



Founded 1908

Derby Railway Engineering Society

President's Annual Report for 2010/2011

It gives me great pleasure to present this report to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

The Society continues in good health both financially and in terms of its level of membership. During the year, 14 new members and 2 new life members had joined the Society. Sadly, two members passed away and with others effectively leaving, the total membership stood at 222 compared with 226 the previous year.

The main means of engagement between the Society and its members is through the lecture programme. During the course of the year we enjoyed 8 lectures including the traditional film evening. Lectures have continued to be presented in the Lecture Theatre at the Derby Conference Centre, continuing a long tradition as our principal venue. I am grateful for the support of the Conference Centre for maintaining their charges for hire of the Lecture Theatre at a level that enables us to continue to enjoy a low cost of subscription.

Throughout the year, the Committee has sought to provide a balanced mix of topics for the lectures, including heritage and modern aspects associated with railway engineering. Following the lessons learned during the previous severe winter, the solution of the problems which beset operations of the Eurostar service through the Channel Tunnel was revealed. We also learned about the benefits of polymer stabilised track and the latest developments of embedded track for possible future use. The next generation of freight locomotives, the Class 70 was thoroughly dissected and we reviewed the on-going art of dynamic testing carried out at Old Dalby. On the heritage scene, the lessons learned from running the new A1 pacific, Tornado, resulted in a somewhat controversial Q and A session but as ever all was taken in good cheer. Another heritage type lecture was about the astonishing development of the Welsh Highland 2 foot gauge line. The final lecture in the series was presented by Bombardier which addressed the daunting challenges posed by worldwide competition in developing its product base aimed at maintaining its commercial position as a leading supplier of railway rolling stock.

The Society was also pleased to share combined lectures presented by DRES and the IET and IMechE. An additional lecture was held at Loughborough University on the subject of Upgrading the Chiltern Line when several members attended.

In addition to the lecture programme, visits have been organised during the year to the Nottingham Tram Maintenance Centre, West Shed at Butterley, Derby Power Box, Davis of Derby, Clay Mills Pumping station and the Derby Silk Mill. This year's off shore visit was to the Isle of Man, where a party of 45 members and guests, being the largest party attending an overseas Visit since the 1970's, enjoyed a three day conducted tour of the island's public transport system, including the steam hauled passenger services from Douglas to Port Erin, the Manx Electric Railway and two privately owned companies, the Laxey Mine Railway and the Groudle Glen Railway. The Society is most grateful for the invaluable services of Ian Longworth and Peter Maddocks (Department of Public Transport – Isle of Man) in personally facilitating a most interesting and memorable tour.

The Annual Dinner remains a major attraction for many members and this continued to be the case in February. Our Guest Speaker was Mr John Ellis, former General Manager of the Southern and Scottish Regions also former Production Director of Railtrack and latterly, a senior consultant in the Railway Industry. In accordance with tradition, we were honoured by the presence of the Mayor of the City of Derby and the Mayoress. Attendance again topped the 100 mark and as has been the case in recent years we have benefited from the support of local employers, Atkins, Engineering

Support Group (ESG), Serco Assurance, Porterbrook Leasing and Lloyds Register Rail all taking tables to entertain their clients. The support of these companies is very much appreciated and ensures the viability of the event for members.

Following through the Society's efforts to attract more young people into the industry a lot of progress was made by participating in the iRail 2011 event held once again at the Roundhouse in March. The Society was instrumental in setting the tasks for young persons to respond to and the event was in fact, the platform for presentation of the awards to the winning participants. Thanks to the involvement of the Smallpiece Trust this event involved 600 pupils in 12 schools across the region. One of the challenges has also been taken up by Stemnet to be used in hundreds of schools across the country. One of the lectures in the 2011/12 session is to be devoted to explaining to the membership just what has been achieved and the future course of events in responding to the challenge of careers for young persons.

The new earlier starting time for lectures has been implemented since the New Year. It is, however, perhaps a little early to conclude if this action has achieved the success that was anticipated. We have not yet realised any increase in new young members and the situation will be subject to review during the current session.

A statement of the Society's finances is presented separately. Despite a small book loss of £50, this shows that our running costs and income were somewhat less for the year than previous, savings having been made particularly by utilising our web based facility for disseminating information to the membership. As a result the Committee is again recommending no increase in subscription fees for the 2011-12 session but, mindful of the current economic climate, it again requests the meeting to authorise it to make any necessary adjustment ahead of the session starting in September 2012.

It has been my great privilege to have had the opportunity to serve as your President for the past year. I offer my sincere thanks to the members of the Committee for their hard work that they put in to ensure the smooth running of the Society. I am also indebted to the Vice Presidents for their support behind the scenes and I am confident that the 104th year of the Society will continue to offer an informative and enjoyable forum for the benefit of the membership.

Allan J Jones
President