

COPY

RAILROADING, ROTARY AND THE IRRFR

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"You will recognize us because you are a member of the IRRFR! That meant we had to find them in crowd of literally hundreds bearing name signs as we arrived at Heathrow Airport, London England. It was surprisingly easy as Adrian and Carol Munns (IRRFR members) were holding up a unique flashing "Green Signal" modeled after the logo on the front of this newsletter! What a great welcome to begin our Railroading and Rotarians galore excursion!

As new members of the IRRFR (IRRFR) we salute this outstanding group. Our recent self-planned trip to England, Wales, Isle of Man and Scotland was a roaring Rotary success. This was a self designed totally railroad journey of which just Annette and I were the only participants, however we were not alone thanks to Rotary and the IRRFR.

The trip was planned to coincide with our attendance at the 1997 Rotary International convention in Glasgow. Adrian and Carol rode with us on the train from Heathrow to our departure point for Shrewsbury, England the first leg of the trip. Adrian provided us with many pages he had authored about interesting points of interest at each marker point along the tracks! This narration added a superb dimension to the trip. The train notes continued all the way into Scotland!

After an evening of local color hosted by Rotarian Valerie Povall and her Rotarian husband we traveled by train to Tywyn, Wales. Our BritRail pass served us well for the entire trip! Upon arrival at the Tywyn station we were cordially met by Colin James, (IRRFR member from Lancashire, England) who traveled with us for the next 3 days. We had written to many members of the IRRFR, International Rotary Travel and Hosting Fellowship and to local Rotary club presidents in the areas we planned to visit. We received an overwhelming positive response along with making many new friends.

We rode the first of our preserved railways with Colin, the Talylllyn Railway, 2 foot 3 inch gauge former slate railway, where we passed a "Peter Sam" engine and toured the station house with its unique manual switching equipment. From there Colin arranged for a short personalized tour of the Welsh Highland Railway Centre. This included meeting the executives of the Welsh Highland RR, some of whom were Rotarians, a short ride in the cab of a diesel and a tour of the yard. What glorious locomotive power they have restored. That evening was the fantastic Ffestiniog RR where we had a "steam and cuisine" gourmet dinner while traveling in Victorian style from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog and returning while enjoying a scrumptious chocolate desert feast. A true highlight was learning that Colin had worked on the restoration of the Ffestiniog Railway. He enlightened us with many details and true stories of the reconstruction. The food was superb and the rail journey one to be remembered forever.

The next morning Colin drove us to the Snowdon Mountain Railway, Llanberis, Wales. Due to wind conditions we only went 1/2 way up the mountain but the trip was exhilarating. The rack and pinion line with its engines from the 1800's proved their continued energy and abilities in spite of the wind. The bogie coaches were immaculate and the narrow gauge provided a closeness and unique ride. With some time available we visited the Welsh Slate museum which used narrow gauge trains to haul slate from the mines to the seaports for shipment. There we rode along the lakeside on the original quarry line narrow gauge Llanberis Lake Railway. Later a journey on the Great Orme Tramway, a cable hauled street tramway operated in two sections, concluded the day! Colin graciously took our luggage in his car as we rode the BritRail to meet him at our Liverpool destination.

The next morning we flew a short hop to the 220 square mile Isle of Man. There we were hosted by Harry and Margaret Pease through our membership in the Rotary International Travel and Hosting Fellowship. What good fortune as because of their knowledge we avoided the crowds from the 40,000 visitor "Tourist Trophy" (TT) motorcycle race. On the IOM we rode all four Isle of Man Railways. From the three foot gauge steam which has been operating since 1874 to the Manx Electric Railway another Victorian classic and the three foot six inch Snaefell Mountain cog railway to a horse drawn tram...they are all classed as trains! From a railroader's viewpoint the Isle of Man was perfect as we had so many great experiences in one place. Thanks to Harry we were also able to ride in the cab of one classic steam engine. Such great equipment still perking along with plenty of steam and power. Along with the trains we saw several museums, visited 2 castles including Rushen Castle and several lighthouses.

Departing from IOM a short ferry ride took us to Heysham, England where we rode another BritRail (ScotRail) up the beautiful coast of Scotland. Along the way we saw many unique Railroad depots, tunnels and bridges. BritRail was always on time and the trains comfortable with broad views of all the outstanding scenery. Traveling up the coastline via Malligat to Armadale and then to the Island of Skye with a short bus trip across the Island for a night at Kyle of Lochalsh. Onto Inverness via BritRail and then to Aviemore to ride the Strathspey Steam Railway, the last of our preserved railway trips. Short in length but long in interest the round trip to Boat of Garten offered views of railroad signals, yard equipment and depots from an era long gone. A turntable dating from the 1800's is still in operation! At Aviemore, Rotarian Bill and Rita Templeton provided us a tour of an outstanding Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) camp. Through a combination of rail and Rotarians vehicles we traveled the last leg of the trip from Aviemore to Glasgow via Dundee. We were hosted by several Rotarians in Dundee, stayed with Alex and Joyce Galbraith in Inverkip and then on to the 1997 Rotary International Convention. Our train trips were not over as our hotel was in Edinburgh and the convention in Glasgow. This gave us the opportunity to continue the use of our BritRail pass for trips between the two cities. Again, BritRail was always on time! With one exception when one train was late, another early and we arrived in Glasgow at the appointed time anyway!

Though we were not able to meet up with Rotarians and IRRFR members Peter Wilson and Glyn Pryce they sent us booklets, tour guides and information regarding railroading in England, Wales and Scotland. Their assistance truly helped to make this trip an outstanding success.

During our home hospitality in Glasgow we met Michael and Anne Munro. Much to both of our surprise and with no pre-planning, Michael is a railroad modeler and builds his own engines! The fun never stops!

We thoroughly enjoyed Rotary fellowship on all of the trip. We were never "alone" anywhere as there were Rotarians and members of the IRRFR there to make our trip easier and more fun! It is great to be a part of such a sharing, caring group. We urge others to join the IRRFR. Come ride with us in Arizona on our historic railways! Here's to more great railroading journeys! We are always ready to ride the rails!