

LOCOMOTIVE & CARRIAGE INSTITUTION

THE HISTORY (1911 – 2011)

Founded in 1911, and known then as the Institution of Locomotive Inspectors & Foreman, the inaugural meeting is believed to have taken place at King's Cross station. Most, if not all, of the records dating from the 1930s and 1940s have been lost over time, and so consequently, very little about the early years of the Institution is actually known in any detail. Some facts are traceable, however, and in 1931 the title was changed to the Locomotive & Carriage Institution. Some of our early Presidents were Sir Henry Fowler, Sir Nigel Gresley, R.E.L. Maunsell Esq. and W.A. Agnew Esq. All of these were prior to 1934.

Several overseas visits took place during the early years of the Institution, with extremely high attendance figures for some of them. The first European trip on record took place in 1935, in which a staggering 100 people journeyed to Switzerland. In May 1936, 79 members participated in the 8-day educational tour to Sweden, and two years later, 44 members travelled together for a weeklong tour of Ireland and Scotland.

Annual Reports exist from 1936 and 1940 to reveal a few more snippets of information, and then with the onset of war, details of our history become very sketchy again. In 1940 the membership stood at 209, with W.S. Graff-Baker being re-elected as President. In his Annual Report of that year, he makes reference to the climate of war, and the need for members of the Institution to "face their duties and do their part". R.C. Kiloh was Chairman around this time (the exact dates are not known), however, a report published in the 1980s mentions that he also stood in as President during the war.

From 1951 to the present day, we are fortunate to have a virtually complete set of minute books and other such reports to detail our history with. However, with all the records being hand-written prior to 1975, the various styles of handwriting of previous Secretaries does take quite a bit of deciphering.

In geographical terms, London has always been the main focal point for the Institution, but several regional branches have also been set up over the years. These include: Doncaster (1952-73), Ireland (1952-??), Crewe (1972-82), West of England (1992-??), White Rose (1993-??) and North West England (1995-??). Sadly, none of these remain today, although a quick scan through our membership list does reveal that we still have a significant number of members in the 'West of England' areas.

With the arrival of privatisation in 1994, the Institution had to change too. Arranging visits and outings became increasingly more difficult, as 'red tape' and Health and Safety tended to get in the way of people being able to make decisions. The type of activity that was offered to the membership had to be altered, with ideas such as walking old railway routes and visiting steam preservation centres becoming more common.

Recent outings have seen us visit The Crich Tramway, East Lancashire Railway, West Somerset Mineral Railway, Seaton Tramway (for our 2010 AGM) and the newly re-opened Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Walking trips have taken in locations such as Sharpness Docks, the former railways of Weymouth and Portland and The Lickey Incline at Bromsgrove & Blackwell.

Foreign visits also became less frequent over the years, although from 2005-2010, Alan Spencer (Chairman and General Secretary at differing times) ran twice-yearly tours to Switzerland under the "Charters Helvetica" branding. With the valuable assistance of Willi Frauenfelder, a Vice President during this period, these trips regularly attracted around 30 of our members each time. However, all is not lost, and an exiting weeklong trip to Dresden, Germany is planned for the summer of 2011.

In 1995, the membership was above 500. Today it stands at 306, having hovered just above the 300 mark for several years now. However, the fact that we have not dropped below this level is encouraging, and proof that the Institution must still be doing many things right after 100 years.

Encouraging to note is that our monthly presentation evenings (held from September through to May), average around 28 members per month. The meeting on 2 March 2010, regarding the brand new A1 steam loco "Tornado", attracted some 46 members – surely a record?

The current average figure is the highest it has been since records started, and again proof that the Institution can still attract the right calibre of speaker. Speakers from 2010 have included Mark Hopwood (Managing Director of First Great Western), Mark Allatt (Chairman of the A1 Locomotive Trust), Allan Dare (Business Development Manager for Chiltern Railways) and Jim Connor (from 'The London Railway Record').

Looking forward, the Institution must build on its recent success stories. The Annual General Meeting has been moved from January to May (to bring it into line with the end of our educational year) and now usually includes a supporting fixture. This makes the day more attractive to members, and judging by recent attendance figures, has proved very popular. Also the Council has decided to alter the venue of the AGM, and by moving it away from London, this has also increased the interest from within the membership. Over the last four years, we have held the meeting in Tisbury (twice), Leeds and Seaton. For 2011, the meeting will be held at The Roundhouse in Derby.

Over the years, many of the General Secretaries and Presidents have used their yearly address's to urge current members to be on the lookout for new blood to join the Institution. I am no different, and although we are currently at a healthy level just over the 300 mark, we can never be complacent. Please take the time to talk to work colleagues or railway associates, and invite them as a guest to one of our monthly meetings at St. James's Park. Hopefully from this, they might be encouraged to join.

The Institution is currently going through a revival in fortune. Long may the current membership remain interested and active, and let our ranks be swelled with newer members, that will carry us beyond 2011 and towards a glorious future.

For those that wish to read more about the Institution, or our plans for 2011, please visit our website at **www.lococarriage.org.uk**

Jerry Gold writes –

Piers Connor's wonderful articles sent me 'googling' on Graff Baker and led me to his presidential address in 1938. It is a fascinating account of his design philosophy and is reproduced here with permission, but without the illustrations, of course.