

Tramway Infrastructure – Are We Preserving the Technology?

Presenter: Craig Tooke, MTPA, Executive Officer COTMA

Session Chair: Richard Gilbert

Session Secretary: Bruce Gamble

Additional Notes from the Session Secretary

Craig's paper advanced the view that maintenance of our tramway museum infrastructure (tramcar mechanical and electrical systems, electrical supply and distribution and permanent way, etc) is as important as other conservation aspects. He highlighted problems in keeping our museum tramways going: ageing technology, declining skill base as the membership ages, difficulty in finding industrial capability for maintenance, repair and replacement.

What are we doing to maintain records of our infrastructure for the future? Do we know what is installed? How it works? How to fix it when it fails? Where the expertise is?

Craig pursued the idea that not only do we need to maintain records, but also develop good collections of industrial textbooks, our links to professional engineering groups and schemes for encouraging and training younger members. Is the passing-on of technical knowledge a priority in our museums?

This work need not be dull and boring, but vital and interesting.

Discussion

Richard Gilbert (BTM) commented that the ICS (International Correspondence School) series of texts are a valuable resource.

Craig noted that the information in these is referred to not only by *museum* tramways.

David Frodsham (TMS/Crich) commented that maintenance of this sort of information is a key job for Crich's librarian. It is used by the workshop staff and international researchers. There is possibly a central role for COTMA here.

(Your scribe found the Crich archive a welcome and *unique* source of manufacturer's drawings for the c.1937 EMB L5 lightweight trucks purchased by the Auckland system for six of its Streamliners).

Craig asked what people felt about a register of patterns and drawings.

Alan Bradley (BTM) noted that he has a list of patterns of the former SEC. It was clarified that these are in fact a list of component *drawings* (not patterns) now held in the Public Records Office.

John Radcliffe (AETM) recounted his inquiry to Crich regarding the Brill portable vestibule cars. Rosie Thacker (Crich librarian) was able to put John in contact with Deborah Brill in the USA, who is the current family historian and a mine of information concerning the Brill company and its products.

David Frodsham can be contacted concerning the means of obtaining information from Crich, the London Transport Museum and the National Rail Museum, York, all of whom maintain liaison regarding their collections.

Warren Doubleday (BTM) questioned if we are working enough with younger members. How do we upskill non-technical people in hands-on understanding and solution of day-to-day problems? He gave an example of how hands-on workshops could be used to demonstrate fault-finding in controllers. A further example of simple techniques to be taught was using a magnetic compass to determine the correct connections when sorting out the field-coil connections in a motor. He also referred to a good paper produced by the Seashore Trolley Museum (USA) a few years back on maintaining motors (Craig Tooke holds a copy). Warren noted that people like him with a technical background were beginning to suffer from ‘chassis rust’ and needed to pass their responsibilities on.