

"I was there"– Tony Keeble, now Trustee and Deputy Chairman.....

My involvement in rescuing MS&L no. 946 all began when Gerald Fleuss, a work mate on Anglia Region, and I purchased an 0-4-0ST from Bowaters at Ridham Dock. We were helping Bob Drage build a small standard gauge railway on his farm at Heydon, near Royston in Herts.

When we finished there were several locos but no rolling stock. Gerald heard that there was a condemned six-wheel carriage dumped at Manningtree (Essex) due to be scrapped. It turned out to be no.946. Duly purchased by us two for £50, it arrived at the farm, delivered as an exercise by 39 Reg. Royal Engineers, after an "eventful" journey - blocking a main road, fouling a power line at the entry to the farm and smashing through the floor of the trailer, our shed on wheels arrived. By this time master carpenter Bob Hanson had joined the growing team and by Carriage & Wagon ex-RE engineer Pat Sumner. And that was when the challenge started....We had no idea how much time and effort would be required to mend all the damage it had suffered in its latter life :- eight of the ten doors were nailed up, no interior compartments, just a massive metal rack for storage of locomotive boiler tubes (at Stratford Locomotive works), from earlier life after being retired from revenue service, replacement of one end (removed to for loading those tubes), severe damage suffered in a derailment, and then glass and wooden panels needed replacement.

Sadly, after three or four years, enthusiasm waned and it was abandoned and suffered badly from the weather and a local shooters club used it as a mess van doing more damage. Pat Sumner and I offered the carriage to Ruddington – and 17 years later more than a few hours, weeks, months, years even, we have a sparkling Victorian railway carriage which exceeded our hopes and dreams with magnificent support from the Ruddington team. All absolutely worth it..." **A Keeble** – Trustee

"I too was there" - Pat Sumner, our Chief Mechanical Engineer

Tony and I were colleagues at Cambridge Area in BR days, he with the commercial and operating world and me with the day to day maintenance of Traction & Rolling Stock and Plant. We didn't have much daily contact as my HQ was at Coldhams Lane Depot, whilst he was located a mile away at the main station Travel Centre. We exchanged the normal pleasantries on meeting as colleagues do. I moved on after 5 years to pastures new. Likewise did Tony.

Another 5 years or so passed working with Inter City as Plant Services Engineer ECML(South). That nice Mr Major and his Government then decided to privatise BR, and he gave us senior managers the chance to retire, which I did. A while later I met up with another ex-Cambridge colleague who suggested that I might like to join the "Old Codgers" reunion which met every so often somewhere in the Cambridge area for lunch and a pint. This I did and met up with Tony again. Our mutual interest at this time was in Gauge 1 Garden Railways, so we started chatting and periodically we "played trains" on Derek Ashton's magnificent railway at Gt. Wilbraham. It was during this time that Tony told me about his 6-wheeler which he had moved to Ruddington and would I like to have a look at it? All the running gear was there, and lo and behold, so was the gas lighting equipment. Yes please!

One look round the 6-wheeler, was enough to spark my interest as a gentle retirement project, so I joined in with Tony going roughly monthly to Ruddington to do some work. In fact stripping work had started on the vehicle by the time I got there; Peter Wilson had done magnificent work by pulling in the body sides at cant rail level with a steel strap and machining new guttering to cover it over.

Also, he had renewed some roof arches and skinned the roof with hardboard. This gave us an excellent start, but we decided to concentrate firstly on renewing the tyre bolts on the Mansell wheel-sets, all 96 of which were bent like bananas, and had to be drifted out. This task took my first 6 months to complete. Then followed the stripping of the body skins and doors to assess what was required on the body, frames and seating. It was about this time that Tony brought along Bob to engage his skills on the woodwork. Together with Clyde and later with Doug, we formed a merry gang, re-skinning the body and renewing the head-stocks over the next year or so.

Quote from our Chairman, RTS - *Pat had the great sadness of having to provide personal care for a very prolonged period of increasing incapacity of his Dementia-afflicted wife, Pat, whom he lost in 2010. His personal support to his wife - and to us - has been utterly outstanding.*

I decided that we needed more to restore our 6-wheeler to its 1888 condition so, through the NRM York, I managed to get drawings from their archive. A bit more research confirmed that the vehicle number was most likely 946, and that is what "she" became. We had found an area of rot to the 35ft long sole bar over the centre axle which required to have a new section spliced in, but to do this we had to lift the body off its frames and prop it 3 sleepers high back on

its frames so we could get underneath in relative comfort. We found that all 16 body bolts had thinned with corrosion down to about 1/8"D from 1"D in some circumstances, so they had to be removed and replaced. Draw gear, brake work, and vacuum pipework, all had to be refurbished at this time, before we lowered the body back onto its frames. Doug had performed wonders with the doors and these could now be fitted and 946 finally began to look the part. Seat frames were devised and expert Roger joined us with Francis to complete the upholstery. There then required lots of painting inside and many rubbed down undercoats before the final external finish was applied professionally. So, after a period of 17 years very rewarding work the Trust owns a gem, much admired, at Nunckley Hill Rail Museum. One day I hope to see "her" with passengers on the GCR main line. **P Sumner** – CME, Trustee