorable decline as it failed to win orders for new work in a competitive bidding process against other British Rail facilities. Simmons’ (1970) description of the museum also had an elegiac tone. He writes (1970: 107, italics added): “By the development of this excellent museum, in partnership with the nationalized transport industry, the borough has worthily *commemorated* what gives distinction to its *past history*”.

#### **7.10. “There is no tourist attraction”<sup>186</sup>: Swindon’s financial and spatial struggles**

The Great Western Railway Museum was not a particularly successful venture in quantitative terms; notwithstanding the unexpectedly high cost of establishing the museum, mentioned above, it made a loss and was, from the outset, too small and in need of an expansion which never occurred. Visitor numbers decreased over time, leading to admission receipts which were considerably lower than anticipated, and losses which were considerably

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<sup>186</sup> Quote from Letter from Scholes to Merrill, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1966: “The general feeling is that an increase [in admission charges] will serve no useful purpose at Swindon because, unlike York and Clapham, there is no tourist attraction” (AN111/616).

higher. In the period between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1962, 47,155 people visited the Museum<sup>187</sup>, but only 43,807 people visited the museum in 1963/4, and this fell to 36,216 in 1964/5<sup>188</sup>. The Curator (Joliffe) suggested that this was “a little disappointing”, though he noted that “it is heartening to report that during recent months there has become apparent some signs of a levelling off”. Nevertheless, the decline in visitor numbers caused the Museum to generate a poor financial return:

Admission etc. receipts are perhaps lower than might have been expected. In the joint memorandum these were anticipated at £4,500. The actual receipts as reported for the first 8 periods [*this probably refers to the first eight months, as the eighth month of 1963 had not finished*] of 1963 are in round figures £990 for admission and £550 gross receipts, i.e. without any deductions for costs of stock, for sale of publications etc.<sup>189</sup>

In a response which was typical of both the BRB's economic bloody-mindedness, and its lack of interest in running museums, the Board- more specifically Eric Merrill, the Controller of Public Relations and Publicity- responded to the low visitor numbers, and thus the disappointing receipts, by suggesting an increase to the Museum's admission charges and also a moratorium on economically non-remunerative Sunday opening, both of which were opposed by Scholes. These proposed changes appear to have caused friction between the Board's representatives and the Swindon Corporation, which resisted them both. An insubordinate Scholes, who

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<sup>187</sup> Minutes of the Great Western Railway Museum Swindon Joint Management Committee, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1963; NA AN111/616.

<sup>188</sup> Report of the Curator 1964-1965; AN111/616.

<sup>189</sup> Letter written on behalf of Director of Accounts and Statistics to Public Relations Adviser, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1963; NA AN111/616.

argued against increasing admission charges on the grounds that there had already been complaints that they were too expensive and that publicity would have to be altered, which would look “stupid and very inefficient”, managed to postpone this action from January to June 1966, when the effect of raising these charges in York- which had already been agreed- would become clear<sup>190</sup>. However, Merrill managed to force through a discussion on raising the charges at the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> August 1966, suggesting that increasing the charges at York “did not affect the attendance and, in fact, slightly increased the revenue”, thus “if the attendance at Swindon remains the same with increased admission charges then the revenue must go up”<sup>191</sup>. It was agreed to increase the admission charges from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1967, although this was later rejected by Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee of the Borough Council, citing the “Present Prices and Incomes Policy” and “advice given in circulars by the appropriate government department”, which had imposed a ban on increasing both wages and prices<sup>192</sup>. However, the admission charge was ultimately raised from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1968 after the ban was lifted<sup>193</sup>. The issue of Sunday opening was raised by Merrill in May 1967, after the Museum’s opening on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May had raised a paltry £12 (i.e.

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<sup>190</sup> Letter, ‘Swindon Museum’, Scholes to Merrill, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966 NA AN111/616.

<sup>191</sup> Letter: ‘Swindon Museum: Admission Charges’, Merrill to Scholes, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1966 NA AN111/616.

<sup>192</sup> Extract from Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Management Committee, Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1966 NA AN111/616.

<sup>193</sup> Memo, ‘The Great Western Railway Museum, Swindon: Increase in Admission Charges’, Scholes to Merrill, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1967; NA AN111/616.

not enough to cover expenditure), however, it was found that no loss was incurred and the Museum remained open on Sundays<sup>194</sup>.

In the planning of what was to become the 1968 Transport Act, the Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records, which reported back to the Joint Steering group whilst forming the Transport Bill, found that the Museum had a deficit of £7,200 in 1965 and £6,400 in 1966, although this reduction in the deficit was indicative of lower charges for the premises itself (Rates, Rent and Administration charges)- which were reduced by £1,300- rather than an increase in visitor numbers, since receipts actually decreased by £700<sup>195</sup>. The Museum appears to have been in something of a catch-22, since it was small and in need of expansion in order to house more exhibits and attract more visitors, yet its low attendance figures dissuaded British Railways, in particular, from investing in such a scheme- as Eric Merrill suggested on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1965, “It is no use anyone thinking of involvement in capital expenditure without very much more concrete evidence than appears to be forthcoming of a reasonable return for it”<sup>196</sup>. As such, what Cossons (who had moved on by then to become the Curator of Technology at Bristol City Council), writing in 1968 (p.88), describes as the Curator’s “plea” for expansion in “the last three annual reports” fell on deaf ears. Yet expansion was needed in order to house the locomotives *Evening Star* and *King George V*- the latter of which “languished in the back of the stock shed” at Swindon, as Nock (1972: 99) suggested, before being, somewhat incongruously, rescued by the cider

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<sup>194</sup> ‘Spring Holiday 1967’, memorandum from Merrill to Scholes, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1967; NA AN111/616.

<sup>195</sup> Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records: Report to the Joint Steering Group 19<sup>th</sup> May 1967; NA AN111/18.

<sup>196</sup> Memorandum, Merrill to N.T.Lovenbury and .Scholes, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1965; NA AN111/616.

manufacturer H.P. Bulmer, who paid for the engine to be returned to steam and initially used it on their own private track at Hereford before it was allowed out onto the main line once again in 1971, as British Railways lifted its steam ban.

Following the passing of the 1968 Transport Act, the BRB was keen to exit its lease agreement with Swindon Corporation in relation to the Museum. There was some initial reluctance on the part of the Corporation to take on responsibility for the Museum themselves- they sought government assistance in running the museum (or potentially in establishing a new site), initially from the Ministry of Transport before being referred to the Department of Education and Science. Section 144, section 1a of the 1968 Act does indeed state that the Board can transfer to the Secretary of State for Education and Science “any premises of the Board in which any significant collection of... relics and records is housed”- although the White Paper had suggested that the Corporation should take it over. In any case, the Department of Education and Science suggested that it was not possible to finance a new purpose-built museum- thus the conversion of a redundant engine shed in York (i.e. what was to become the NRM) was the only viable solution, and that, furthermore, since the Museum was “a regional amenity of very high quality... it did not seem unreasonable to suppose that the Corporation might be prepared to take it over”<sup>197</sup>.

Thus, after some protracted negotiations which centred on the amount which the BRB would have to pay to be released from its agreement with the

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<sup>197</sup> Letter, Miss M.D. Bishop (Department of Education and Science) to D. Murray John, Swindon Town Clerk, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1968; NA AN111/616.

Corporation, and also the future ownership of the relics, the Museum passed into the sole administration of Swindon Borough Council. However, the material in the collection became part of the National Collection, since the bulk of it was, as the then Science Museum Director Sir David Follett suggested on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1968; “of such significance in the overall picture of the development of the national railway system that practically all of it falls in the highest class of material worthy of preservation in a national museum”. Follett, on the recommendation of Colonel Simmons, the Science Museum’s Land Transport Curator, excluded the tank engine No. 9400 from this analysis, yet this too ultimately became part of the National Collection. The Museum remained open, with some alteration in the nature of the exhibits, until 1999, being replaced by STEAM-The Museum of the Great Western Railway, which opened in June 2001 and is located in a building which had formerly been part the site of Swindon Works itself (the works having closed in 1986) (Hoadley 2001). The Grade II listed building in which the Great Western Railway Museum was housed is now a youth centre known as The Platform, although it does contain a former First Great Western Mark II railway carriage as a nod to its past (*Swindon Advertiser* 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010).

### **7.11. “Modesty clings to it still”: The Railway Museum, York**

The Railway Museum in York was run down during the 1960s, and its future appeared uncertain. As Simmons (1981:2) was later to suggest, the Museum- which consisted of two buildings housing Small and Large exhibits- was “full to overflowing” by the time that the last catalogue of the collection was published in 1956, making further additions or expansion impossible.

Indeed, the only major alteration in this period was the closure of the small exhibits section in 1966. Whilst correspondence about the museum between Eric Merrill, John Scholes and representatives of the North Eastern Region and/or the Museum (NA AN111/615) suggests that this amalgamation was only carried out once the large exhibits section had been extended, through the conversion of a Road Motor store which had previously occupied space within the building, Simmons (1970: 158) nevertheless suggested that the museum had been “reduced in size” and that, as such, “some of what was formerly shown to the public is now no longer on display”. He described this as “thoroughly deplorable, a grave disservice to one of the major educational museums in the North of England” (Simmons 1970: 158).

The future of the Railway Museum in York appeared to hang in the balance between 1965 and 1968, and the correspondence files about the Museum at the National Archives (AN111/14; AN111/615), which also includes some clippings from local newspapers, depicts a rapidly changing situation. Disquiet about the possible closure of part- and perhaps ultimately all- of the Museum from November 1965 to January 1966 was superseded, in around March of that year, by the possibility that the Museum might be taken over by York City Council- or that a joint agreement might be entered into between the Council and the Board, in a similar manner to the administration of the museum at Swindon (*Yorkshire Evening Press* 25<sup>th</sup> October 1967<sup>198</sup>) - before the full scale of the plans for what was to become the NRM, at York’s former motive power depot, became clear. Indeed, prior to the production of the

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<sup>198</sup> Press clipping in NA AN111/14.

White Paper in connection with what was to become the 1968 Transport Act, the Committee which operated the 1965 Historical Relics Scheme (which actually consisted only of Scholes, Merrill and Frank Wilkins, Chief Public Relations Officer of the London Transport Board) recommended the closure of the York Museum, in view of its poor state of physical repair, and the redistribution of exhibits either to Clapham or Swindon or other museums outside of the BRB's remit (AN111/16).

Correspondence file AN111/14, at the National Archives, contains several letters from the general public, dating from between November 1965 and January 1966, protesting about the proposed closure of the Small Exhibits section of the York Railway Museum, and the potential dispersal of its exhibits to the museum at Clapham or their disposal through sale- although no decision had been made at this point. The initial peak of letters, in late November and early December of 1965, was prompted by a leak of information by Museum Curator Bob Hunter in his contribution, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1965, to the 'York I want' column in the *Yorkshire Evening Press*, infuriating Merrill who had to respond to the resultant correspondence- on a copy of a letter he had sent in reply (3<sup>rd</sup> December 1965), he writes: "The deplorable leakage of news about our exploratory and confidential discussions has wasted days of my time. There have been at least 20 letters like this"<sup>199</sup>. A later slew of letters, in January 1966, appear to have been prompted by newspaper coverage of the potential closure in the *Northern Echo* and *Yorkshire Post* on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> January.

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<sup>199</sup> Amended copy of letter sent by Merrill to W.Huby (copy sent to Scholes and Hunter), 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1965.

Concerns about the future of the Railway Museum in York were often expressed within a regional context- the museum and its contents being portrayed as a regional asset. Oliver D. Hutchinson of 12 Hilbra Avenue, Haxby wrote a letter to the *Yorkshire Evening Press* which was published on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1965, having earlier sent a similar letter to Eric Merrill (dated 20<sup>th</sup> November); he was presumably dissatisfied with the response to this (which was not copied into the correspondence file). Having learned about plans to close the Museum, and indeed that “some of the unique and interesting exhibits may have already been dispersed or disposed of”, he asks if the museum is to be lost altogether “because of complacency and lack of interest”. More pertinently, however, he suggests that it would be “of little satisfaction” if the exhibits at York were to go to the Clapham Museum, since “The North was the cradle of the railways”; thus “the material is the real and living history of the North and as such it should be *preserved in the North*” (italics in original). Hutchinson added, that, elsewhere, the collection would “become merely a collection of antiques and junk”. For Hutchinson, the specificity of place was important in relation to the Museum- the exhibits only *made sense*, in effect, if they were displayed in a Northern context, and viewed by residents of the area. Similarly, D.J Worrall (2<sup>nd</sup> December 1965) argued that the collection “belongs in a very large measure, to the north of the country, where its true home is”, whilst G.N.C Carter (30<sup>th</sup> November 1965) suggested that, if the exhibits were to be moved to Clapham, “this would be “of little use to railway enthusiasts in the north”. This correlates with Rolt’s (1958) guide book to the museum: indeed Rolt suggested that those exhibits which are not representative of the North East, or more

specifically British Railways' North Eastern Region, would be transferred "to more appropriate locations... and the York Museum will then be exclusively devoted to relics of regional significance"- though no transfers of this kind took place.

A leader in the *Northern Echo* of January 6<sup>th</sup> 1966 similarly portrayed the exhibits at York as examples of the North East's industrial past. The author comments that "too much of the North-East's industrial history has gone already. If any more goes she may soon forget she had industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at all"<sup>200</sup>. They suggest that Durham's folk museum is "threatened by some who apparently would like to pretend this was all a green and pleasant land in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" and warn that a proposed new folk museum at Aykley Heads in Durham (which did not come to fruition) "must not falsely represent the North-East as a rural paradise". Anticipating, to some extent, the joint establishment of the North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish, in County Durham, by Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear County Councils in 1970 (though the Beamish scheme had first been put forward in 1958), the editorial proposes that the authorities of the North East should 'club together' to form an industrial museum, and preserve as much equipment as they can in the meantime. An anonymous British Railways spokesman responded to Hutchinson's letter by stating that no decision had been taken in regard to closing any of its transport museums, although some action had to be taken to stem the £65,000 losses which were being suffered every year. The correspondence at the National Archives

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<sup>200</sup> 'The Northern Echo' editorial, Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup> 1966; press clipping in file NA AN111/615.

shows that whilst, behind the scenes, Merrill and G.S. Knox- the Public Relations and Publicity Officer based at York- had been involved in some preliminary discussions with different parties who were connected to the proposed industrial museum, the uncertainty as to what the future of the York Museum- and indeed, as to what the future of any of the museums- might be led to this process effectively being postponed at this stage until a firm decision had been made.

Although it was viewed as an amenity of regional importance, the Museum was also seen to have a value at both a larger and smaller scale. An article written by David Campbell in *The Northern Echo* on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1966 emphasized both the local economic value of the Museum- “the city of York will feel the draught if the museum shuts” but also its wider cultural value. After speaking to some visitors to the museum- and to the Curator Bob Hunter- and describing some of its exhibits, Campbell asks: “Does British Railways want to disown its past?” He argues that “The age of steam may have passed as a practical proposition, but it must be preserved in some safe place”<sup>201</sup>.

The uncertainty surrounding the Museum at this time, and the negative publicity this generated, was not helped by the poor relations between Curator Bob Hunter and his superiors. Hunter, who had taken over the running of the museum in 1959, having previously served with the Royal Signals at Catterick, seems to have been regarded as something of a liability by Scholes and Merrill. It was seemingly his insubordinate nature- refusing to, or

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<sup>201</sup> Press clipping; NA AN111/615.

only reluctantly, following instructions and leaking supposedly confidential information to the press and enthusiasts- which led Merrill to arrange to talk to the General Manager of the North Eastern Region, during a visit to the Museum and the city on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1965, about his future. He considered that Hunter should “very soon have a change of occupation”<sup>202</sup>. Hunter’s sacking or transfer does not seem to have happened at this stage, although Merrill does begin to send ‘evidence’ in the form of newspaper clippings and communications which he deemed to be unacceptable behaviour to a Mr Geiger, presumably as a means to ultimately condemn Hunter’s curatorship- in both senses of the word. In November of 1965, Hunter conducted his afore-mentioned interview in the *Yorkshire Evening Press* in which he disclosed the supposedly secret news that the museum was to close. G.S. Knox spoke to Hunter personally about this, pointing out that “shooting his mouth off about some hypothetical future horror does none of us any good”- but added in his memo that he feared that Hunter was “uncontrollable”<sup>203</sup>. Pertinently, Knox suggests that his team should be given “official notification of any decision to change things before Mr. Hunter himself hears, so that I can inform the press properly”. Scholes was appalled at suggestions that the York Museum would be closed, and wanted to begin discussions with York City Council as soon as possible, yet wanted Hunter to be “removed out of the way, anywhere”, whilst these discussions were started<sup>204</sup>- to which Merrill responded, in rather poor taste, that “The “removal” you suggest is not as

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<sup>202</sup> Memo, Merrill to A.Dean, General Manager of British Railways’ North Eastern Region, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1965; NA AN 111/14.

<sup>203</sup> Memorandum, Knox to Merrill, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1965; NA AN111/14.

<sup>204</sup> Memorandum, Scholes to Merrill, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965; NA AN111/14.

simple as that unless you have ‘burial in a moorland grave’ in mind”<sup>205</sup>. Such an approach led to further tension between Hunter and his superiors, however- in a memo from Hunter to Scholes, sent on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1966, Hunter suggested that he is “extremely embarrassed” that he had to tell “a well known York figure” that he did not know that news of the Museum’s potential takeover by the City of York Council would be carried in the *York Evening Press* that evening, suggesting that this was “another bad example of the lack of internal communication”, which showed a lack of courtesy to himself and his staff<sup>206</sup>. Hunter perhaps had a point, yet in passing this memo on to Merrill, Scholes comments that “Hunter is making trouble at York for us all, and the sooner he is stopped the better”<sup>207</sup>.

In fact, the written statistics available within the correspondence files about the Museum at York show that this location, longer established than its counterparts at Swindon and Clapham- attracted more visitors than these two sites combined in 1964 and 1965, and actually made a small surplus in each of these years. A later report, by the Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records, in 1967, found that this surplus increased further in 1966 (though it quotes a different figure for the 1965 surplus), which can perhaps be partially attributed to the increase in admission fees in 1966, by six pence for adults (from 1/s to 1/6) and three pence (from six pence to nine pence) for children.

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<sup>205</sup> Memorandum, Merrill to Scholes, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1965; NA AN111/14.

<sup>206</sup> Memorandum, Hunter to Scholes, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1966; NA AN111/615.

<sup>207</sup> Memorandum, Scholes to Merrill, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1966; NA AN111/615.

Simmons describes- and critiques- the York Railway Museum in *Transport Museums of Britain and Western Europe* arguing that the museum was, in some respects, not quite making the best out of a bad job. He wrote that the Museum was “housed and equipped less handsomely than many of the others described in this book”, and that “its premises are somewhat less than convenient for their purpose” (1970:157). He suggested that the Museum had “started in a very modest way, as the pioneer venture of the kind in this country; and modesty clings to it still” (1970:157).

Notwithstanding these limitations, Simmons deployed some fierce vitriol for the poor labelling and layout of the track and signalling exhibits at the Museum, suggesting that the ‘raw materials’ for a good quality display were being let down. Due to its scattershot nature and the lack of descriptive labels, he argued that the arrangement of railway track, which could form a “first-rate display”, in fact comprised, to all but those with expert knowledge, no more than “a collection of scrap metal of diverting variety” and thus it “might as well not be here” (1970:152). That being said, he does pay York a complement of sorts by suggesting that, in relation to its collection of track, “what is done poorly at York is not done at Clapham or Swindon at all” (1970:152). Simmons also suggested that the signalling collection “remains little more than a quaint display of assorted curiosities” due to the want of labelling and a descriptive handbook- whereas it could become, with these additions, “the best grammar we have of the evolution of railway signalling” (1970:154) - thus utilising once again the metaphor of the museum object as a text through which to understand railway history. He does note, however,

that “there is simply no room to show these tall and awkward objects satisfactorily”, and that, in its current premises, “it would be hard to improve the display very much” (1970:154). Simmons portrays a somewhat cramped, cluttered and fusty Museum with an underlying ethos which is as static as its exhibits- which is reinforced by photographs of the Museum from this era (see figure). Nevertheless, Simmons suggests that the Museum does give a uniquely rich portrayal of a sort of Darwinian, Whiggish evolution of the railway:

One thing is done supremely well at York. This Museum alone can lead the visitor back continuously, stage by stage, over the whole history of railways in Britain- beyond the passenger-carrying train and the steam locomotive to the colliery lines and wooden waggonways of Northumberland and Durham, out of which, in the eighteenth century, the modern railway began to emerge (1970:158).

Whilst Simmons is perhaps referring specifically to the Museum exhibits in this quote, in other respects York was- and still is- seen as a place which, through its position as a busy hub on the East Coast Main Line, uniquely enables visitors to its' Railway Museum- both in terms of the original Museum and the NRM- to witness the development of railways right from their beginnings to the present day. Hence this passage by Rolt (1958), writing in the Museum's guidebook in relation to locomotive No. 251, designed by Henry Ivatt (Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Northern Railway from 1896-1911) and built in 1902:

Glance back through that doorway at the (1829-built) *Agenoria* and you will appreciate how rapidly the steam locomotive developed in the space of seventy-five years. The work of Henry Ivatt was carried forward by his successor, Sir Nigel Gresley, and ultimately resulted in the great locomotives of the 'Pacific' type which you see today hauling East Coast expresses. So it is that York, like no other place in the world, presents the whole panorama of railway history from its first crude, tentative beginnings to the present day.

More recently, the NRM sought to utilise its position next to the Main Line to enliven its display; the *Works* extension, which opened in 1999, incorporates a viewing balcony onto the tracks, with loudspeaker announcements piped in from the station, a screen showing video from a nearby junction and copies of York Signalling Centre's control monitor, and York Station's departure board, on display (Zeilinger 2001; *pers obs.*).

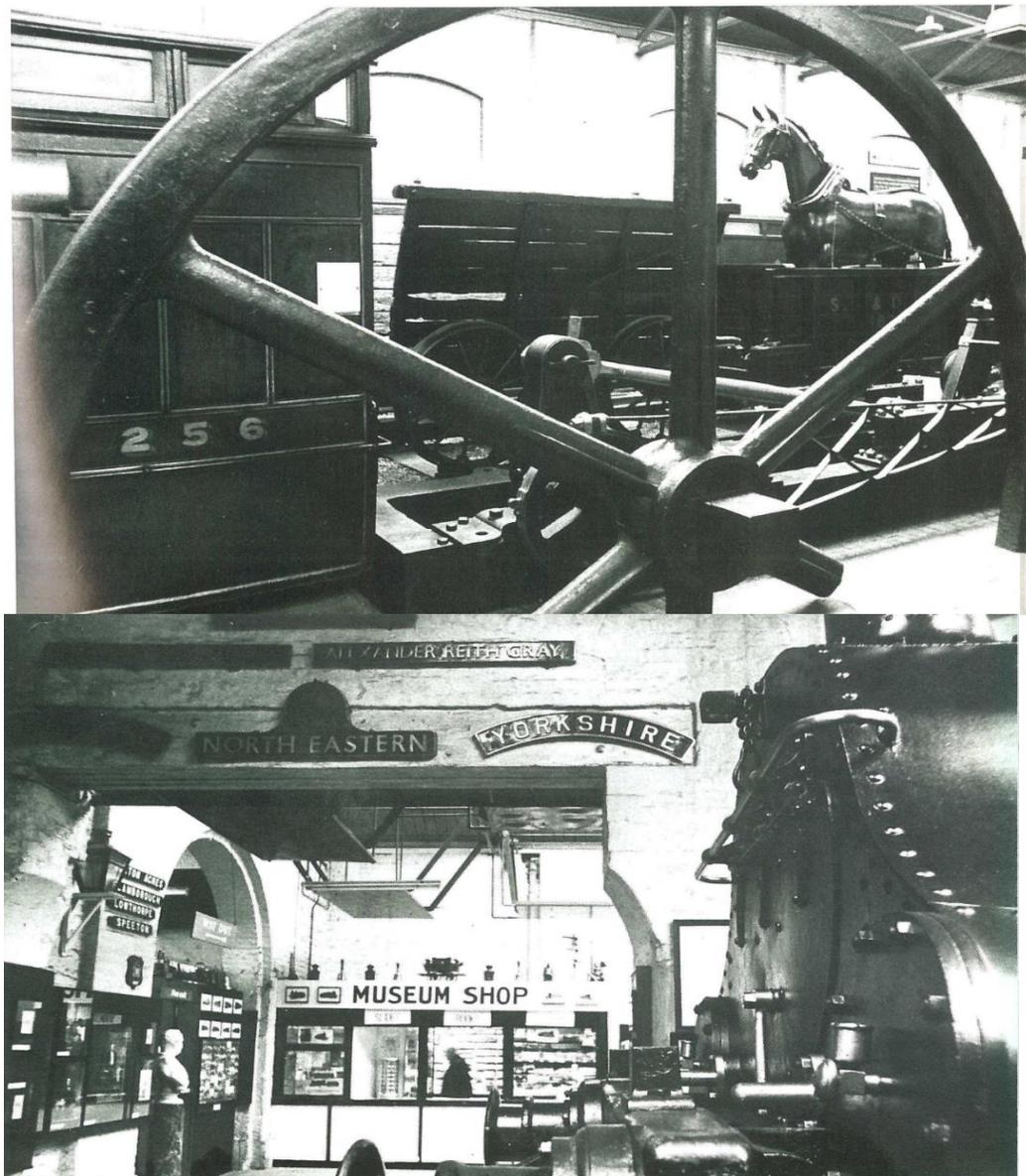


Figure 26. Photographs of York Railway Museum from Peter Williams' *British Railway Museums*.

### 7.12. The 1960s: uncertain times for Britain's Railway Museums

As was detailed in the conclusion to Simmons' *Transport Museums in Britain and Western Europe*, the 1960s and early 1970s- particularly the years between the advent of the BRB in 1963 and the final decision, in May 1971, that a new Museum was going to be built at York (although even after this time there were some concerns in relation to funding)- were an uncertain,

and to some extent unconventional, period for Britain's major transport museums, a time of disorganisation and uncertainty during which their owner and guardian was prepared to invest very little on their upkeep, let alone their renewal or expansion, and was actively- and publicly- attempting to rid itself of the financial responsibility of running them. This uncertainty was caused firstly by the BRB's discussions with the Treasury and the Ministry of Transport with a view to their taking on financial responsibility for them. Later, following the passage of the 1968 Transport Act, a new set of uncertainties arose through the opposition to the plans to transfer the railway collections to York- and the proposal of alternative museums at Crystal Palace Low Level Station and St Pancras Station (and later at Peterborough). This unclear situation was described by Simmons as "deeply discouraging to the Curator of Historical Relics and his staff"; he suggests that "the uncertainties... have denied their (the Museum's) staff the opportunity to plan for their improvement and orderly growth" (1970:286).

Whilst British Railways was perhaps not adverse to the preservation of such items *per se*. it did not want to be involved in running the museums in which they were housed. Simmons (1970: 283) quotes a BRB official who commented that it was "our duty not to waste money on things like this which are not in the public interest", and notes that the BRB had tried to offload the financial responsibility for its Museums firstly to the Treasury, before holding long discussions with the Ministry of Transport with no clear-cut result. Whilst the government gave BRB responsibility for preserving relics through the British Transport Historical Relics Scheme of 1963, which

came into force in July 1965, and the Museums continued to be open, Simmons suggests that this was merely an interlude, since the BRB had wide powers to dispose of items through gift, loan or sale and didn't have to display all, or any, of its relics to the public. An article in *The Guardian* on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1964 suggested that railway enthusiasts feared the scheme was merely "a euphemism for the dispersal, sale, or scrapping of large parts of the collections".

As was mentioned above, the Historical Relics Committee- which was responsible for operating the Historical Relics Scheme, and consisted of Merrill, Wilkins and Scholes- recommended the closure of the York Railway Museum in a draft report of 1966 (ANI 11/16), but this plan appears to have been overtaken by the preparations for what was to become the 1968 Transport Act. A Joint Team on Museums (later called the Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records), began meeting at this time. The Team was chaired initially by J.A. Barber, and later by S.M.A Banister, from the Ministry of Transport, whilst Mr R.A. Channing, also from the Ministry of Transport, served as Secretary. The other Team members comprised Scholes, Dr D.H. Follett who was the then Director of the Science Museum, Mr R.H. Lascelles who was Chief Secretary of the BRB, Mr A.R. Maxwell-Hyslop of the Department of Education and Science, Miss K. Whalley of H.M. Treasury, Mr A. Flaxman who was also from the Ministry of Transport and Mr R.F. Monger from the Public Record Office. This team in turn fed their proposals to the Joint Steering Group, producing an interim report in October 1966 – after six meetings had taken place- and their full report in April 1967, after a further

four meetings. The Team's recommendations were approved by the Joint Steering Group in May 1967 and, having received Ministerial authority, were included in the White Paper and thence passed into law through the 1968 Transport Act<sup>208</sup>.

With hindsight, the ten meetings of the Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records held between 1966 and 1967 can in some respects be seen as pivotal in shaping the face of British railway preservation as it would be recognised today, for it was at this time that the former York motive power depot was put forward as a site for a new museum, with the pre-existing collections at York and Clapham being closed and their collections being concentrated at this one site. However, even after the proposals passed into law the scheme was not a foregone conclusion, and the nature of the museum site- the precise form it was going to take- was still to be decided.

The choice of York- and of the Motive Power Depot in particular- for what was to become the NRM has been praised on the grounds of its location outside of the capital- the first time a national museum had been located outside of London, the large size of the site itself, and the city's railway connections as "one of three historic English cathedral cities- the others were Peterborough and Carlisle- that became important centres of the railway industry" (Simmons 1981: 4; Cossons interview 05/02/16). However, the choice of the site was governed as much by serendipity as by choice: York was just one of 20 possible sites suggested in a list prepared on 21<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Files NA AN111/10, AN111/18.

November 1966<sup>209</sup>, which also included, for example, two possible sites in the Nottingham area- Annesley Motive Power Depot and New Basford Carriage Cleaning Shed- although it quickly emerged as a front-runner, alongside a plan for a museum at Harrow-on-the-Hill which was ruled out on the grounds of cost (London Transport had placed a high value on the land), even before the scheme had been properly planned- as BRB Secretary J.H. Lascelles suggested on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1966: “It was... felt necessary to go ahead with a scheme at Harrow-on-the-Hill even if the result was to demonstrate conclusively that it could only be carried out if more funds became available from some source or other.”<sup>210</sup>

The Treasury’s rule that the new site had to be financed solely (in terms of the costs of acquisition and development) by the proceeds of the sale of Clapham seems to have ruled out any site in London, as a letter from Lascelles to Wilkins (who wanted to look into the possibility of converting St Pancras into a museum), written some time later, pointed out: “the Treasury’s embargo ruled out any site within the London area and it was indeed only because of this that we were forced to look further afield; and York was chosen as the best available place”<sup>211</sup>.

This imperative- along with criticism of the process by which York, rather than Harrow-on-the-Hill, was selected, by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in a 1970 report- perhaps casts some doubt on the assertion which was subsequently made, which was that a site outside of

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<sup>209</sup> Joint Team on Museums and Historical Records- Re-siting of museums sites for consideration, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1966; NA AN111/10.

<sup>210</sup> Letter, R.H. Lascelles to Chief Officer Special Duties, Eric Merrill and Dr. F.F.C.Curtis, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1966; NA AN111/10.

<sup>211</sup> Letter, Lascelles to Wilkins, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1967; AN111/18.

London had been deliberately chosen as a means of distributing the nation's cultural resources around the country, and specifically away from the capital. For example Jennie Lee, the then Minister of the Arts, suggested in a House of Commons debate on the Clapham Transport Museum in the early hours of 31st January 1968 that "Outside London there is growing resentment that when we are planning not just local museums but great national ones, so much of our most valued national furniture is concentrated in or around London"; thus "It is government policy not only to encourage regional development but to meet this mood throughout the country" (Hansard 30<sup>th</sup> January 1968 session). Yet, as Lascelles' earlier letter- and also the high cost of the Harrow site- implies, the choice of a site outside London was governed at least as much by the lack of suitable sites in the capital, particularly within the sale price of the Clapham site- as it was by any political decision to locate the new institution away from the capital.

Even after the York site had been decided upon and the Transport Act had been passed, there was vociferous opposition to the scheme by the Clapham Society and the Transport Trust, and within Parliament- including the formation of a Parliamentary Action Group led initially by Nicholas Ridley (who was later, successively, the Secretary of State for Transport, the Environment and Trade and Industry under Margaret Thatcher's Administration in the 1980s) and later George Strauss, MP for Vauxhall. This opposition led to the proposing of several alternative schemes for a Transport Museum, whilst the change of government in 1970 provided a potential turning point as the process was reviewed. The sites put forward

included Nine Elms by Lambeth Council, St Pancras- which was earmarked for closure in 1969 before being reprieved- by the Victorian Society (supported by the Duke of Edinburgh, who wanted to safeguard the building), Crystal Palace Low Level Station by the Transport Trust, and even Peterborough, by the Reverend Richard Paten, who went on to found the Railworld tourist attraction near the city (*The Guardian*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1971).

The change of government in 1970- with Ted Heath's Conservative administration taking over from Harold Wilson's Labour government, led to Lord Eccles taking on Jennie Lee's responsibilities for the Arts; in relation to the Museum he later suggested that, upon taking over this position, he had found "a very hot potato on my desk" (*The Guardian*, 12/03/1971). The change of government perhaps provided some hope for those who had opposed the scheme, as did the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Sir Edmund Compton, in 1970, who was critical of certain aspects of the process, though not to the extent that the decision itself was invalidated. Lord Eccles gave the Parliamentary Action Group and its supporters until March 15<sup>th</sup> 1971 to come up with new proposals for a rail-connected, costed museum in London, along with ways of bridging the gap between the cost of any new museum and the sale value of the Clapham site. Despite the Action Group, and the Transport Trust, producing its Crystal Palace plan in response to this, British Railways required some £650,000 to release this site, and it was announced on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1971 that the new Museum would be built in York, and that this would be a National Railway Museum, rather than a national *transport* collection (*The Guardian*,

12/05/1971). Whilst I have seen no evidence, within the correspondence files of the Chief Public Relations Officer which relate to York (AN111/18-AN111/34), that any of the alternative plans were seriously considered- indeed, Merrill began planning for the move to York before the Transport Act had even been passed-it should be noted nevertheless that the move to York was by no means a 'clean' process, and could at several times have had a very different outcome.

### **7.13 Transport Museums and enthusiasts**

Noting that most transport museums "have come into existence at a time when the machinery and equipment with which they are so much concerned are becoming out-of-date with ever increasing speed", Simmons (1970: 275) points to the fact that "there were 19,000 steam locomotives in service on British Railways in 1955; the last has disappeared from regular service". Beyond motive power, thousands of miles of lines were closed in the wake of the Beeching report, which, combined with the re-branding of the remainder of the network in British Rail's new corporate image, resulted in turn in the scrapping of thousands of items of obsolescent or surplus infrastructure, from station seats to signalling equipment. It was in this era, as noted in the previous chapter, that the private railway preservation movement gathered pace as redundant steam locomotives were purchased either directly from British Railways or later from scrap dealers, whilst closed branch lines were taken over. By 1974 the situation had approached the stage at which Transport Trust and National Railway Museum Committee Chairman Sir Peter Allen could comment, in the foreword to Peter Williams' book *Britain's*

*Railway Museums*, that “there is possibly too much” interesting railway material preserved in the country. Today there are 108 operating Railways, Tramways and Rail Cableways and 60 Steam Centres operating 536 miles of line, whilst over 1,300 steam locomotives have been preserved (Heritage Railway Association website).

It is beyond the scope of my research to go into the specifics of such schemes; suffice it to say here that what might be termed ‘official’, governmental approaches to preservation within museums have both intermeshed with, yet also counterpointed, the private efforts of enthusiasts- particularly in relation to the operation of preserved railways. This was reflected in the title of an International Symposium held at the NRM in 1993: ‘Common Roots, separate branches: Railway History and Preservation’. The NRM requires private enthusiast groups to conserve much of its rolling stock: there is simply not the space for all of the National Collection to be housed at the NRM’s sites in York and Shildon. Yet there are (admittedly dormant) tensions between, on the one hand, museum professionals who have- as Sir Neil Cossons did in a famously incendiary after-dinner speech at the above Symposium, and as Divall and Scott did in their 2001 book *Making History in Transport Museums*- questioned the accuracy with which history is portrayed at privately preserved railways and the lack of intellectual rigour within the literature on railway history, and on the other, preservationists who may view the museum as a mausoleum and wish to see the exhibits in working order- which have perhaps not been conclusively resolved (Cossons interview 05/02/16).

Railway enthusiasm has, in addition to the operation and restoration of steam locomotives and branch lines, taken the form of the collection of smaller pieces of railway equipment and decoration, encompassing more or less everything from posters, station signs, name and numberplates from locomotives through to signalling equipment and even lavatory paper. Many objects of this type were, according to Whitaker (1995:60) stolen during the 1960s:

Between 1966 and 1970 the railways were virtually stripped bare by trainspotters. Anything that could be unscrewed, unbolted or hacksawed away from its moorings could be taken away and hidden. There was a nationwide panic among trainspotters to save all those Trespassers Will be Prosecuted signs, signal arms and clocks that had been in place for forty or fifty years.

The more legitimate purchase of obsolescent railway objects at officially arranged auctions, along with the re-sale of items, led ultimately to the growth of the railwayana market, in which the circulation of such objects has become a huge market worth some £3 million by 2001 (Bradley 2015). However, it was not until relatively late in the 1960s that the BRB fully (and literally) capitalised upon the monetary value which could be attached to the past, and particularly to the obsolescent objects which it was seeking to replace around its network.

Initially, the unwanted items from branch line closures- notably station furniture- was sold in *ad hoc* auctions, but, having regard to the success of these auctions- some six-hundred enthusiasts attended an auction at Stoke-

on-Trent in 1964 (Bradley 2015)- and to the fact that a shop had been opened to sell locomotive nameplates, on a privately run basis, in Harrow-on-the-Hill, Bill Kirby, the Stores Controller for the London Midland Region, formalised the process firstly through sale at the (closed) St Enoch Station in Glasgow in around 1968, and later, from November 1969, at a former storeroom in the vicinity of Euston Station (Bob Ballard interview 17/02/15). The name Collector's Corner was used for these ventures, which initially dealt solely with items from the London Midland Region but later also took in items from the Southern, Western and Scottish Regions (Bob Ballard interview 17/02/2015). The price list for a sale at St Enoch's in August 1968 gives an idea of the breadth of material which was available, encompassing hand lamps, carriage panels (from compartmented carriages), watches, clocks, original oil paintings, by-law and trespass notices, locomotive whistles, destination boards and even toilet roll holders (six in stock), a bargain at 2s 6d<sup>212</sup>. The shop at Euston sold a similarly eclectic array of redundant railway objects, as Bradley (539) describes:

In 1969... a weird shop called Collector's Corner opened in a dowdy warehouse near Euston station, selling pretty well any portable or detachable object with a railway provenance. Brass buttons from porter's uniforms were a penny each; big stuff such as station signs was piled up in the front yard.

Bradley (2015: 539) suggests that "the wider fashion in the 1960s-1970s for using by-gones as household furnishings must have... encouraged the collecting trend"; this was a visual aesthetic into which the Clapham Museum unwittingly

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<sup>212</sup> NRS BR/RSR/4/1789.

tapped<sup>213</sup>. It was suggested that some of Clapham's collection, which was not wanted by the Science Museum, could be sold at auction, perhaps at the Museum itself- and some of the material was transferred to Collector's Corner at Euston, but the ongoing discussions about the future safeguarding of historic relics halted this process (Bob Ballard interview 17/02/15; AN 111/613).

#### **7.14. Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the three transport museums which were operated by the BTC, and later the BRB, in the 1960s, describing their exhibits, the way in which they were run and, particularly in the case of the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, the ways that they were appropriated in contemporary cultural events and representations. The displays and exhibits at the three museums at Clapham, York and Swindon in turn reflected academic conceptualisations and debates about the railway as a regionalising force (or otherwise), and the notion of a 'railway age' covering the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the First World War. Such ideas have been explored in detail here.

Furthermore, this chapter has gone on to describe the ongoing uncertainties surrounding the Museums at Clapham, York and Swindon during the 1960s, which ultimately resulted in the closure of the sites at Clapham and York and the opening of a new, National Railway Museum at a different site in York in September 27<sup>th</sup> 1975. By uncovering the events which took place prior to the opening of this Museum I have sought to emphasise that the

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<sup>213</sup> See also Samuel's (1994:85) definition of retrochic, which "trades on inversion... treating the out-of-date and the anachronistic- or imitations of them- as if they were the latest thing".

process which led to this event was not smooth and straightforward. Finally, I have sought to counterpoint the official preservation efforts of the state, encapsulated in the three museums operated by the nationalised transport body, with the burgeoning railway preservation movement, enacted on a private basis by both individuals and groups, which was taking place alongside these state-sponsored activities.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

Focussing on the post-war period that, with the benefit of hindsight, could be described as leading up to the establishment of the NRM- and thus, to some extent, to the nature of railway preservation as it exists today- this thesis has sought to highlight the precarious nature of railway preservation- and specifically that carried out under the auspices of, or in partnership with, the BTC and the BRB- at this time, focussing on the contradictions and connections between the overarching systematic strategies behind these organization's decisions, and the often individual, ad hoc manner in which such decisions were taken in practice. I have sought not only to elucidate these processes in detail, but also to, in effect, both shrink the level of analysis down to the object itself, tracing the stories of some of the locomotives, in particular, which were involved, yet also expand it out to incorporate the wider enthusiasms for railways, and for the past, at this time. This was exemplified by the advent, from the 1950s onwards, of societies dedicated to the preservation of particular locomotives (such privately owned machines ultimately far outnumbered those earmarked for preservation by British Railways) or by the restoration of particular railway lines which were scheduled for closure (these were often, though not exclusively, rural branch lines).

The rise of these enthusiast societies- as a counterpoint, to some extent, to the official preservation efforts of nationalized industry- illustrates the fact that, as Raphael Samuel suggested in his book *Theatres of Memory*, "heritage, as it crystallized in the late 1960s, was a cultural capital on which all were

invited to draw” (1994: 238). Samuel celebrates the productivity and knowledge of the ‘Sunday mechanics’, those “true buffs (who) busied themselves in the sheds bringing moribund locomotives and rolling-stock back to life” (1994: 249). These preservation schemes sought to save locomotives which had not been set aside for preservation by British Railways, thus setting them in opposition with what might be termed the ‘official’ preservation policy enacted by the Curator of Historic Relics, John Scholes. Nevertheless, I have suggested here that the boundaries between the more official knowledges encapsulated by the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, and the unofficial knowledges of the ‘buffs’, were less starkly drawn than might be expected. This was evidenced by the transfer of expertise and the formation of friendships across this porous divide, particularly between John Scholes and members of the enthusiast advisory body the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics- although the enthusiasts on the Panel were less hands on in their enthusiasm than the ‘Sunday mechanics’ described by Samuel.

I have traced the specific histories of both the organisations which preceded the NRM and the National Archives as the official (gate) keepers of Britain’s railway history in its three dimensional and written forms- principally the Department of Historic Relics, the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics and the British Transport Historical Records Office- and also the objects themselves (which now form the National Collection). This has, in turn, enabled me to recover what might be termed ‘hidden histories’ and detail the activities of those pivotal figures- such

as G.R. Smith, Sidney Taylor, John Scholes, John Emslie, William Oswald Skeat, Ron Wilsdon, Henry Maxwell and Eric Merrill- who have, to a greater or lesser degree, fallen through the cracks of history and largely been reduced to little more than passing references or footnotes- with the exception of the works of Dieter Hopkin (1987) and Denis Dunstone (2007).

Meanwhile, the key organisations involved in postwar railway preservation- the gate-keepers of Britain's railway heritage- were in themselves spatially situated. Indeed, the locations in which each were based can be seen as (to use Bruno Latour's phrase) centres of calculation at which the physical materials of railway history were accumulated, whilst what came to be thought of as the 'correct' interpretations of railway history, and the 'correct' standards for preserving railway heritage, were defined and circulated to an array of locations, including museums, preserved railways and academic institutions, throughout and beyond the UK. As Jöns (2011) has suggested, centres of calculation are venues in which "knowledge production builds upon the accumulation of resources through circulatory movements to other places". Latour (1987), on coining the term in his book *Science in Action*, suggests that the creation of a centre of calculation rests on its ability to act at a distance upon unfamiliar events, places and people, an ability which is itself predicated upon rendering these events, places and people mobile, keeping them stable and enabling them to be combined. Technological and scientific advancements are the means through which this can be achieved: for example, Latour describes cartography as the means by which knowledge of distant lands was accumulated by European empires, whilst understanding of

an area's natural history was amassed through the collections of, for example, taxidermy and painting. The notion of 'centres of calculation' has gained purchase across the social sciences (particularly within imperial contexts), including the field of historical geography. For example, in Ruth Craggs' paper about the Royal Empire Society (RES) Library "the term 'centre of calculation' is used to highlight the importance of visions of the Library as a space of and for imperial knowledge in the heart of Empire"(2008: 51).

In the context of my thesis, the British Transport Historical Records Office in London- along with its subsidiaries in York and Edinburgh- and the Museum of British Transport in Clapham can be seen as centres of calculation in which material- in either paper or physical form- was amassed and used, until the 1962 Transport Act, to control the heritage of the BTC's own diverse empire, which covered a range of transport interests, before passing to the BRB, which as an organisation was less interested in controlling its past. However, the Museum of British Transport, in particular, operated somewhat unevenly and dysfunctionally under the Curatorship of John Scholes; this centre of calculation was not monolithic in its operation, in the way that the literature on this topic (see Latour 1987; Jöns 2011) implies that such centres operate. The success of a centre of calculation rests on its ability to successfully order the information and materials which have been collected, enabling, for example, "the zoologists in their Natural History Museums, without travelling more than a few hundred metres and opening more than a few dozen drawers, (to) travel through all the continents, climates and periods" (Latour 1987: 225). Craggs (2008) describes the classification system

of the RES Library, which was specifically designed for this location, and enabled knowledge of distant people and places to be quickly called to hand whether for reference, governance or business purposes. At The Museum of British Transport in Clapham, however, there had been, as the Audit Report A1.4 (AN 111/563) carried out in 1975, two years after its closure, suggested, a “complete lapse in control in managing the custody and accountability of relics”, which meant that items which were, or should have been, in the collections- and thus available to be brought to hand if necessary- had gone missing. Whilst a paper record of the exhibits in the museum had been kept, this did not always match what was actually located in the museum or, if it did, it did not give any idea as to its location. For example, of the 389 oil paintings recorded as being in the possession of the Clapham Museum in its asset registers, six did not have matching index cards, whilst more seriously a list of the oil paintings found in the museum by a representative of the Department of Education and Science, which was “obtained and verified against the registers together with selected physical inspections”, found that some 42 oil paintings listed on the asset registers could not be found in the museum. Thus the relationship between the paper record and the physical object, so vital for the successful operation of a centre of calculation, had broken down.. This was demonstrated when, in 1968, donor S.L. Poole unsuccessfully sought to retrieve some of the items he had given to the Curator of Historic Relics in 1950s, upon hearing about the Museum’s proposed closure (see chapter 7).

There had also perhaps been a lack of selectivity when deciding which items were suitable for collection, as objects which represented the nature of the British railway industry: for as Cossons' (1968: 86) suggested, it was "almost impossible to describe the variety of small railway exhibits" held at Clapham. Thus, in terms of its smaller objects at least, Clapham can be seen as a rather chaotically disordered accumulation, rather than a calculated representation of railway history. Meanwhile, as is detailed in chapter 6, the selection of additional locomotives earmarked for preservation in 1961 were not able to be preserved owing to a lack of available space; at this time, further centres of calculation were deemed to be necessary in order to house all of the machines which had been listed. However, as the meeting place of the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics, the Museum of British Transport was nevertheless the location at which the fate of many historic transport items was decided; it was where the decision to preserve those locomotives which were on the 1961 list had been taken. It was also a site at which standards in locomotive preservation, and particularly the restoration of engines back to their original form, were displayed and thus disseminated to the burgeoning railway preservation community. Sykes et al. (1997:172) suggest that such restoration work, still visible in the material forms of locomotives in the National Collection, represents "the legacy of John Scholes".

Latour demonstrates that scientific measurements travel furthest once they are combined, bureaucratically, within the paper record. He suggests, for example, that

The microbiological tests of water made by bacteriologists would have no relevance... if they stayed inside the lab. Now that they are integrated, for instance, in another complex record at City Hall that juxtaposes architects' drawings, city regulations, poll results, vote tallies and budget proposals, they profit from each of these other skills and crafts (Latour 1987: 255)

With respect of the British Transport Historical Records Office, we can see that hitherto separate records were, for the first time, amalgamated together, in the same way that the BTC itself had combined several company identities under the auspices of British Railways. Whilst it is not quite the case that individual records were irrelevant on their own, the combination of sources in one place meant that authors were better able to construct wider arguments about railway history, for example about the Railway Age which existed in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The files located at the Records Office were grouped by company identity, allowing the researcher to identify and utilise the records of several companies in one place, and of several forms of transport- and perhaps connect them together- in a way that they had not been able to before. Meanwhile, just as the Museum of British Transport came to display the 'correct' methods of locomotive preservation (at least according to John Scholes), so the Records Office came to be seen as a site of correct practice in archival administration, as attested by its archivist Leonard Johnson in his 1962 article in the JTH. He describes "visits from representatives of large business and archival organisations, both in this country and abroad, for the express purpose of studying our methods of archive administration" (Johnson 1962: 161).

Centres of calculation have typically been seen as sites from which spatially dispersed empires were controlled. Craggs suggests that the Royal Empire Society 'conceived the role of its Library as an Information centre of practical use in the running of the Empire' (Craggs 2008: 58). The British Transport Historical Records Office allowed historians to annex information and create their own ideological empires in print, making the kind of broad historical statements over which, as we saw in Chapter 7, Langton and Freeman disagreed. At the same time, if Johnson (1962) is to be believed, the weight of historical, archival evidence was also used by the nationalised industry to rule its own diverse empire of railways, canals, hotels and docks- although the fact that the Office was open to the public also allowed the decisions of the British Transport Commission to be contested. This is tangentially mentioned by Johnson (1962: 161), who refers to timetables yielding "important information relative to an enquiry as to the opening in the last century, and continuous operation, of certain of the Commission's ferry services". Johnson portrays the Historical Records Office as a vital part of the Commission's continued operation, yet the fact that the Office was open to visitors meant that the Commission itself did not have a monopoly on its own historical data. In describing these individuals' actions, I have sought to demonstrate Latour's (1996: VIII) point that one "cannot even conceive of a technological object without taking into account the mass of human beings with all their passions and politics and pitiful calculations". The nature of the material which was or was not preserved by the state, and indeed the nature of railway preservation and railway heritage as a whole- for example the porous divides between enthusiastic and official knowledges, referred to above- can

be mapped onto the passions and politics and pitiful calculations of the individuals involved in post-war railway preservation and of the organisations for which they worked- though it could perhaps also be argued that these organisations, and the structure in which they were formed, had their own agency within this process. The (applied) passions of William Oswald Skeat, John Emslie or Henry Maxwell (to give just three examples) for preserving locomotives, the political machinations of the 1960s- as British Railways sought to rid itself of the economic responsibility of running railway museums, and later as the Labour government sought to implement its policy of dispersing the UK's cultural resources away from the capital- and the pitiful (as it was adjudged) nature of G.R. Smith's reports for the BTC in 1949- all held an intermeshing influence on the nature of UK railway preservation. At the same time, the nature of the organisations involved in these processes also had a bearing on the way in which they played out: for example the initially (until 1953) vague connections between the BTC and the Railway Executive, which was supposedly under its control, led to contradictions between these two bodies. For example, the contents of the Royal Waiting Room at Windsor were sold off by British Railways against the Commission's wishes.

The processes of post-war British railway preservation, and the decisions which were made about the preservation of particular objects, were often driven by the idiosyncrasies of particular individuals, with decisions sometimes taken on an ad hoc basis. As is suggested by Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate (2016: 1), enthusiasm, as an emotional response, can sometimes come with

negative cultural baggage- being seen as a “threat to rationality and professional practice”. As this clashes with the need for their case study organisation- the Twentieth Century Society- to maintain professionalism and credibility, volunteers for this Society are configured as experts and their enthusiasm is downplayed or even suppressed. This process, they suggest, “manifests itself with the adoption of various bureaucratic and administrative procedures, in this case expert committees” (7). However, I have suggested that, in spite of its seemingly rational structure and decision-making processes, the committee of amateur experts depicted here- the Consultative Panel for the Preservation of British Transport Relics- was influenced by individual, often enthusiastic interests, either of those who served on the Panel or of the professionals with whom they interacted; for as Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate (2016:8) suggest, “paid staff... may also be enthusiasts”.

In addition to studying the processes of post-war railway preservation, and the organisations and individuals behind these, I have also studied the sites at which some of the preserved objects were displayed- particularly the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, the Railway Museum at York and the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon. Although they have all closed, I have not viewed these sites simply as waypoints en route to the ultimate creation of the NRM, but have attempted to get under their skin, analysing the ethos of each Museum and attempting to recreate their sense of place.

In his paper which explores the “disordering effects of ruination” Edensor (2005b: 311) conjured a sense of lost place from the material ruins of post-industrial Britain- later deploying this practice more specifically to uncover the

'mundane hauntings' of working-class spaces in Manchester, often those which have ceased to fulfil a particular purpose such as the former Maine Road football stadium and a closed section of railway line which has been converted into a cycle path (Edensor 2008). He noted that: "stories retrieved from ruins must be recovered out of a jumble of disconnected things; ghostly, enigmatic traces that remain invite us to fill in the blanks" (Edensor 2005b: 330).

The stories I have recovered from the archive- my ghostly traces- have been more ordered, yet arguably no less enigmatic, as those which Edensor retrieved. In Chapter 7 I traced some of the events and exhibitions held at the Museum of British Transport during the 1960s from correspondence and promotional material found principally in the National Archives; these hints, these ghostly traces of places and sometimes people which are no longer with us invite us to fill in the blanks about what these occasions were like and how the space was used.

I have also sought to stress that history could have taken a very different course at several points; en route to its terminus (as we would understand it) there were many junctions, and thus many branches along which the course of events could have travelled. This thesis has been deliberately ambiguous as to whether the route travelled was the 'correct' one.

Writing in the accompanying brochure to the NRM's 40th anniversary dinner, Head Curator Andrew McLean argues that:

It is fair to say that the museum may never have come to York in the first place and the NRM's position as the first national museum in England to open

outside of London would have passed to another museum or, perhaps, to none at all (McLean 2015: 29).

Nevertheless, the fact that McLean traces the idea of a National Railway Museum back to the late nineteenth century- and through all of its subsequent twists and turns- implies, perhaps, that by the 1970s the concept of the National Railway Museum was an idea for which the time had come. More to the point- and this is perhaps to be expected in the accompanying brochure to the NRM's anniversary dinner- it is viewed as an idea for which the time should have come, a museum which, as "the culmination of years of hard work", has become "one of the country's most popular and best loved museums" (McLean 2015: 29). The NRM has undoubtedly been successful, attracting over 1 million visitors in the first year after it had opened and going on to win European Museum of the Year in 2001 (following redevelopments). Yet history, as the saying goes, is written by the victors, and had events taken a different turn, the status quo could have been different, and this would in itself perhaps- or perhaps not- have been viewed as the optimal means to display the UK's railway heritage.

Whilst the nationalisation of the British railway network in 1948 laid the foundations for the designation of railway heritage, and thus the protection of historic railway artefacts, on a national basis, the scale of such a task, not merely in terms of organisational effort and (perhaps more crucially) cost, meant that the 'problem' of housing and displaying these objects was seen- particularly by Sir Brian Robertson, Chairman of the BTC, in the late 1950s- as best resolved by British Railways' Regional Management. As it was later

put, by Skeat, in an article for the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (NRM Box 66), “the Regional idea didn’t fully materialize” (the Great Western Railway Museum at Swindon was the only new regional museum to open, in 1962): if it had, if the Commission had been able to act more quickly prior to its demise, then at least one more railway/transport museum could have been built, in Derby (see Chapter 7); thus the geographical pattern of Britain’s transport museums could have been different. This would have had ramifications in respect of the 1968 Transport Act: for if combining the Museums at York and Clapham into one site was a difficult ‘sell’ for the British government, combining collections housed in three different places would perhaps have proved impossibly controversial.

Similarly, there were several historic locomotives- classes or individual machines, in particular, which, although earmarked for protection, fell through the cracks of history and into oblivion, whilst those objects which became part of the National Collection often owe their survival to chance and whim. As was described in Chapter Four, examples of two former London and North Western Railway locomotive types- the Prince of Wales and Precursor classes- were initially suggested by a group of enthusiasts as being types which were worthy of preservation (though this was something of an either/or decision), but later, in what are now unclear circumstances, both types were allowed to be scrapped by some of the same enthusiasts who had suggested their preservation in the first place. Similarly the London and North Eastern Railway K3/Great Northern Railway H4 Class was initially selected, in 1948, as a type which was deemed worthy of preservation, but in 1960 it was de-

selected from the list of types to be preserved, with no explanation given. Meanwhile, the locomotive Ben Alder- of the Highland Railway 'Small Ben' Class- was, after withdrawal in 1953, stored in various locations around Scotland- as a precursor, it appeared, to its preservation on a more permanent basis- but it was ultimately scrapped in 1966, with a British Railways spokesman citing its non-standard boiler as the reason for its destruction (Dunstone 2007).

Latour (1996: 297) suggests that Aramis, the driverless Parisian transport system, “wanted to become not the subject of our discourse, but the object, the tender anonymous object by means of which we would travel in Paris”- an object which would exist “over there on the Boulevard Victor, a happy thing”. The preserved locomotive perhaps never assumes the quotidian, workaday and anonymous quality to which Latour alludes, since they are examples of a type of technology which has long since disappeared, and are therefore a spectacle in themselves, although they may become a more-or-less permanent fixture within museum space. Museums can be a special space- as Gaynor Kavanagh suggests in her foreword to Divall and Scott’s *Making Histories in Transport Museums* (2001:vii), “museums are an engaging, challenging, memorable means of discovering past episodes of human experience”. I well remember the excitement of my first visit to the NRM as a 10 year old boy, as I charged around trying to take in all of the interesting exhibits. Preserved locomotives are, in effect, transferred from the mundane machine ensemble to the more magical museum ensemble. *Ben Alder* could have become a part of this latter ensemble at the Riverside Museum in Glasgow, or perhaps at the

Museum of Scottish Railways in Bo'ness. Members of the Precursor, Prince of Wales or K3 classes would have become part of the National Collection, and could have been found perhaps at the NRM or else at a preserved railway, safe and secure. But it was not to be.

On the other hand, as mentioned above the locomotives selected to become a part of what ultimately became the National Collection were chosen in a relatively brief, almost off-hand manner, whilst the correspondence files of the Consultative Panel shows that, by 1964, it was under considerable pressure to reduce the number of preserved locomotives: there was, as a Memorandum of a meeting of a Locomotive Sub-Committee of 1st June 1964 put it (NRM Box 66), an

Expectation that in the near future, representatives of the Consultative Panel would be called to confer with representatives of British Railways Board, with a view to reducing the number of locomotives to be preserved; including both those set aside for preservation and certain examples already in traffic.

Although the locomotive *Ben Alder* was 'sacrificed', no further scrappages were made, and with the passing of the 1968 Transport Act responsibility for preservation was passed on, at length, to the NRM, which could request items of interest from British Railways. The point is that the formation of the National Collection- a term which itself did not come into common usage until the advent of the NRM- was an historically discontinuous and uncertain process, a fact which is not perhaps evident from the statuesque quality of the locomotives in the Great Hall.

To sum up, this thesis has shown that closer inspection of the preservation activities of British Railways between 1948 and 1968, nested within the cultural context of the time and acknowledging, more broadly, the relationships between railways and Western culture, produces a more nuanced understanding of this era. The years following the Second World War, although of vital importance in creating the railway preservation *mise en scene* that we would recognize today, were at the same time more than simply a stepping stone on a path heading inexorably towards the National Railway Museum, and studying this era highlights the contradictions and connections between systematic preservation and conservation plans, and the idiosyncratic nature of enthusiasts' love for trains.

Furthermore, my thesis has highlighted the interrelatedness of material objects and paperwork, serving to reiterate the importance of the latter within historical geographer's research. As Mills (2013) has suggested, cultural and historical geographers have sought to re-define and animate the archive in recent years, extending the very concept of the archive to incorporate a range of objects in addition to paperwork. Mills suggests, in relation to the archive, that "it is often the objects, ephemera, memorabilia and tactile 'stuff' that is most memorable, desirable or illuminating", adding "objects are not simply just another item with a reference number to access via a request slip in a formal indoor reading room" (706). However, as Bruno Latour put it in his book *Aramis, or the love of technology*, "nothing has a bigger appetite for paper than a technology of steel or motor oil" (which, I would suggest, applies equally to a technology of iron and steam); moreover, he suggests that "there

are only differences of degree between matter and text”. As was suggested in my Methodology (Chapter 3), each locomotive in what has become the National Collection brings with it its’ own paper trail; however, decisions which determined the fate of particular machines can lie buried in seemingly mundane paperwork accessed within a formal archive environment. This was evidenced most clearly by David McKenna’s memorandum of 15th June 1960 (see Chapters 3 and 6)- a copy of which can be found within file BR/RSR/4/1716 at the National Records of Scotland, in which representatives of the T9, Q1, ‘Lord Nelson’ and ‘King Arthur’ classes were earmarked for preservation. It was this connection between the paperwork and material objects- in this case the Q1 class locomotive No.33001 and the King Arthur class machine ‘Sir Lamiel’, which I had seen in real life and, in the latter case, operating at a privately preserved railway, that proved to be perhaps the most rewarding part of my research.

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