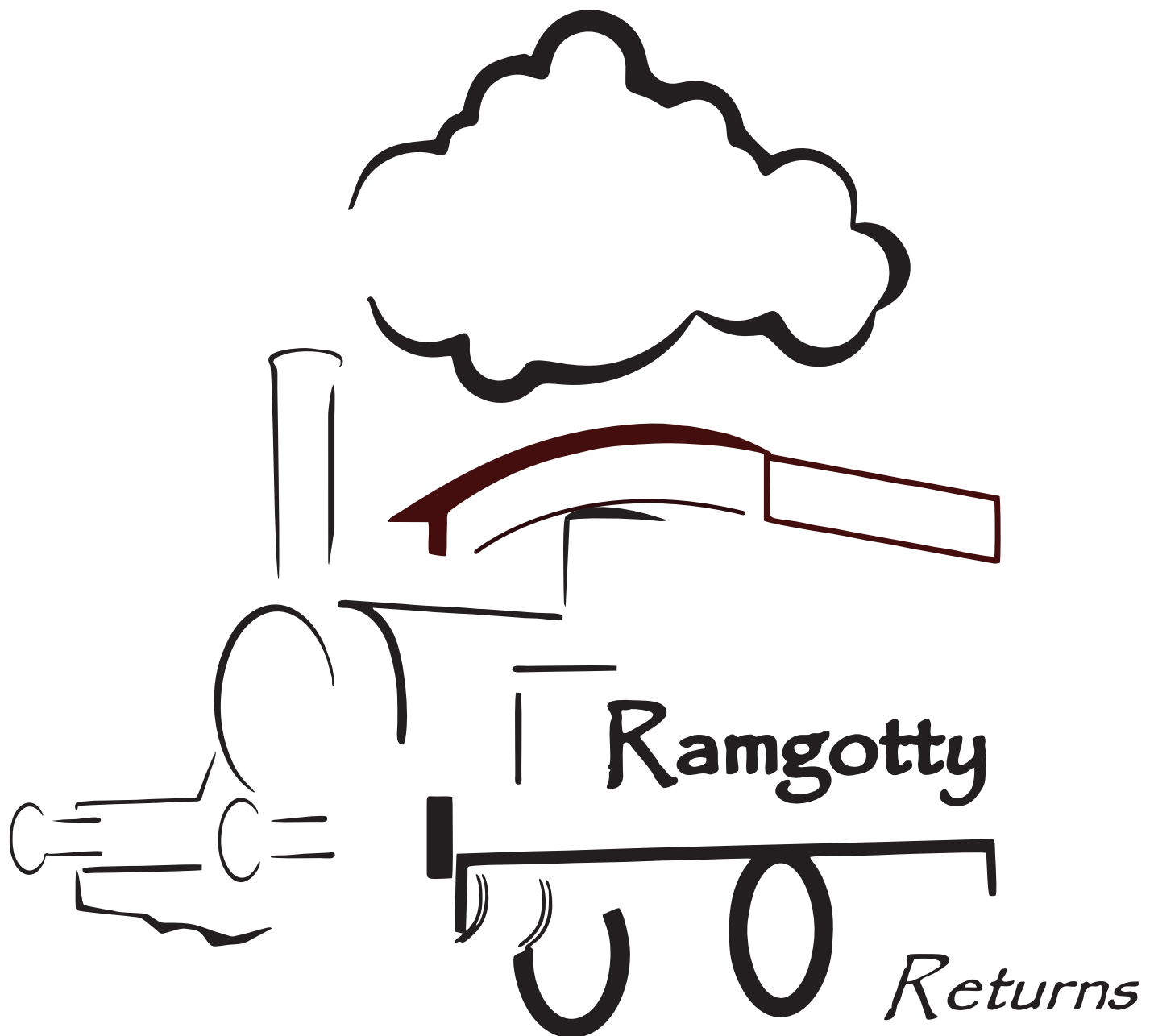


INDIAN STEAM RAILWAYS MAGAZINE

XVII National Steam Congress

Issue No.: XVII WINTER 2019 ₹ 20





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The Indian Steam Railways Magazine encourages readers to contribute to the magazine about issues related to preservation of steam and other railway heritage. Such contributions may include technical papers, humorous articles, information about forthcoming events, memoirs or photographs. All published contributions shall be suitably acknowledged. Please send your contributions to :

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The theme for the 17th National Steam Congress is "Ramgotty Returns"

From the Editor...

The Guinness Book of World Records lists the 1855-built Fairy Queen or EIR 22 as the world's oldest working locomotive. This is being hotly contested by the Express, EIR 21, Fairy Queen's sister locomotive, also built in 1855. Whichever loco gets the title of the oldest working locomotive is not at all relevant as both the locos are of the same vintage and both are owned by the Indian Railways.

The question that now comes up is the third position. A strong contender is the 0-4-0T Anjubault-built locomotive, the Ramgotty. Built in the year 1862, the Ramgotty first worked on the Indian Branch Railway Company, a 4-foot gauge railway between Nalhathi and Azimganj in the Bengal Presidency of British India. The Fairy Queen and the Express worked between 1855 and 1909 after which they were retired. Ramgotty on the other hand had a much longer working life from 1862 to 1974 when it was also retired. Thanks to the push given by Ashwani Lohani, the then Chairman of the Indian Railway Board, Ramgotty was taken up for revival in 2018 and this year, it is in steam for the first time since it hissed steam last in 1974. This makes it perhaps the third oldest working locomotive in the world. If any person is aware of any other older locomotive, please let the Indian Steam Railway Society know.

Getting the Ramgotty working again was an even bigger challenge than the revival of the Fairy Queen and the Express. The latter locos were both taken up by a full-fledged workshop that had been at the forefront of steam loco overhaul and maintenance in the steam days. Ramgotty, on the other hand, was taken up by the Train Set Depot at Shakurbasti in New Delhi. Yes, the depot had been a steam loco shed at one time but such sheds did not undertake the kind of heavy repairs that workshops did. Yet, the depot leadership and staff took up the challenge and their confidence in themselves bore the fruit of the Ramgotty being in steam once again. While the boiler of the locomotive was repairable, the frame and the undergear had to be virtually rebuilt.

Therefore, it is a tribute to the great work done by the Shakurbasti depot that the theme of the National Steam Congress this year is RAMGOTTY RETURNS.

Let's hope that in the years to come, others follow suit and we have many more steam behemoths returning. Happy steaming...

(J.L. Singh)
 Editor



Ramgotty being renovated at the Shakurbasti Train Set Depot at New Delhi



Photos Courtesy Train Set Depot, Shakurbasti

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R. S. Virdi
President ISRS

MESSAGE

ISRS enters its twentieth year - with about a hundred and eighty-six members on its rolls. A hundred and twenty two are original life members - and sixty four tenure members for ten years who joined 2013 onwards - including your current President who joined the Society post retirement in 2015. The grandiose plan to raise the membership to a thousand hasn't quite started rolling yet. We managed only five new members in the last one year.

We finally have the current and updated list of members - uploaded on the ISRS website at indiansteamrailwaysociety.in. Request members to

go 'on line' and check for any data requiring updating - or discrepancies requiring corrections, and communicate them to the Secretary via email for updating/correction. Members who find their name missing may also apprise the Secretary with particulars of date and tenure of membership.

And all readers are urged to log on and apply on line to join the movement. Promise to revive your steamy memories - pun not intended!

The accounts for the last FY 2018-19 have been audited and uploaded on the website for information of all members. The AGM of the Society - probably the second after inception - was held on the 22nd of September 2019 at the NRM New Delhi. A summary of the activities of the Society was presented and the audited accounts passed. The existing Managing Committee members were requested to continue till the next AGM - which should be held by around May / June 2020. The holding of the long overdue AGM may not have much of an impact on the movement for restoration of Steam - but it is a legal requirement for registered Societies and must be fulfilled.

The Managing Committee met regularly on the second Sunday of every month through the year - barring two occasions. The first when the date coincided with the date of voting for the General Elections in Delhi - the 12th of May 2019. The meeting had to be cancelled. The other occasion was when the date coincided with the date of the Statesman Vintage Car Rally in Feb 2019. The meeting was pre-poned by a day - and despite the usual notices, it did lead to a lot of confusion! We



Miss Muffet Locomotive in front of Jamalpur Locomotive Workshop before revival



EIR 21 "Express" steaming on Southern Railway

have since decided to stick to the date, time and venue of the meeting in future! We fervently request greater participation from Members.

Steam activity on IR...

The centre of gravity of the steam activity on IR for BG has shifted to the Rewari Steam Heritage Centre. It is here that **Northern Railway** through the Sr. DME Shakurbasti and his team - work the magic of keeping the BG steam locomotives in fine maintenance fettle. There are 3 WPs, one sole surviving WG, one AWE and one WL based at Rewari of which at present only two WPs are operational. As of course is the "Fairy Queen" EIR 22. There are four MG steam locos here too, but no track to run them on. The WL is in Amritsar Workshop for the last three years, awaiting the attention of its benefactors to come back on line. Revival of the 1862 built RAMGOTTY - taken off the plinth at NRM, is the major work-in-hand is the major work taken in by shakurbasti and it is the completion of this work that gives the Congress this year its theme - Ramgotty Returns.

Meanwhile the Krauss-Maffei 1:4 scale working model steam loco - restored last year - continues to chug away on the one km circular track at the Bal Bhawan in Delhi.

The KC 520 continues to delight Steam lovers on the Kalka Shimla Railway and the ZB-66 on the Kangra Valley section.

Southern Railway (SR) leads in providing Workshop support for the 'heavy repair' of steam locos at its Perambur and Golden Rock Workshops. SR also runs the EIR 21 'Express' - the twin of oldest working steam loco in the world the 'Fairy Queen' - much to the delight and acclaim of the public 'down South'. The steam operations on Niligiri Mountain Railway are the only MG steam services at present, while on NG it is that lovable iconic B-Class that continues to provide 'Joy' and rides on the **Toy Train of the DHR on the Northeast Frontier Railway** between Darjeeling and Ghum.

On the **Eastern Railway** little "Miss Muffet" was taken off her tuffet - and brought back to life to ride for a while - on the rails inside Jamalpur Workshops. While on the **South-Eastern Railway** Kharagpur Workshop toiled hard to breathe steam into that giant - the Bayer-Garrett - and run it on the Kharagpur - Midnapore section. At **CLW** the 1:8 scale working model steam loco was fired up to the joy of the children there.

Ratlam Division on **Western Railway** has done some exemplary work in retaining and restoring the 9 km MG hill section from Patalpani to Kalakund (near Indore). This section should see the added attraction of steam operations soon as some of the MG steam locomotives presently at Rewari are being transferred there. Mumbai Division of **Central Railway** runs the only B-class other than those on the DHR, on the NG section from Neral to Matheran.

Exciting times ahead...

The news that IR is planning to offer operation of passenger services to private sector players is potentially great news for promoting "steam heritage tourism" - which incidentally were the theme of the XVII National Congress this year that has been changed to Ramgotty Returns.

A steam hauled service from Nizamuddin Delhi to Agra, with a bullet nosed WP - and 5 star on board services, **has the promise of a great business opportunity.** Let's hope some private sector Tour Operator bites this bullet! The fundamental requirement for running such a service successfully is of course a couple of WPs in perfect fettle - fit for 100 kmph - and the crew to run it. Will that ever become a reality?

R. S. Virdi
President ISRS

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Ramgotty Returns

From the Fairy Queen to Ramgotty



The Fairy Queen

In the 1960s, i.e. as recently as 50 years back, the Indian Railways (IR) was operating over 11,000 steam locomotives. In fact, when you said "Locomotive" it meant steam. Its cousins, the diesel and electric locomotives, were referred to as diesels and electrics: the 'locomotive' was one powered by steam.

Today, the situation is at the other end of the spectrum. With less than 40 steam locomotives in a position to steam in the country, the days of steam are definitely over. As the years rolled by, the black beauties were being cut up and sold as scrap. The only ones that were not touched – the hill railways of Darjeeling and the Nilgiris – were also continuing precariously and would perhaps have followed the footsteps of their brothers and sisters to oblivion.

Enter Ashwani Lohani! If the title of "Steam revival man" can be given to any person, it has to be Ashwani Lohani. It was a fortuitous day when he was posted as Director of the National Rail Museum in New Delhi. During a visit to the Rail Museum at York in the UK, he noted that they had a locomotive of 1868 vintage in working order. This led him to the path of revival of our very own even older locomotive, East Indian Railway's EIR No. 22, aptly named

the Fairy Queen. Although we claimed that it was in working order, it had not actually worked since 1909, having stood on various pedestals in the intervening period. In spite of the bureaucracy that was more of a hinderance that a help, Lohani took the help of the Perambur Locomotive Workshop and steamed up the Fairy Queen in 1997, the first time in 98 years. After a number of trips were completed, the Guinness Book of Records certified the Fairy Queen as the world's oldest working locomotive on the 13th of January 1998.

Not satisfied to rest on his laurels, Lohani followed it up with proposals to accord World Heritage status to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus), the Victorian Gothic railway station cum office of the Central Railway zone. Both now have the status and acted as catalysts for the other hill railways, Kalka-Shimla Railway and the Nilgiri Mountain Railway to follow suit. Not just that, Lohani also initiated the setting up of the Rewari steam shed to be a centre where a number of steam locos could be homed and human expertise as well as spare parts concentrated in one place. This project languished after Lohani's departure from the museum. In 2009, when he was Divisional Railway Manager, Delhi, he pushed the

scheme again and the Rewari Steam Heritage Centre came up. Today, the Centre is homing 12 steam locos, 8 BG and 4 MG.

It was also during Lohani's stint as the Director at the Museum that the Friends of the Rail Museum was started. This body later metamorphosized into what is today the Indian Steam Railway Society.

The success of the Fairy Queen was the impetus that others needed. The South Eastern Railway revived and ran Beyer Garratt locomotive No. N 38811 in 2006 while the Southern Railway revived the Fairy Queen's cousin, EIR 21, the "Express", in 2009. Both locos are in steam today. With Ashwani Lohani's return to IR as Chairman of the Railway Board in 2017, steam revival activity took a quantum leap. The iconic loco, Miss Muffet, was revived by Jamalpur Loco Workshop. Other locos that had been languishing like KC 520 of Kalka-Shimla Railway and ZB66 of Kangra Valley Railway returned to their steaming days. Another project was taken up of the revival of a locomotive of vintage comparable to the 1855-built Fairy Queen: This was revival of the 1862-built Ramgotty.

Who or what is Ramgotty? It is none other than an interesting steam locomotive. It is perhaps the only locomotive named after an Indian during the British days. And it was not named after a Governor, a General or even a Governor General. Ram Gati Mukarji was the Manager of a small railway company named the Indian Branch Railway Company, a short 27-kms railway, opened between Nalhati and Azamganj in what is now West

Bengal, to an unlikely gauge – 4 feet. The Ramgotty locomotive was also built to this gauge by Anjubault of France in 1862. In 1872, the Nalhati-Azimganj line merged with the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway and later in 1925, was taken over by the East Indian Railway and got converted to the normal BG. This locomotive was also converted to BG and transferred to Jamalpur Workshop where it worked as a shunting locomotive till 1951. It was then sold to the Calcutta (now Kolkata) Municipality for hauling garbage wagons. After it was retired in 1974, it was saved by Jamalpur workshop from the cutter's torch and not sold as scrap. When the National Rail Museum was set up in New Delhi in 1977, one of the first exhibits to be brought to it was the Ramgotty. And, here the Ramgotty stood till 2018.

In 2018, it was picked up for revival and the Shakurbasti Train Set Depot was given the responsibility. Sr. DME Shakurbasti and his team put their heart and soul into the task and today, Ramgotty is steaming once again. RAMGOTTY has returned...

The story of the revival of steam from the Fairy Queen to the Ramgotty is a fascinating one, but surely this is not the end. There are at least another 15-20 locomotives that can be revived and should be able to steam up again. If the necessary will and support of the Indian Railways and other interested stakeholders is forthcoming, we could even build new steam locos as is being done in the UK and the USA. The days of the black beauties are certainly not over.



The Ramgotty

Steaming On! – The UK's Latest Steam Loco Takes To The Tracks

Paul Whittle



Lady of Legend with a short train of former GWR carriages at Didcot on 27 July 2019

In 1960, British Railways built its last steam locomotive. Constructed at the Swindon works of the former Great Western Railway (GWR) it was a powerful 2-10-0 freight locomotive. Normally, it would have been outshopped in plain black livery, but in deference to the occasion it was painted in express passenger green, given a copper-capped chimney and named 'Evening Star'. But with rapid dieselisation the locomotive saw service for only five years on the main-line, before working on several heritage lines, and is now on static display at the National Railway Museum, York.

Almost sixty years from that momentous day at Swindon, it's remarkable that across the UK there are about twenty projects to re-create steam locomotives of types not already rescued from the scrap yards. The new-build movement started in 1994 with 'Tornado', a 4-6-2 Pacific A1 Class of the former London and North Eastern Railway. Costing £8m, all privately funded, the project took 14 years and proved that there was still the engineering capacity and donor-enthusiasm for

a limited steam construction revival. Since entering service in 2008, 60163 'Tornado' has been a regular sight on main-line specials and preserved lines, whilst in 2017 it was the first steam locomotive in fifty years to run at 100 mph. Building on that success, the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust is now well ahead with constructing P2 Class 2-8-2 No. 2007 'Prince of Wales' and has even ordered the first components for its third locomotive project, Gresley V4 2-6-2 No. 3403.

The very latest new-build steam locomotive to enter service (April 2019) is 4-6-0 Saint Class No. 2999 'Lady of Legend' built by the Great Western Society at their Didcot Steam Centre. Originally designed in 1902 by the then Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Western Railway, George Jackson Churchward, the Saint class represented one of the most important developments in steam locomotive design of the 20th Century. There were many innovative design features, and Churchward's emphasis on standardisation of compo-

nents led to a long line of very successful follow-on types. In all, some 77 Saints were constructed, and after half a century of work the last example, No 2920 'Saint David', was scrapped in 1953.

Work started on the new-build project in 2009 and benefited from the use of two major components, the boiler and the frames, from Hall Class 4-6-0 'Maindy Hall', a successor class to the Saints and of a type already well represented in preservation. The technical specifications include a weight (loco plus tender) of 125 tons, boiler pressure of 225 psi and two outside cylinders with Stephenson valve gear.

An integral feature of the project is the 'Atlantic Option'. Although intended to run primarily as a 4-6-0, provision has been made for the loco to run as a 4-4-2 'Atlantic', mirroring the original build contract when 13 Saints were built as 4-4-2 for comparative purposes and later converted to 4-6-0s. The plan is for 'Lady of Legend' to stay at Didcot for running-in before visiting other

heritage steam locations. But it will also be equipped with all the modern safety equipment to allow it to operate on the national main-line network.

The splendid 1920s-era picture 'Great Western Style' of a Saint Class locomotive in its prime depicts a Bristol-London express speeding through Sonning Cutting headed by No 2922 'Saint Gabriel'. The artist, Philip D. Hawkins is one of the leading UK railway artists and a Fellow of the Guild of Railway Artists, a 150-member professional body that this year celebrated its 40th anniversary. The picture is available to purchase as a high quality print from www.philipdhawkins.co.uk or www.railart.co.uk

Full details of the Great Western Society are available at www.didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk

Photographs: Courtesy the Author

Paul Whittle is the Vice Chairman, The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society and can be contacted at pro@dhrs.org



Last steam loco built by British Railways. 9F Class 2-10-0 No 92220 Evening Star at the National Railway Museum, York. (Photo credit Paul Whittle)



Great Western Style by Philip D. Hawkins FGRA



Star Class 4-6-0 No 2999 Lady of Legend on shed at Didcot Railway Centre on 27 July 2019



Under construction. An impression of P2 Class 2-8-2 No 2007 Prince of Wales (Photo credit A1 Steam Locomotive Trust).



First steam new-build, A1 Class Pacific No 60103 Tornado hurries westwards through West By fleet on a steam charter from London on 1 June 2019.

Darjeeling comes to the UK

David Barrie



It is generally recognised that the 'Flying Scotsman' is probably the most famous locomotive in the world. But possibly you may not realise that the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) is very likely the most famous railway in the world. Certainly, amongst rail fans from America to Australia, from Japan to the United Kingdom, it is the dream of all rail enthusiasts to visit this 'Holy Grail' of railways. Little wonder, therefore, that in the 1990's a Society devoted to this remarkable line was founded. Nothing remarkable, except that it was founded in the UK, where we have over 100 preserved steam heritage railways, each with its own fan base, supporters' group, or Society dedicated to its well being. So, what makes the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society (DHRS) unique is that it is the only Society in the World, with members in some 26 different countries, founded to champion a railway in a different country.

The mission statement of the DHRS is, 'To promote awareness of, interest in, and support for, the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.' As some readers may already be aware, we have over the decades achieved this by a number of initiatives, whether it is chartering trains, bringing tour

parties, exchanging engineering expertise, funding via the Darjeeling Ladies Inner Wheel, an awareness programme for children. Via our charity arm (Darjeeling Railway Community Support) we aid and assist various activities to help the people and villages alongside the tracks, from establishing schools to sending a doctor to the remote villages, encouraging self-employment opportunities, to eco projects like planting saplings to establish ground stability. We funded the establishment of a garden at Sukna to prevent encroachment over the railway sidings. You may have heard a



number of our active members give presentations at the Indian Steam Railway Society annual conferences. We have supported the DHR in many ways. We do this in India and here in the UK. Publicising the DHR is at the forefront of what we do.

One of our initiatives that falls firmly in this 'promoting awareness' category has been to descend upon a preserved railway in the UK and transform it into India. A simple reason, the oxygen of publicity. This has really been made possible by Adrian Shooter's Darjeeling 'B' class locomotive (number 778 also known by its original number, 19), being available to run on the chosen line. In case you do not know the story, this engine was purchased back in the 1960's by a wealthy American, who ran it on his private line back home. When he passed on his family did not know what to do with it, so it languished in the back of the local railway museum for several years. Thanks to a chance encounter, the DHRS learnt the museum wished to dispose of it. Of course, we could not afford to purchase, but we knew someone who might. Step forward one Adrian Shooter, then Chairman of Chiltern Railways, a hugely

successful Railway Company running trains out of St Pancras in London to destinations all over Birmingham and the midlands. Adrian built 'The Beeches' light railway in his garden in order to showcase number 19. Remarkably, it has its original boiler, which makes it the oldest working locomotive boiler in the world!

So, from time to time, Number 19 visits a preserved line (The Ffestiniog, the Leighton Buzzard, being two examples) and the DHRS is invited to add colour and interest by adding prayer flags, Hindi signage, a bazaar, chai sellers, and more. Of course, we dress in Indian costume. (We British do enter into the spirit of the occasion.) This of course creates publicity, visitor numbers swell, the media sense a story, and thereby the profile of the DHR is raised.

The Launceston Steam Railway is a heritage line that operates out of the town of that name in the county of Cornwall, a top UK holiday destina-



tion and the event this August was held in the high tourism season. In addition, the BBC sent over a crew to film with the result that this was screened on the early evening peak time regional news, raising the profile of the event further, and so, of course, the DHR enormously. Thus, fulfilling our aim of ensuring the DHR is well publicised!

In India and all around the World, there are those who love the Indian Hill Railways for their unique and

captivating qualities. Indian Railways has championed the DHR, investing heavily in its resurgence. The DHR Society endeavours to play its part in ensuring knowledge of this remarkable line reaches the widest possible audience.

About the Author: David Barrie is Chairman DHRS. He can be reached at chairman@dhrs.org

The DHRS website: www.dhrs.org



The River, Fort and Bridge

P J Singh



The Bridge

The early morning sunrise, the wakeup call of the rooster, were quite normal for the young lad to go and play in the dusty streets of KOTRA. But the little fellow did not dream that this daybreak was going to change his future life and soon he would become the ruler of one of the most powerful States in Rajputana. Maharao Chatrusal II, ruler of Kotah was issueless and of fading health. He decided to adopt Udai Singh as his heir to the throne of Kotah.

Since there were other contenders to the throne, the adoption was kept a very closely guarded secret and the boy was smuggled out from KOTRA to the fort of Kotah. This adoption was the wisest act of Chatrusal, who otherwise was an easygoing ruler and the State went into debt. He died in 1889, and the young village boy, after education in Mayo College, Ajmer, and Military College, Mhow, became the 16th ruler with full powers invested to him in November 1892. He changed his name to Maharao Umaid Singh, the Second. During his 51-year reign there was good progress in education, medical services, roads, bridges and there was good administration. He was the first ruler who made Hindi the official State language. There were strict laws on hunting and there was wildlife protection; nobody could shoot a tiger without his permission.

Be that as it may, at heart he was a railway man, many a time traveling within the driver's cabin and in the trolley of the Permanent Way Inspector. While BB&CI Railway was in the process of connecting Kotah with Bombay, his desire was to connect Kotah with Bina/Guna. After the mutiny of 1857, the British government decided to expand the railways so that war supplies and troops could be transported rapidly. The Rajas of the Indian States also desired to have railways in their own territory but chose Meter Gauge. The Maharao had vision that one day Central India would connect to Rajputana and insisted on Broad Gauge. Finally, the Midland Railway Company took up the work but was bought over by the

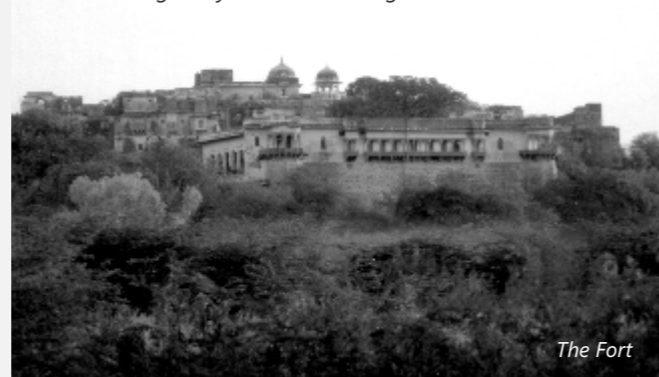
Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIP). While the Bina-Kotah track was a straight run, at Palaitha it had to cross the Kali Sind river, the fury of which is a spectacle to behold, when viewed from the majestic ramparts of the historic fort.

The Thakur Sahib of Palaitha, Apji Onkar Singhji, provided land, built a bungalow for the GIP engineer and, in addition, built staff quarters, stables and drinking water wells. The rail link and the bridge were completed in seven years and the first train was run sometimes in 1907. The Maharao of Kotah, his nobles and their families traveled in the first train. For over 100 years the power of steam hauled the train and in the silent nights, under millions of stars, the silence used to be broken by the huffing and puffing of the steam engines. They always used to blow a long whistle as if to salute the majestic fort of Palaitha. After the last farewell whistle, diesel engines have taken over, but they have kept the tradition of blowing their horn while crossing over the bridge.

The Kali Sind river and the fort are 42 kms. from Kotah (now Kota) on the Baran Road and a little further are cenotaphs of the early rulers and the GIP bungalow.

Photographs: Courtesy the Author

P J Singh has been a rail enthusiast all his life and has contributed regularly to the ISRS magazine.



The Fort

XVI National Steam Congress

A REPORT



One of the Painting on display

The XVI National Steam Congress was conducted by the Indian Steam Railway Society (ISRS) in New Delhi on the 17th and 18th of November 2018. The main Congress was conducted on the 17th at the National Railway Museum (NRM) Auditorium while a Steam run to Rewari was organised on the next day.

Considering the heightened activity in the previous year in reviving and also bringing back many off-pedestal steam locos to life all over the Indian Railways, the theme for the Congress was appropriately kept as **"Revival of Steam"**.

Delegates for the Congress started registering early in the warm and sunny Delhi afternoon, with the NRM Auditorium foyer decorated with lively paintings of renowned painter Kishore P. Biswal, arranged by the efforts of the Director of NRM and Patron of the Society. His oil on canvas paintings of steam locomotives were a real treat and set the right tone for the Congress. Delegates also enthusiastically picked up the latest ISRS Magazine issue put together by JL Singh, our ever so active Editor and the 2019 Steam Calendar put together by the efforts of Abhimanyu Shaunik, one of our active

and regular members.

The Hon. Minister of State for Railways Shri Rajen Gohain was kind enough to grace the occasion as the Chief Guest. The Hon. Minister for Culture Shri Mahesh Sharma also found time to grace the Congress as the Guest of Honour. He addressed the gathering during the function.

The Master-of-Ceremonies and Organising Secretary, Vikas Arya, launched the proceedings and called upon the gathering for observing a two minutes silence in memory of the late President of the Society, Lalit K Sinha who had passed away on the 15th of February earlier in the year. A lamp was lit in honour of the past Presidents, RC Sethi and LK Sinha, by the dignitaries present, along with Smt. Anita Sethi, wife of Shri RC Sethi.

This year's Congress held special significance as two of the previous Directors of the National Rail Museum, who have played an important role in the start and sustenance of the Steam Heritage movement in India, were attending the Congress as important functionaries of Indian Railways: one, Ashwani Lohani as Chairman of the Indian Railway Board, and the other, Rajesh Agrawal, as the Member Rolling Stock, Indian Railway Board.

The Congress commenced with the welcome address of its Working President and Chairman Railway Board, Ashwani Lohani. He welcomed all those attending and applauded the efforts of all zones of the Indian Railways in reviving some of the most iconic steam locomotives in the last one year. He emphasised the need to revive the steam locos to good working condition and having a mission of working a regular time tabled train using these locomotives.

In his address, the current President, Ranjit S Virdi paid tributes to the past Presidents and expressed the hope that the Society would continue to build on the foundations laid by them through the good work they had done. Though he had joined the movement for preservation of steam rather late, he expressed his desire to expand the membership and presence of the Society all over the country. He expressed the hope that the Indian Railways and other stakeholders in the Tourism industry, especially in Assam, would take up the revival of a portion of the heritage MG line of Haflong Hill in Assam, retained after the broad gauge conversion, and develop it as a site for Steam Tourism.

The Member Rolling Stock, Rajesh Agrawal, who is the Chief Patron of the Society, said that he had always been closely associated with steam heritage not only in India but all over the world and considered it his duty to preserve it along with all his other responsibilities.

The Keynote address of the 16th National Steam Congress was delivered by David McIntosh of British Rail who had been invited by the Society on the recommendation of Sir Mark Tully, Vice President of the Society. His presentation showed that there is a lot to be learnt from the experience of 'revival of steam' in Britain here in India.

First and foremost is the sheer scale of the 'revival' there. There are over a thousand working steam locos in Britain today as against barely 24 in India – counting all gauges. Secondly the revival of steam in Britain has been made commercially viable – mainly because the steam heritage services are run as private enterprises with a large number of volunteers taking up various tasks. The British citizenry values its heritage and is prepared to spend a good amount on a weekend ride on a steam train with family and friends.

His presentation brought out in detail how many mainline steam services are run by the two charter Steam Train Operating Companies authorised by Network Rail (the British Rail Infrastructure company created after privatisation). The presentation showed that the number of trains run is continuously on the rise, peaking to 600 in 2017 from about 150 in 1997, when these companies were formed, and mileage rising from about 10,000 miles to about 90,000 miles annually. The number of passengers carried on such charters has also quadrupled

from about 40,000 to about 160,000 in this period, testifying to the popularity and commercial success of these ventures. Since these steam trains run on the mainlines, along with regular services, reliability and safety achieved by the steam traction has to be at par with that achieved by the commercial main line services. This is a huge challenge but has been planned for.

The second part of his presentation detailed the meticulous work done in restoring the 60007 Sir Nigel Gresley, an A4 Pacific class of steam loco. The restoration was done between 2015 and 2018. Belonging to North Yorkshire Moors Railway, where it made its farewell run in September 2015, the locomotive underwent complete overhaul in public view at the National Railway Museum workshop in York. The work is being financed and overseen by the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Preservation Trust Ltd. and the locomotive is anticipated to re-enter mainline service on final completion of the overhaul and return to service.

Originally built by London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) Doncaster Works in 1937, this A4 Class Pacific Locomotive was initially numbered 4498 and 7 (LNER 1946) and later as 60007 on British Rail service upto 1966. Withdrawn from service on 1 February 1966, it was saved by the A4 Preservation Society, which was soon renamed the A4 Locomotive Society, from the cutter's torch. It was named after Sir Nigel Gresley, one of Britain's most famous steam locomotive engineers, who rose to become Chief Mechanical Engineer (CME) of the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER).

Sir Nigel Gresley is the holder of the postwar steam record speed of 112 miles per hour (180 km/h) gained on 23 May 1959 and carries a plaque to that effect.

The Keynote address was followed by the ceremony of the release of ISRS Souvenir- the Indian Steam Railway Magazine, the ISRS calendar and the release of the book 'Crossing the Lines' authored by Pramod Kumar, retired General Manager of Diesel Loco Works, by the Hon. Chief Guest followed by his speech. This was succeeded by the presentation of Steam Awards, list of which is given at the end of this coverage.



Shri Venkataraman, a familiar Railwayman from Chennai in his nineties, who has made it his passion to write and publish many fascinating books on various aspects of Railway development on his own initiative and cost, was also felicitated.

Technical Presentations

The first presentation was by the Principle Chief Mechanical Engineer, Northern Railway, Arun Arora.

As overall incharge of the epicentre of steam revival activities –Rewari Steam Shed, he recapitulated the outstanding works done by his teams for revival of steam locomotives at Rewari, Shakurbasti, Amritsar and Kalka during the year.

The movement of the only WG locomotive, 10253 to Rewari, and the ongoing efforts to steam it up, the revival and repairs of WPs 7161 & 7200, and the Bal Bhawan scaled-down Krauss Maffei loco after many years of being out of use, as well as KC 520 on the Kalka Shimla Railway, and ZB 66 on the Kangra Valley Railway, all were outstanding and challenging projects. The icing on the cake was the first time introduction of a weekly time tabled mainline steam loco hauled train on 15th Sept 2018 between Farukh nagar and Garhi Harisu. It was indeed a proud year for Northern Railway and Steam.

The next presentation made by the Principle Chief Mechanical Engineer Southern Railway, A K Kathpal, was equally impressive. He recounted the extraordinary story of the revival of EIR 21 "Express", the twin of EIR 22 "Fairy Queen" by the team of Southern Railway, both open-line and workshops of Perambur and Golden Rock. Express undertook its first commercial run on 27th May 2018 between Chennai Egmore and Kodambakkam, followed by successive similar and highly popular runs on all Divisions of Southern Railway. He described the story of this iconic loco from when it was put in service in 1855, till being plinthed first at Jamalpur workshop and later at Howrah station. In 2010 the loco was restored by Perambur workshop and undertook a heritage run on 15th August that year. He also described the return of another 100 year old steam loco, X-37384, on the Nilgiri Mountain Railway, which is now running regular charters also.

The next presentation by the Principle Chief Mechanical Engineer South-Eastern Railway J K Saha and his Chief Works Manager Kharagpur, A K Gupta. They recounted the putting back in steam of the only surviving and arguably one of the heaviest articulated steam locomotives to ever run on the Indian railway system – the BNR 811 (SER 38811) BG Beyer Garrett. The giant, built in 1926 and withdrawn from service in 1969, had



been reconstructed and made functional by the valiant efforts of the SER leadership in 2006, but last year an effort was made to overhaul it and make it run on the mainline in steam, and possibly make a regular charter trip. The presentation was about the current effort, the challenges faced – what with the fading away of the remaining supporting skills and materials in Railway workshops – and the grand success achieved in successfully moving the locomotive on its own steam. Some issues still remain – for example the braking – which hopefully would get tackled to enable it to haul passengers, at least on ceremonial occasions.

The last presentation was by J L Singh about a number of interesting steam locomotives exhibited at various locations in the USA which he had the opportunity to personally see. Among these were two geared steam locomotives, a Shay and a Hasler, common among the logging companies in the USA. Geared steam locomotives were never run in India.

The Conference ended with a Vote of Thanks by the Secretary of ISRS, G Shankar.

He first paid tributes to Shri L K Sinha, our previous President for his enormous services to the Society and to Steam Heritage. Then a detailed thanks was proposed to all those who had, in many small and big ways, contributed to the conduct and success of the XVI Congress.

List of Steam Awardees:

1. **Delhi Division:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by running a regular weekly steam hauled train.
2. **Perambur Workshop:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by reviving EIR 21.
3. **Southern Railway:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by reviving X 37392 at NMR.
4. **Rewari Steam Loco Shed:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by reviving the steam loco at Bal Bhavan, New Delhi.
5. **Amritsar Workshop:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by reviving ZB 66 steam locomotive.
6. **Kharagpur Workshop:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives by reviving the Beyer Garratt locomotive.
7. **Mr. David Charlesworth:** for displaying an outstanding commitment to the cause of steam locomotives.

Steam Run on the 18th of November 2018

A steam run was organised from Delhi Cantt. station to Rewari the next morning, i.e. the 18th of November 2018. The train was hauled by WP 7200 "Azad".

Amongst others, the dignitaries on board included Rajesh Agrawal Member RS Railway Board, Sir Mark Tully, David McIntosh and his partner Ms. Carole, David Charlesworth of the DHRS, and other ISRS members including the President and Secretary.

A notable personality on the footplate all through from Delhi Cantt. to Rewari was Alexander Karnes, a young steam enthusiast from the US who had delivered a memorable keynote address at the 14th Congress. His report on the state of affairs of the Rewari Shed as well as the Steam loco revival in India which he published on his Facebook page is remarkably detailed and insightful. The Steam Society was pleased to grant him an honorary membership of the Society and looks forward to his continued association. He combines the insights of an engineer and a manager with the hands-on skills of a mechanic, indeed a rare combination.

Photos archives of the ISRS.



Photo-feature

ISRS Steam Run 2018



As part of the National Steam Congress, a steam run was organised from Delhi Cantt. station in New Delhi to Rewari with WP locomotive No. 7200 "Azad" hauling the train. A special coach was attached for the delegates who started the run. While most of the delegates joined the run at Delhi Cantt. some of them joined only at Gurgaon station.

The Delhi Cantt.-Rewari rail line was constructed and opened for use as a section of the Rajputana-Malwa Railway (RMR) way back in 1873. It was, in fact, the first Meter Gauge (MG-1000 mm) line in the country. Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General, often credited with the introduction of the railway in India, was in favour of the Broad Gauge (BG-1676 mm) and all the initial lines in the country were laid to this gauge only. It was only by

1871 that MG was finally accepted and the Delhi-Rewari line was constructed. After being part of RMR, the line was subsequently taken over by the Bombay Baroda & Central India Railway, and finally, during re-organisation of the railways after independence, became part of the Bikaner Division of the Northern Railway zone of the Indian Railways. Today, it remains on the Northern Railway but as part of the Delhi Division. It was earlier a Meter Gauge double line. As a consequence of Policy Unigauge of the Indian Railways, one of the two double lines was converted to Broad Gauge in 1994 and the other in 2006. Thus, it is now a Broad Gauge double line.

Apart from a visit to the Rewari Steam Centre, the run itself was on a very historic line. We bring you the run in pictures.









TRAIN No. TRAIN NAME EXPT.TIME AID R.No.
WELCOME TO REWARI JUNCTION RAILWAY STATION

Train to Rajmahal

P K Mishra



Howrah Station today

A contract was signed between the East India Company and the East Indian Railway Company on 17 August 1849, entitling the latter to construct and operate an "experimental" line between Calcutta, the existing seat of power of British India, and Rajmahal, the old capital of Bengal.

"An expenditure of £1,000,000 was sanctioned for the first section: from Hourah (Howrah), opposite Calcutta, to Raneegunge, via Pandooah and Burdwan. The line is to be continued from Burdwan, in a northerly direction, to Rajmahal, and thence probably along the right bank of the Ganges to Patna, Mirzapore and Allahabad. A further sum of £1,000,000 has been sanctioned, for the purpose of continuing the extended line to Rajmahal, the whole expense not having yet been estimated. The East India Company guaranteed interest on the capital advanced for this purpose, at the rate of five per cent per annum for the first million, and four and a half per cent for the second." **Railways in Bengal: (being the Substance of a Report Addressed to the Chairman of East India Company by Sir William Patrick Andrew)**

"Rajmahal, formerly known as Agmahal, was selected by Raja Man Singh, famous General of Akbar, as the capital of Bengal on account of its central position with respect to that province and to Behar and from its commanding the Ganges and the strategic pass of Teliagarhi." **(Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. xiv. pp. 325-326)**

Rajmahal was the point from which the Ganges was continuously navigable at all seasons of the year for steamers upwards for a distance of five hundred miles. The river traffic was estimated at more than two million tons, while that by road was estimated to be only 33,370 tons.

It was expected that rail connectivity between Calcutta and Rajmahal would avoid the five hundred and twenty eight miles of a long circuitous route of rapid and ever tortuous Bhaugerrutte, long labyrinth of Soonderbunds, which would be navigable only eight months of the year. The river traffic was extremely dangerous due to frequent shipwrecks and total loss of large amounts of property.

"The Railway train would, with certainty, perform in ten or twelve

hours what now takes the steam vessel, on the average, as many days, and what is only precariously accomplished by the heavily-laden country boat in a month." **Indian Railways as Connected with British Empire in the East by Sir William Patrick Andrew**

Lord Canning, the Governor General, after the inaugural train journey, delivered a historic speech at Rajmahal: "We began our journey at the chief seat of Western trade and civilization on this side of the globe, the head quarters of England's power in Asia; and we have closed it almost under the walls of the ancient capital of Bengal and Behar — the city of Gour — which, little more than two centuries ago, was not surpassed by any in India for its busy population and magnificence, but which now lies a mass of tangled ruins and rank forest, tenanted by wild beasts, reeking with fever, and void not only of human industry, but of human life. In travelling between these two points — points of such striking contrast — we have passed through a country teeming with population and covered thick with all that is necessary to the sustenance of man."

George Turnbull, the chief engineer of EIR, conducted the survey in December, from Burdwan to Rajmahal, identified the route and determined the gradient after taking levels. The whole difference of level between Calcutta and Mirzapur was stated to be only 240 feet and this rise was almost uniformly spread over a distance of nearly 600 miles and consequently gradient available in this line averaged about 1 in 12,000. In 1851, Turnbull went to the extent of stating: "Although it would be almost premature and rash to state so positively before regular sets of longitudinal sections are made, yet I have strong hopes, amounting almost to conviction, that a gradient not much, if at all, greater than 1 in 2000 may be obtained all the way from Howrah via Rajmahal to the river Soane to the west of the city of Patna," **Turnbull's Report, 26 Feb. 1851, Sel. Govt. of India, No. 1**

Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General, remarked "Tried by these tests, I apprehend that the entire line from Calcutta by the Valley of the Ganges to the North West Provinces, will stand the first in order of importance and value, and ought to command the earliest and best attention of the Government of India." **Dalhousie's Minute, 20 April 1853, Pari. Pap., (H.C.), 1852-53, LXXVI, (787), p. 117**

The work of constructing Railway lines from Burdwan to Rajmahal was



Lord Canning

awarded to Nelson and Co., Railway contractor in India, who built 121 miles in Rajmahal and then went bankrupt.

The tapping of Ganges by the railways was a momentous feat as henceforth neither passengers nor costly goods would be subject to the freaks of Nuddea rivers and would profoundly change the life and activities of the region for ever.

It was a construction against all odds under most challenging circumstances and railway engineers and their team had to constantly battle with wild animals, deadly diseases, epidemics and onslaughts of nature. "The Rajmahal Railway has been driven through a land of tigers & cholera, the labourers have had to battle with the deadly miasma of jungle, the growth of centuries and in some instances have been carried off in broad daylight by wild beasts whose lands, undisturbed for ages have been intruded by the stranger with his iron road." **Rajmahal, its Railway & Historical Association by John Brunton**

On the 4th July 1860, the first train ran through from Calcutta to Rajmahal; this section of the Railway was planned for opening to the public from 15th October. The intervals between rains were employed in putting the line into efficient order and allowing the earthwork to settle and consolidate.

Before the official inspection of the Governor General, an inspection special was run on 22nd July between Howrah and Rajmahal allowing the entire top brass of EIR to thoroughly inspect the new line before officially declaring the section open.

The following notes of a trip on the East Indian Railway from Howrah to Rajmahal and back appeared in the Calcutta Englishman, 10 September 1860 edition:

"A special train left Howrah at 6.15 a.m. on the 22nd July, for Rajmahal, which place after several stoppages,

it reached at 4.30 p.m. Thus the road from Calcutta to Rajmahal is practically open, for the occasion of this special train was not that of an experiment, or a trial trip, but it was for a special purpose, and one that the Managers, and indeed all who are connected with the Railway may well be proud of - it was to convey the first lady of the land from Rajmahal to Calcutta."

The train left Howrah at the exhilarating pace of forty-five miles an hour, and kept up this running to Burdwan, where breakfast was partaken of. After a short rest a fresh start was made, the junction soon reached, and as speed was no object, stoppages were made at places wherever any order had to be given, telegram to be despatched, engineers to be taken up, or work to be inspected.

The party consisted of G. Turnbull, Esq., engineer-in-chief; E. Palmer, Esq., agent; Lingard Stokes, Esq., locomotive superintendent; T. Batchelor, Esq., traffic manager; C. L. Adley, Esq., Superintendent electric telegraphs; Captain Stanton, consulting engineer to the Government of India; Captain, the Hon. C. I. Stanley, A.D.C. to the Governor-General; Major W. S. Sherwill; and J. Wilson, Esq., barrister.

The party were kindly housed by T. Vigers, Esq., district engineer at Rajmahal, whose house, built over the "Sungee Dullan," or Stone Hall, an ancient building, commanding a beautiful view of the river Ganges, its numerous populated islands, and the bold projecting Rajmahal hills that dip down to the water's edge.

The paper, London Daily, describes the difficulties faced in the field, challenges in removing rocks in cuttings, bridging the treacherous rivers and how the indomitable English perseverance and talent could overcome all these obstacles.

"The state of the line from the junction near Burdwan to Rajmahal is most creditable to all concerned.



Lord Dalhousie

Great must have been the difficulties overcome, bad black cotton soil in some places that melts away under the influence of homoeopathic doses of water, and becomes converted into black mud, heavy and deep cuttings in others, cuttings that make a non-professional man shudder to his heels when he thinks of the masses of ponderous rock blasted and removed, rivers with almost uncontrollable streams that think lightly of rising to fabulous heights in a few hours, and that have beds broad enough for artillery practice-grounds; then again every conceivable article, whether for Railway purposes or for food, have had to be brought from great distances, some of which can only be measured by thousands of miles."

"But by the indomitable English perseverance, talent and kindness, all these difficulties, and many others besides, have been overcome; and lastly, the constructors of this great work have had to contend against an enemy more powerful and more to be dreaded than any of those yet mentioned; but by patience, care, and kindness, even this great difficulty has been overcome; and this was sickness amongst the workmen along the line, for the engineers, whose time and patience are so thoroughly occupied and tried whilst carrying out their great design, could still find time to

administer to the wants of their humbler workmen, amongst whom cholera has lately created foul havoc." **London Daily News, Monday, 10 September 1860**

Immense bridge over the More River at Synthia was one of the greatest engineering works of India with a large number of elegantly turned arches and its breathtaking brickworks.

"I was content to know that I was approaching and then crossing one of the greatest engineering works of India. The waters of the river, for the first time since the Creations now flow under the arches of a railway bridge, and that as quietly as if perfectly accustomed to such bridges. The water of this river, however, at times can and does perform feats of such boisterousness, that when the time does come for it to exert its force, the masonry will be sorely tried and, doubtless, will prove to be made of sterling stuff."

The next great work is the bridge over the Adjye, a magnificent piece of engineering of twenty-four arches; and equally excellent are the bridges over all the minor streams too numerous to mention. The extensive cutting at Surrool, two miles in length, is as neat a piece of work as can be found in any part of England.

En route, Pakour is the first station in the Santal country; where a Martello tower, thirty feet high and twenty feet diameter, loop holed for musketry with space on the top for one or two light guns, was constructed. It was built in 1856 for protection of Railway officers & Railway bungalows when the latter were rebuilt after Santal resurrection of 1856. This tower afforded protection against a company of mutinous Sepoys in 1858. "Rajmahal, its Railway & Historical Association" by John Brunton

The approach to the Rajmahal hills, from the very pretty scenery, is peculiarly pleasing, and as the train

dashes through the cutting at the Seeta Pahar, you first of all marvel that such an undertaking should ever have been thought of, and then you wonder that it should ever have been accomplished. Not content with proclaiming their power to cut through hills, and with a cool contempt for anything like an obstruction, the engineers of the railway, upon forcing their way through the obstinately tough basaltic hill, quietly run their line right through the Jola Jheer, a huge lake, extending for miles in every direction.

The Sita Pahar cutting was a work of immense labour through solid Basalt; three to four thousand men were employed on the mining and cutting work. The first contractors abandoned it in despair, as the stone proved to be as hard as iron.

At Rajmahal, one can see the ruins of house of great Jagat Seth, one of the richest person of his time and famous Banker, Rothschild of India; at whose door, East India company, French and Nawabs of Bengal, would come frequently for loans.

One can also see the grave of Surgeon Boughton, the man who, having gone from Surat to Agra in 1636, and cured the daughter of Shah Jehan, as his fee obtained a patent for his countrymen to trade free of customs duties facilitating the growth of East India Company in India, and destiny would allow him to play the same role of facilitating British trade in Rajmahal, where he cured one of the lights of Sultan Suja's 'harem'.

The region was teeming with wild life including rhinoceros and tigers, which are now sadly extinct: "For sports-men there is abundant occupation; the islands in the river not a hundred yards from the station will yield a goodly bag of hog, deer, frankolin, partridges, wild hog and tigers; whilst nearer the hills rhinoceros, tigers, jungle-fowl, pea-fowl, and other game, are met with."

It was fervently hoped that this

successful opening up of the line from Calcutta to Rajmahal is but the prelude to a good road to Darjeeling being constructed, and inhabitants of Calcutta would be able to spend their holidays on the slopes of the Himalaya, and gaze upon the snowy peaks and blue glaciers in not so distant future.

The train left Rajmahal at 6.15 a.m., on the 25th, on its return towards Calcutta, arriving safe at Howrah at 4 p.m. The whole country for forty miles south of Rajmahal was under water from the three previous days' heavy rain.

The rivers were in all cases very full; some had left their beds, and were spreading over the country, putting the embankments to a severe test, but they had stood firmly; and along the whole line, with the exception of the usual moderate subsidence of new earth, not an impediment was met with, though thousands of workmen are still engaged trimming and turving the slopes, filling up holes, digging tanks, erecting telegraphs and water tanks, building houses and stations; and although the line is a single one, and engines are engaged daily in running up and down the line, not an approach to an accident occurred.

The saloon carriage attached to the special train is a beautiful piece of coach-building; the greatest liberality having been exercised in its construction, ornaments, and furniture". London Daily News,



George Turnbull

Monday 10 September 1860

Board had grand expectations of the large traffic shifting from rivers to Railway after opening of the section. "Great expectations," the Board said, "Have been formed of the large traffic which will come upon this portion of the line, but the Board think it right to guard the shareholders against too sanguine an expectation that this traffic will appear simultaneously with its opening. It will certainly take time to draw it from its accustomed channels, and whilst no doubt there will at once be a very considerable apparent tonnage conveyed, it will principally be in the Company's own materials, the real trade of the country coming gradually, and until the advantages of railway transit are better understood in India, probably in the first instance somewhat slowly." History of the East Indian Railway by George Huddleston

Governor-General of India in his speech after opening of the Railway to Rajmahal also raised the issue of financial viability of the project, reiterating the remunerative employment of capital to facilitate investments:

"Though the Government were most anxious to give encouragement to the investment of English Capital in India, and however sincere their desire, that encouragement would fail, unless they could prove by the establishment that there is scope for remunerative employment of such capital in India, particularly in Bengal. Without such assurance, capitalists will not be induced to aid in such enterprises, however useful in their ultimate results." A Sketch of Eastern Bengal with reference to its railways, and government, Thacker Spink & Co. 1861

To commemorate the opening of the line as far as Rajmahal, the Government of India struck a large silver medal which was distributed to the principal officers engaged on the work. The distribution of a symbol of the kind would, it was thought, be acceptable to the engineers and

others, whose services in connexion with the work it was proper to acknowledge, and it will doubtless tend much to the promotion of good feeling on their part.

The following is a copy of the communication sent to one of the District Engineers employed on the work:—

From the Secretary to Govt. of India. Public Works Department.

To GRAHAM PEDDIE, Esq., DISTRICT ENGINEER, East Indian Railway.

Sir,

I am commanded by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India to transmit, for your acceptance, the medal struck by order of Government on the occasion of opening the East Indian Railway to the Ganges at Rajmahal, as being a memorable point attained in the construction of that great work, on which you have been employed.

I have the honour to be

Sir, Your most obedient servant,

H. Yule, Lieut.-Col., Secretary to the Govt. of India. The History of the East Indian Railway by George Huddleston. Published 1906 by Thacker, Spink and Co.

The East Indian Railway line to Rajmahal was opened on the 15th October 1860 with much splendour. A train, containing the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and other distinguished guests invited by Mr. Palmer, the agent, East Indian railway company, started from Howrah at 8 o'clock in the morning, and took up the Right Honourable the Governor General and his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief at Serampoor at 9 o'clock.

The train entered upon the new line at Synthia at about past 12, and after stopping for the refreshment of the passengers for nearly an hour at Rampoor Haut, reached Rajmahal before 5 o'clock in the evening. The distance of Rajmahal from Howrah is 202 miles, of which 83 are newly

opened. The party returned without any untoward occurrence to Calcutta on the following day. It was no small achievement to open 83 miles of railway in one day, and to run successfully a train consisting entirely of new carriages built in the railway company's own workshops, conveying upwards of 200 1st-class passengers over 200 miles of railway at an average speed of 25 miles an hour, returning the same distance with equal success the next day.

The line had, as was to be expected, suffered much from slips and settlement of the new embankment during the rains, then hardly over, and the ballasting was incomplete; but the engineers had exerted themselves to get ready for an opening before the Doorgah Poojah holidays, and succeeded so well that the train passed up without difficulty or delay, except for five or six minutes to replace a rail near the commencement of the Rajmahal branch.

His Excellency the Governor General of India, Lord Canning gave a historic speech at Rajmahal:

"We began this day's journey at a spot washed by the tides of the Bay of Bengal, and within a stone's throw of the anchorage of some of the noblest ships which, to the furtherance of commerce and all its attendant blessings, the skill and enterprise of our fellow countrymen have launched upon the ocean. We have ended it in an inland district 200 miles off, where not only are the uses of the great highway of nations uncared for and unknown, but where the very name of the 'black water' is a word of mystery and terror.

"We have skirted a district abounding in mineral wealth, and already eagerly seizing the opportunity, as yet imperfectly afforded to it, of pouring this wealth into the great centre of activity in Calcutta. We have been carried through the wild country of the Sonthals, one of the rudest and wildest races of India, but a race not insensible to kindly

government, and who, if their hills and jungles had been as accessible five years ago as they are now, would have been at once checked in a purposeless rebellion.

"Lastly, we find ourselves standing on the bank of the great Ganges, at that point at which it is in the interests of commerce that the tedious and uncertain navigation of its lower waters should be exchanged for a short and secure land carriage.

"If, then, Gentlemen, it be destined, as without presumption we may believe it to be, that to British science and British enterprise shall be committed in India the noble task of bringing security, comfort, and comparative wealth within the reach of races as yet ignorant of these; of extending the field of profitable industry to them; of supplying the wants of some by the superfluities of others; of enhancing prosperity where it exists, and of reviving it where it has drooped and decayed; of promoting fellow ship between men, and of bringing light into dark places;—if these, I say, be the functions allotted to the science and enterprise of our fellow country men in India, then I declare that I do not know where in the map, not of India only, but of the world, a spot could be found presenting, within the short compass of one day's journey, so complete an epitome of all the opportunities for usefulness and good which attend on well directed enterprise, as does the country through which we have this day passed."

The old portion of the line (Howrah to Burdwan) over which you have this day travelled is the one in India, the proceeds of which already more than cover the Government's guarantee " of five per cent. And though this may appear an unimportant vulgar fact to those who are not concerned by it, it is one full of hope for the future.

It is by tempting the capital as well as the skill and experience of England

into India, by showing that there is remunerative employment for it, that India must be advanced. This can be done only by showing an example of the practical success of such undertakings as this; and that the East India Railway, to do honour to which we are met, is not only full of future promise, but actually in great part remunerative, and that of its well-working there need be no apprehension, we may now safely assert.

I am sure, gentlemen that many of you must have been struck, as certainly I was, by the sight of a train such as we saw to-day, carrying 200 first class passengers, all in brand new carriages of Indian make, and with new engines, issuing from its starting place, so perfect in all its parts, and so well appointed, that Paddington station itself might have been proud of it, accomplishing within nine hours a journey of more than 200 miles, 85 of which have only this day been opened, and arriving at its journey's end, not only easily, smoothly, and without an accident, but without a screw loosened.

I have known something of similar ceremonies in England, but never have I heard of any that was more thoroughly successful than that which we have this day witnessed.

"I believe, gentlemen, that if it had been prophesied to any one of you a few years ago on getting into the comfortable carriage of an express train at Euston square, that you would one day be carried in a like conveyance and very nearly at a like speed through such a country as this, you would have treated it as a joke. Yet the thing has come to pass this day;—and, let me say that the extravagant contrasts which have thus been presented to our eyes are not merely a subject for idle wonderment, but a solid ground of hope for the future of British India." Bengal Hurkaru – The East Indian and other Government guarantees on Railways. ... WM. H. ALLEN & Co., 7, LEADENHALL STREET. London 1861.

His Excellency the Governor General, in proceeding up the Ganges, took the opportunity of visiting three of the principal works on the East Indian railway, viz., the Monghyr tunnel, and the Soane and Kurrumnassa bridges.

Turnbull reported that in Rajmahal Station much remains to be done; but he had not been very urgent in pushing on the works there, until experience has proved how much accommodation will be required.

"Above 3 miles of Permanent Way are laid down already for station purposes; three additional brick bungalows, and a barrack for guards and engine drivers, are completed.

The following temporary structures have been set up: a booking office and platform, a goods shed, with export and import platforms, and an engine shed for six locomotives, with watering apparatus. The permanent buildings for booking office and carriage sheds are in hand, and will be carried on to completion as fast as materials can be provided.

The continual changes in the bed of the River Ganges are well known; the tendency of the river of late years has been to deposit large "chirrs" or sand banks opposite to station frontage, and the deep water is now at some distance south of the station. To connect the Railway with the unloading places frequented by the boats and steamers, it was found necessary to lay down about a mile and a half of Permanent Way. Some unavoidable delay took place in obtaining permission to lay down this temporary road, which is absolutely necessary for the traffic, but the work is now in hand, and will soon be finished. A building of considerable size, part of the old palace ruins, was roofed in and adapted for a hotel, and has been of great convenience for the accommodation of passengers. It is found, however, to be much too small, and a proposition for enlarging it is prepared.

The hall of black marbles which once

formed Sultan Suja's Boitakaana now makes a comfortable sitting room for the Railway Engineer.

George Turnbull, in his half yearly report ending 30th June to the Chairman and Board of Directors of the East Indian Railway dated 9th August 1861, wrote that The works and way have been maintained in good working order, and the traffic has been carried on without intermission during the half-year. Ahmoddpoor Station is nearly finished. At Mullarpoor and Nulhatty the second or "up" platform walls are finished, and the goods and passenger sheds are well advanced. Rampore Haut engine changing station has the pumping engine house and tank finished; the other buildings are in progress. Moradoi and Pakour stations are nearly finished.

In 1860, when the loop-line of the East Indian Railway was opened to this town, an arm of the Ganges ran immediately under the station, forming a navigable channel for steamers and boats of all sizes. In 1863-64 the river abandoned this channel, leaving an alluvial bank in its place. Rajmahal was, till 1879, three miles distant from the main stream of the Ganges, and could only be approached by large boats during the rains. A tram way was constructed to connect River Ghat with station. In 1879 the Ganges returned to its old bed, but in 1882 it showed indications of again deserting it. The Imperial Gazetteer

of India, Volume 11 by Sir William Wilson Hunter.

All permanent way, rolling-stock and other stores were transported from England in sailing ships via the Cape of Good Hope (the Suez Canal did not then exist). By 1859, before opening of Rajmahal section, there were 77 engines, 228 coaches and 848 freight wagons with EIR.

The construction of line to Rajmahal was initially much impeded by the Sonthal insurrection necessitating importation of labourers from Nagpur and other distant parts, unhealthiness of climate, difficulties in constructing large bridges & extensive viaducts. It was pioneering leadership of Turnbull that the line could be finally constructed.

It was expected that Railways would play a big role in civilizing the natives and imbibing the importance of punctuality in them.

"As the stream of the Ganges, like that of Nile, and other great River, has been the diffuser of civilization among its banks, so is the Railway likely to prove a line of light through Mofussil darkness enabling the merchants, the educator and the missionary to give access to the highways and hedges of the Santal and other districts.

"Punctuality so wanting in our native friends will be taught more effectively than the school master—the train waits for no one." The Calcutta Review, Volume 36



Rajmahal Station after renovation

Book Review

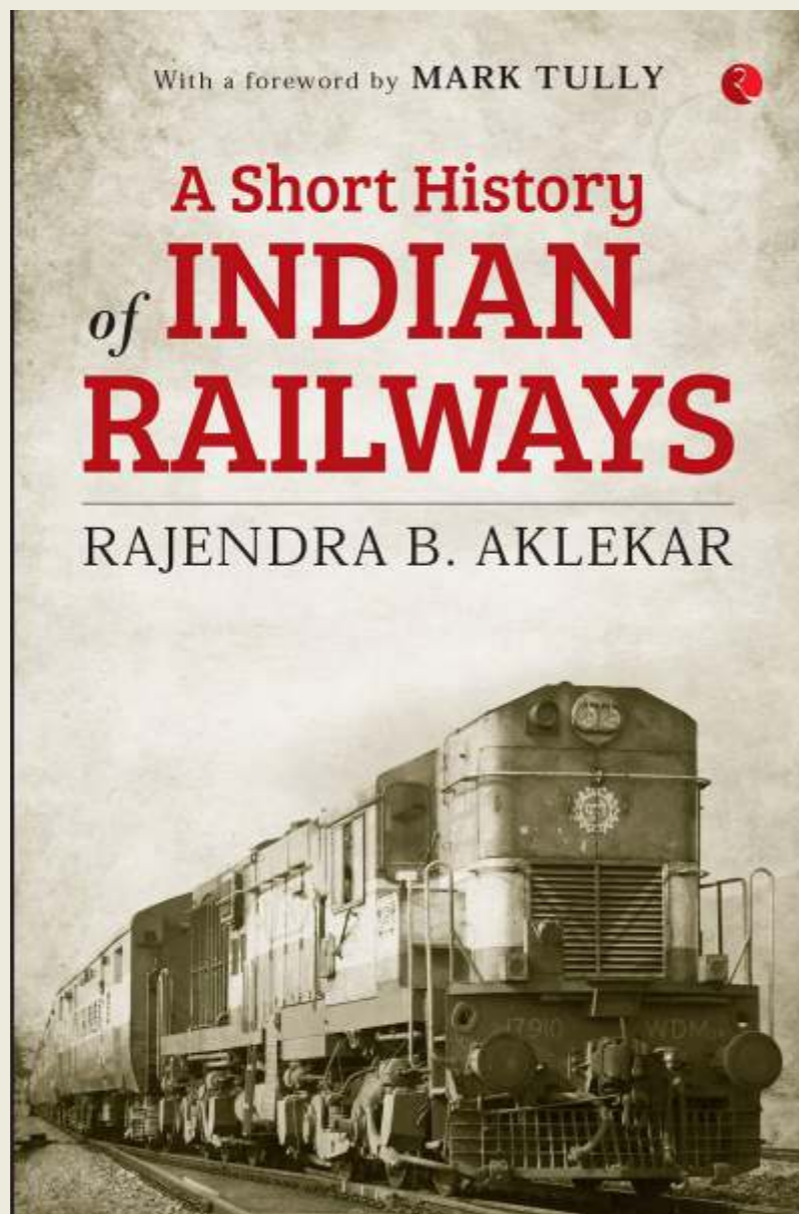
A Short History of Indian Railways

One of the events at the 17th National Steam Congress this year is the release of the book, **A Short History of Indian Railways**, by the well-known journalist from Mumbai, Rajendra B. Aklekar. The book had been launched in June this year but the Indian Steam Railway Society is recognising the book and honouring its author by releasing it once again at its Congress so that it is brought to the notice of the large number of persons interested in the railways that the Congress brings together.

A short review of the book follows...

There have been a number of books written that cover the history of the Indian Railways. Virtually all of them start from the first commercial train that ran on Indian soil in 1853 and after going through various events, dates, rail persons, developments, etc. end with the time when the book was written. The well-known journalist and rail fan from Mumbai, Rajendra B. Aklekar had read most of these books on rail history and was aware that another book on the subject had to be different. And he succeeded admirably in bringing out a history book that holds the attention of the reader through presenting the rich history of the organisation through anecdotes and stories. While each anecdote may be a stand alone, he has woven all the tales together into an eminently readable book.

Aklekar needs no introduction. He has authored two books related to the railways earlier. The first was **Halt Station India** that chronicles not only the introduction of the first train in the port city of Bombay (now Mumbai) but continues to the electrification of the lines around the city almost a century back, and beyond. There is no doubt that when it comes to the railways in Mumbai, few would know more than Aklekar. The second book, **India's Railway Man**, is a biography of E. Sridharan, known affectionately as the Metro Man, but who rose to prominence earlier when he completed the difficult and challenging Konkan Railway line very successfully. Aklekar's third book goes beyond one city or one person and covers the entire Indian Railways in an absorbing and very readable manner.



One of the features of the book is the personal touch that Aklekar has added to many of the stories. For instance, when he talks of the oldest railway station in the country that still exists, Royapuram, in Tamil Nadu, he narrates the story of the station through a personal visit. When talking of one of the railway's recent success stories, the Vande Bharat Express or Train 18, he does so through a conversation with the creator of the train, the then General Manager of the Integral Coach Factory, Sudhanshu Mani. Even when the author is writing of events or times that he obviously could not have witnessed, a personal touch is evident right through his writing style.

Once beginning to read the book, chances are that you will not put it down. For instance, when your attention may be getting diverted, Aklekar adds a touch of humour to the stories that he is narrating. One good example is of an irate passenger who complained that he had got a cinder in his eye. The reply he received is perhaps one of the best examples of not only wit and humour but also of a diplomatic repartee. The incident is reproduced below:

There is a story about an angry passenger who complained to a railway official that he had a cinder in his eye from one of the engines, and it cost him £1 to have it taken out and have his eye seen by a doctor.

The aggrieved passenger asked: 'What are you going to do about it?'

To this the official answered tactfully, after saying that he was sorry to hear of the problem, 'We shall do nothing, Sir! We have no further use of the cinder, and from a legal point of view, the cinder was not yours. No doubt we could institute proceedings against you for removing our property, but in this case, we shall take no further steps in the matter.'

There are few books or events regarding the railways to which Sir Mark Tully is not connected in some way. Sir Mark is connected with this book as well through the Foreword that he has written. Apart from commending the presentation of the history through stories, he sums up with the words, 'His (Aklekar's) stories instruct and entertain, bringing the past of the Indian Railways alive in the present. They will entertain as well as instruct, thereby encouraging Indians to be proud of their railway's past and ensure that those railways play a crucial role in the future.'

Thus, starting with the Red Hills Railway, whose construction started in 1836, 'A Short History of the Indian Railways' ends with the introduction of Train 18 or Vande Bharat Express that started commercial operations on in 2019, i.e. the current year. Any person with any interest in the Indian Railways and its history must have this book adorn his or her book shelf.

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