



Supporting Local Freemasons

The Craftsmen

Week Commencing 5th October 2020

Issue Number Twenty Seven

Welcome to the twenty seventh edition of the Ross Masonic Club Weekly Round-Up.

A great big thank you to our two regular contributors to this issue, Patrick and Harry. I am sure we all appreciate your efforts each week. This week we have:

- Patrick and Harry continue the story of their varied careers
- A reminder of the question from Dennis in last week's 'Would I know, did I know' on the significance of the gavel
- Two new regular features;
 1. 'When I were a lad' - do you know who is in the picture?
 2. How I became a Mason, where John Mole tells his story
- An article on the Railway coming to Ross by David Hudson.

All thoughts and suggestions for future articles welcomed. Please keep your input coming with, once again, a special thank you to all those that contributed.

Keep safe Brethren and keep in contact.



Keeping in Contact and Staying Sharp

Facebook



We have set up a Facebook Group for Ross Masonic Club. We currently have 28 members across the Lodges and Chapter. Any members of Lodges or Chapter that meet at Ross Masonic Hall are welcome to join in.

Would I know the answer? Did I know the answer?

By W.Bro. Dennis W. Roberts, PAGDC Group Leader Information and Guidance Group

A reminder that last week I asked:

What is the significance of the Gavel?

You can always check your thoughts by visiting 'Solomon' of course! <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

Dennis Roberts - Group Leader Information and Guidance Group e-mail: roberts.greeba@btinternet.com



To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,--
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

By John Keats

How it All Began

John Mole describes his route Into Masonry.

My family and friends never had any connection with Freemasonry and how I became involved is a short story in itself.

After leaving school in 1960, I became an apprentice engineer with Stewarts and Lloyds (later British Steel) in Halesowen spending five years training in all aspects of practical engineering skills. With day release at Dudley Technical College I obtained an HNC in engineering. On completion I spent some time assisting with the development of plastic extrusion machines for the coating of steel tubes. By 23, I was the supervisor of a galvanising plant.

I quickly realised that I did not want a life confined to a factory or office and with the then expanding laying of North Sea gas pipelines I joined a company MAPEL, designing and installing cathodic corrosion prevention systems. I spent a few years, although based at home, on sites all over the UK. The commissioning of these systems involved liaison with the local utilities, particularly gas companies. This led me to be well known by engineers at the then West Midlands Gas. When a vacancy became available in 1974, I was approached and joined West Midlands Gas.

Spending time initially at Dudley and then a year in Birmingham as part of the team converting over to Natural Gas, the remainder of my time was based in West Bromwich.

I progressed through the ranks from assistant engineer to, by 1990's, the District Operations Manager. I was responsible for all gas mains, services, plant and equipment, three supervisors and over 50 direct and contract employees.

I was 'Mr Gas' for the district which encompassed Sandwell Metropolitan Borough. With the Open University I had obtained a degree;

332nd Regular Meeting of the Lodge will be held on
THURSDAY, 14th OCTOBER, 1993 at 4.45 p.m.

LABOUR OF THE LODGE

With experience and a dissertation I had become a Chartered Gas Engineer.

One afternoon in 1992, leaving a building site meeting, I was contacted by radio by one of my supervisors requesting I attend at West Bromwich Masonic Hall as soon as possible. Arriving a few minutes later I found the supervisor and one of my direct labour emergency teams standing around an excavation on the gas service to the Masonic Hall. There was a strong smell of gas and it was obvious the service was leaking.

When a gas service to a commercial or industrial property is leaking, there are two problems. One is safety, the other is who is going to pay for the replacement? Cutting the gas off usually sorts out both. In this case, both the emergency team and their supervisor had been reluctant to do so, following approaches from the Masonic Hall. There was a meeting that night and meals needed to be provided.

I did not hesitate and instructed the team to cut off the gas supply. I did a brief survey of the route of a replacement service; the meter position was acceptable and I informed the hall that one of our commercial representatives would be contacting them (to sort out payment) and left the site.

It was only a few minutes to the office. The District Manager, Jack Graham was waiting in the car park. "What's going on at the Masonic Hall?". How the hell did he know so quick!

"Just cut them off, gas leaking into the building, service pipe needs replacing, when it's been sorted who's paying, perhaps a couple of days to get them back on". I replied.

He looked me straight in the eye. "If you wanted to, you could get them back on tonight". He said no more and walked away.

I thought a moment, and at the time, did not realise how much it would change my life.

I called the emergency team and told them to remain on site until I returned. The supervisor was contacted and told to move a second team to the site to assist.

By 7.30pm that evening a replacement gas service had been installed. Nothing was ever discussed about the incident, but a couple of weeks later, Jack Graham explained he was a member of Murdoch Lodge, no 3480 and would my wife and I like to come as his guests to their Ladies Night at the Chateau Impney. I was invited to join the lodge soon after, which I did in 1993.

Murdoch Lodge, named after William Murdoch, founder of the gas industry, met 4 times a year at Stirling Road, Birmingham. It was formed in 1911 by a group of Gas Works Managers. There were strict by-laws that all members should be employed in the gas industry, hold responsible positions and be chartered engineers. It had similar sister lodges, Northern Star in Manchester and Evening Star in London. These restrictions limited new membership, and in my time, they were amended, first to include other utilities and then gas contractors.

I slowly progressed in the lodge, and even after retirement and moving to Gloucestershire in 1997, continued my membership. I was Worshipful Master in 2000, which some of you attended.

As I became involved in other orders in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, my visits to Murdoch lodge grew less, I attended the 100-year anniversary in 2011, but Murdoch Lodge did not survive the closure of Stirling Road. Membership, like me had dispersed. I shall never forget my visits to Murdoch Lodge. It had a very formal atmosphere; ritual was always good and the festive board enjoyable.

'When I Were A Lad'

A new feature which we hope we can run over a few weeks

Please send in your pictures of you as a child and a short clue. We will publish the photo one week so people can guess who you are and publish the results the following week. Either a scanned image or take a picture of the photo with your phone and send it in with a few words of description. Just for a laugh - nothing too serious!



Did you Guess? This is Tim Fycun WM of Ariconium and a Zoom attendee.



Here is Tim looking very elegant



Any idea who this young chap is with is Grandmother around 1947 in Worcestershire?

Harry's in Hot Water! (Part VIII)

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Return to my home force

The date now is early 1984 and I have been on the crime squad for a year. Although we work long hours and accumulate considerable hours of overtime there is an unwritten rule that you will only be paid a certain number of hours each month.

The remainder of hours worked be put onto your overtime card from which you can claim payment in the months ahead, or take time off at your choice. This was in theory only because we were always busy and in fact building up even more hours.

I had a considerable number of hours on my card and I had been studying hard to take the sergeants exam so decided to take two weeks off just prior to the exam. I had been studying when I could but had fallen behind in my studies due to work.

I spent the next two weeks at home locked away studying. We had three exam papers to take. The first was Traffic law. The next was General police duties and the last was Criminal law. I studied really hard in that two weeks and was able to catch up and was well prepared for the exam which followed almost immediately after. I must say I felt quietly confident walking out the exam room at the end of the day. It was a couple of months before the results were released and I passed. I was still on the squad and had another eighteen months to go.

That year I put my name forward for promotion. The promotion race splits down into two parts. You have to pass through your home force divisional team to be forwarded to a divisional board with the ch/Supt, in my case the crime squad boss recommended me for a divisional board.

I completed this only to be told by my force that I would not be promoted whilst on the Crime Squad. I was disappointed at this, so immediately requested to return to Swindon CID as being a Detective Sergeant was my ambition at that time. I consequently returned to Divisional detective duties within weeks. I got my head down and worked hard. In these duties I also spent a lot of time performing acting duties as the sergeant on my shift was away on a courses and leave. Before going she asked me to check her basket and if I could address any issues I found. At this time I did not know the impact this would have. One of the things that had been left was of a witness making certain allegations of a missing woman possibly having come to some harm. Over the next couple of weeks I interviewed this witness over a long period of time, taking detailed notes. The witness was an alcoholic. She had split with her husband, who was the subject of the allegations. She had been having an affair with him whilst he had been with his previous wife with whom he'd had three children. The affair had gone on for some time, with his wife having no knowledge of it. He eventually left his wife.

Harry's in Hot Water! (Part VIII) Contd.....

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Return to my home force

The family home was sold and the proceeds used to purchase two homes, one for the separated wife and the other with his new girlfriend (witness). His wife and children lived with her mother while he, who worked in the building trade, had her new home renovated. She eventually moved into this new home with the children and without her husband.

On the day after moving to this new home she took the children to their school In the morning and that was the last that was ever seen of her. The children returned home that day and their mother was missing. They went back to grannies home and she reported her daughter was missing to the police several days later . He had persuaded her that her daughter may have had a boyfriend and run off with him. The mother just wanted to hear from her daughter that she was safe and well. Some weeks after she went missing the mother had a birthday card posted in South Wales allegedly from her daughter saying she was alright and she had met someone else and when she sorted her life she would be in touch. No meaningful police enquiry took place at this point. This remained the same for some 14 years until I took a statement from the alcoholic woman alleging that she suspected with no direct evidence that her husband had in fact murdered his ex wife and disposed of her by burning her body and then burying the remains under a garage in the back garden of their new home. I put together a case file and conferred with my Det/Ch Insp. Over the coming months I investigated this missing person, interviewing family relatives and friends. There was no doubt in my mind the husband had murdered his wife. His wife was unaware he was having an affair until he told her and then left. From family and friends she was loyal to him and thought he would return to her. They described her as being devoted to her children and would never leave them, also that she was totally in love with her husband.

I filed a long report including estimates of some £14,000 to dig up a garden and knock down a garage at the premises we suspected she was buried at. Consequently at a high powered CID meeting at which I was not present, they turned down my request to dig and demolish, saying there was insufficient evidence for this.

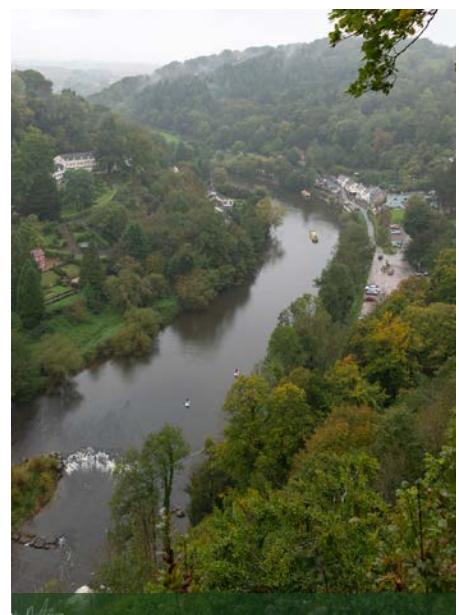
I had also put a case together for fraud and forgery whereby the husband had forged his missing wife's signatures to sell her house. I also proved by a handwriting expert that he had in fact forged his wife's writing and signature on the birthday card supposedly sent by her to her mother. The suspect had always kept in touch with his mother in law and it was him who suggested she had run off with another man. He had also heard her mother say they she just wanted to hear from her daughter to ensure she was alright. The following week the birthday card arrived!!! I could also show that at the time of her going missing she was a full time mother. There was no evidence at all of another man in her life and the husband had significant financial issues which would have made it almost impossible to finance the two mortgages required of him.

Over the following months he was charged and went through the Crown court system. He was convicted of the fraud and forgery even though he sought to divert blame to his second wife who gave evidence against him. He received a suspended prison sentence.

The barrister who tried him spoke to me after the trial and said he would be happy to go ahead with a new trial for murder without a body as there was a very good circumstantial case. This didn't happen and my head of department closed the case. I was a little frustrated as was my immediate boss Ch/Insp. However I knuckled under and got on with my work. (This will resurface later).

I had subsequently attended another promotion board and later that year was promoted straight to Detective Sergeant on our force surveillance unit. I was really pleased as in our force you normally had to return to uniform duties on promotion and also move house to a different area in the force. I didn't have to do either. This made both me and my wife happy as the children were very settled in Wootton Bassett. I was posted to our headquarters on our force surveillance unit as a Detective Sergeant. I spent the next year on this unit and we were very successful as a unit. This unit also had responsibility for carrying out bomb searches. This was very relevant in the mid 80s due to the Irish issue. I had a happy year on this unit returning home every night. I expected to be on this unit for several years. This wasn't to be as one day I was called into the Head of CID's office and he asked me to go to Chippenham. He also informed me that it was the Chief Constable's intention to send me back onto the Regional Crime Squad when a vacancy arose. This had come from my answers to his questions on my promotion board when he asked my views on the regional drug squad set up. I had been quite blunt on my answer to this and outside the stock answer expected for this sort of question. Apparently my answer had coincided with his thoughts on the matter.

More next time on my move to Chippenham CID.



Are you ready for autumn?

The Railway Comes To Ross

By David Hudson

There was great excitement in the town. Reportedly, some 5,000 people assembled at the new station to meet the special train officially opening the Hereford, Ross and Gloucester Railway. The Ross Town Band played, and 2,000 local children had a celebratory tea in the goods shed.

At 8.50 am, 1st of June 1855, the train pulled in for a brief stop before proceeding to Hereford. The train had commenced from London, stopping at Gloucester to pick up local directors and dignitaries. It left Gloucester at 8.00 am carrying 150 people, and arrived in Hereford at 9.25 am

The celebrations continued into the evening with a public tea and ball at the Town Hall, another ball at the Swan Hotel, and a dinner for the navvies at the Royal Oak.

A major player in the development of the plan was Ross banker and solicitor, and local benefactor, James Wallace Richard Hall of Springfields House, now the site of Vaga Crescent and the Oaklands Estates. He became the solicitor for and, later, a director of the Hereford, Ross and Gloucester Railway Company.

JAMES WALLACE RICHARD HALL was born in 1799, the son of Rev. John Hall who was a naval chaplain, who, when he retired, moved to in Wallace Cottage, Much Birch (now the Old Cedars). He married twice although both of his wives died prematurely and out of his 10 children only one of them reached old age (Mary Sarah who attained 105 years).

James Hall was made a Freeman of the city of Hereford in 1822, the year after becoming a practising solicitor in Hereford. He established the Ross Dispensary and British and Foreign School (now the Masonic Hall), was treasurer of Webbe's Hospital, vice-chairman of the Union Workhouse, a trustee of Baker's Charity and the Ross Turnpike Trust, a Ross Improvement Commissioner, clerk to the Wormelow Hundred, a solicitor to the Harewood End magistrates and he was pivotal in setting up the Forest of Dean Bank which is now part of Lloyds.

The Craftsmen Newsletter

Following his sudden death in 1860 a fountain was erected by public subscription at the junction of Station Road and Cantilupe Street, approximately where the mini-roundabout now stands. The fountain is now a short distance away at the entrance to Smallbrook Gardens.

Approval to build the line was granted by Act of Parliament in 1851. Although an independent company, from the beginning it was designed, constructed and operated by the Great Western Railway. Its Chief Mechanical Engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was consulted before the Act was passed and, on its passing, appointed Charles Richardson as Residential Engineer. Not being satisfied that the best route had been chosen, he, with one assistant, made the survey of a new line, which was adopted by Brunel and afterwards carried out.



CHARLES RICHARDSON, born on the 14th August, 1814, at Capenhurst Hall, near Chester, was the third son of Mr. Richard Richardson, J.P., Deputy Lieutenant for the County and Chairman of Quarter Sessions, who died when Charles was six years old. At the age of nineteen Mr. Richardson was apprenticed to Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and, as a pupil saw much work in the Gloucester area.

He moved to Ross and became involved with local cricket. He became an enthusiastic player until late in life, and it is not generally known that he

made the first cricket bat with a cane-spliced handle, and invented and made a catapult for bowling a cricket ball.

Mr. Richardson died on the 10th February, 1896, at the age of eighty-one, six days after a parasitic seizure. His modest and benevolent disposition prevented his being more famous.

The line was 22.5 miles long from the Grange Court Junction on the Gloucester and Forest of Dean line, constructed to the Great Western broad-gauge standard of 7 feet and



½ inches (2,140 mm.). Four tunnels were to be built on this line. The tunnel at Lea was 771 yards long, that at Fawley 540 yards, the Ballingham tunnel was 1,210 yards and the Dinedor tunnel 110 yards long. There were also to be four viaducts over the River Wye, each one made of timber on stone piers with six openings 44ft wide. It was recognised that the Lea and Ballingham tunnels would take the longest to construct, so work was commenced.

The construction work was subcontracted to a partnership of Mr. Thomas Brassey, Sir Morton Peto Bart. MP and Edward L Betts. These gentlemen were not local, but were involved throughout Britain and overseas in construction and investment in many railways.

THOMAS BRASSEY was a major and highly regarded English civil engineering contractor and manufacturer of building materials who was responsible for building much of the world's railways in the 19th century.

Born in 1805, Thomas Brassey was the eldest son of John Brassey, a prosperous farmer, and his wife Elizabeth, living at Aldford, near Chester. Thomas Brassey was educated at home until the age of 12, when he was sent to The King's School in Chester. Aged 16, he became an articled apprentice to a land surveyor and agent, William Lawton.

Brassey set up his business in Birkenhead, expanding into quarrying and brickmaking; he supplied many of the bricks for the expansion of Liverpool.



In 1831 he married Maria Harrison, the second daughter of Joseph Harrison, a forwarding and shipping agent with whom he had come into contact during his early days in Birkenhead. They had three sons. By 1847, he had built about one-third of the railways in Britain, and by time of his death in 1870 he had built one in every twenty miles of railway in the world. This included three-quarters of the lines in France, major lines in many other European countries and in Canada, Australia, South America and India. He also built the structures associated with those railways, including docks, bridges, viaducts, stations, tunnels and drainage works.

As well as railway engineering, Brassey was active in the development of steamships, mines, locomotive factories, marine telegraphy, and water supply and sewage systems,

including part of the London sewerage system, still in operation today, and was a major shareholder in Brunel's The Great Eastern.

In later life the family established a more-or-less permanent base in Lowndes Square, Belgravia, London.

Brassey developed cancer, but continued to be involved in his projects. On 8 December 1870 he died from a brain haemorrhage in Victoria Hotel, St Leonards and was buried in the churchyard of St Laurence's Church, Catsfield, Sussex where a memorial stone has been erected. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography describes him as "one of the wealthiest of the self-made Victorians". He left a fortune of over £5 million, equivalent to about £600 million in 2020.

SIR SAMUEL MORTON PETO, 1st Baronet, MP, normally called Morton Peto, was born on 1809, in Woking, Surrey. As a youth, he was apprenticed as a bricklayer to his uncle Henry Peto, who ran a building firm in London. When his uncle died in 1830, Peto and his older cousin, Thomas Grissell (who had been a partner to his uncle for five years), went into partnership. The firm of Grissell and Peto (1830–1847) built many well-known buildings in London, including the Reform Club, the Oxford & Cambridge Club, the Lyceum, St James's Theatre and Hungerford Market at Charing Cross.

In addition, they built Nelson's Column and the new Houses of Parliament (1843) and the infrastructure of the London brick sewer.



In partnerships, primarily with Edward Betts he was involved in numerous railway construction projects in Britain and overseas. He was at one time regarded as the largest employer of labour in the world!

The Peto and Betts partnership became insolvent in 1866 due to a combination of the failure of the bank, Overend, Gurney and Company, and their involvement in the failure of the London Chatham and Dover Railway.

In 1844, Peto bought Somerleyton Hall in Suffolk. He rebuilt the hall with contemporary amenities, as well as constructing a school and more houses in the village. He next built similar projects in Lowestoft. Peto served for two decades as a Member of Parliament. He was elected a Liberal Member for Norwich in 1847 to 1854, for Finsbury from 1859 to 1865, and for Bristol from 1865 to 1868. During this time, he was one of the most prominent figures in public life. He helped to make a guarantee towards the financing of The Great Exhibition of 1851, backing Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace.

In 1855 Peto was made a baronet; (1st of Somerleyton Hall) but in the 1860s his businesses ran into trouble, so that in 1863 he sold Somerlyton Hall and in 1866 became bankrupt. His reputation as a trustworthy businessman was badly damaged and never fully recovered. He died in obscurity in 1889.

EDWARD LADD BETTS was born in 1815 at Buckland, near Dover, son of William Betts (1790–1867), a successful contractor's agent and railway contractor.

He was apprenticed to a builder at Lincoln. However, becoming more interested in engineering, he then worked as agent for Hugh McIntosh, building the Black Rock lighthouse, Anglesey, then the Dutton Viaduct on the Grand Junction Railway. He became involved in numerous rail projects, entering into partnership with Peto.

In 1843, Betts married Ann Peto, the sister of Samuel Morton Peto. Both are interred in the family vault in the



churchyard of St Peter and St Paul's Parish Church, Aylesford. They had eight children.

Their family home was Preston Hall, near Aylesford. He became a magistrate and High Sheriff of Kent.

Following the bankruptcy of the railway company he was forced to sell the Hall. On doctor's advice he moved to Aswan, Egypt, dying in 1872.

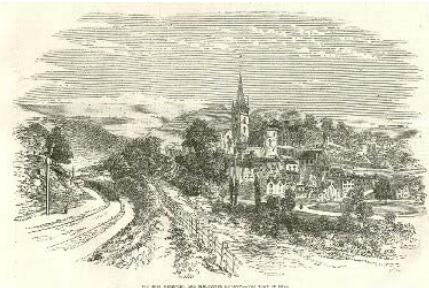
Building began in 1851, and the first part open on schedule in 1853 from Grange Junction to Hopesbrook, where a temporary station was built. However, the remainder was subject to several delays. Lea tunnel proved to be even more difficult than expected. Although the highest point of the line in was subject to water problems, in 1853 being completely flooded. Despite this the line was expected to be completed by November 1854. Bad weather and further water problems delayed the official opening until Friday 1st June 1855.

To ensure all was well for the opening a heavy locomotive (reported as being 50 tons) thoroughly tested the tracks and infrastructure on 31st May. This was completed without difficulty. The Hereford Times of 25th May had announced that Brunel and the partners would be attending for a celebratory dinner at the Green Dragon Assembly Rooms, but all sent their apologies.

The opening did not just make local news but was celebrated nationally, being reported in the "Illustrated London News" for July 14, 1855 describing the line opening and Ross as:

OPENING OF THE HEREFORD, ROSS AND GLOUCESTER RAILWAY.

"At length we have the satisfaction to record the opening of this line Railway, which took place on the 1st day of June last, with great rejoicings. On a Rocky eminence looking over the Wye stands the town of Ross. Nothing can be more picturesque than its position from the Railway.

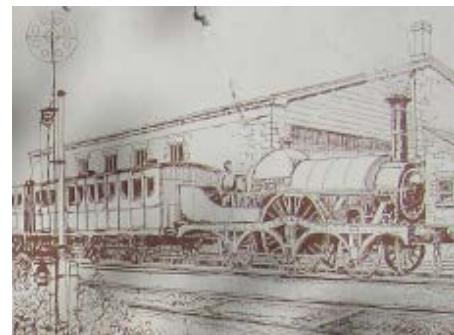


The woodcut associated with the article.

We should add that the opening of this line of railway gives the tourist cheap and easy access to the tour of one of the finest rivers in Europe. The Wye tour, considered not to be excelled by any in Switzerland, can, by means of this railway, be accomplished in less than two days; and, by an excursion-train of Great Western,

there is not a mechanic in London who may not enjoy, at the cost of one day's labour and three days' wages, a treat hitherto only within reach of the wealthy."

Regular services commenced the following day; six trains from Hereford to Gloucester, and five in the opposite direction. The first trains of the day crossed at Ross at 8.55 am., whilst the last train left Ross at 7pm. The Sunday service was one train in each direction. Although the original plan was for a double tracked railway, this was never built, the railway remaining single track with passing places at several stations.



There's more than one way to earn a living Part 10

Patrick Eyre continues to recount his career moves.

Having installed the conveyor and mixer unit on the Hino chassis cab the driver arrived from Dublin. Out of interest I asked him to drive it onto a public weigh bridge to check its unladen weight, and by my calculations it would be down to carrying a payload of 5m³ or less on the UK roads. Chatting to the driver before he left he thought there were no such restrictions on weight limits in the Republic, but if there was he didn't know of any. He thought the conveyor attachment was a great idea and he hoped his boss would let him put it to work. He also thought our mixer unit was far superior to the ones his boss was buying, as indeed I did, and I would be going through the after sales

routine with his boss in due course. The first port of call was in Sevenoaks Kent and meeting the regional manager of an area taking in all of Kent and Sussex with 35 batching plants. I had originally arranged the appointment with him who in turn had contacted his area managers who would find a site in their area of operation currently delivering concrete to a customer who had offloading problems involving the use of a crane or concrete pump. I had previously sent the regional manager descriptive information showing the feasibility of what the conveyor could do or could not do. The site just happened to be in Sevenoaks and not Worthing.

There's more than one way to earn a living Part 10

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We had to wait around for a couple of hours before the concrete was due to be delivered. Our truck was then loaded with 5.5m³ of concrete with a high cement content, and had to travel about 5 miles to the site. The building contractors were constructing a concrete retaining wall about 8ft high and 4ft thick, heavily shuttered with reinforced steel. It involved a scaffolded platform for the guys to work from with their vibrating machinery.

They had already competed half the job with the help of a tower crane and concrete skip. Access for truck and conveyor was good and Tony got it all into position with the conveyor extended over the wall. At a vertical angle of about 20 degrees and a slewing angle starting at 0 and finishing at 45 degrees to the truck, it only required the truck to be repositioned a couple of times to complete the job. It was possible to shorten or lengthen the conveyor by a couple of feet by cranking the length, but more than 30 degrees vertical would result in material running back down the belt; the manufacturers of the conveyor would have known that using a chevron type belt would improve the required angle but would create a real mess if used with wet concrete.

To finish the job in hand required a further 3.5m³ of concrete, and a second truck mixer duly arrived, and by extending the mixers chutes discharged the concrete into the conveyors receiving hopper.

So this first job went extremely well, both the regional and area managers were in attendance and were suitably impressed; the site manager too who made his feelings felt remarking that it made placing the concrete much quicker and cheaper to place.

Tony went through the routine of washing the conveyor with the mixers high pressure hose; returning to the batching plant to wash out the drum and the vehicle itself.

The company I was hoping to sell the conveyor too was already a buyer of my truck/mixers, and had purchased 8 over the last couple of years. He thought the concept was just great but required a great deal of thought. The only point of criticism was the fact that the carrying capacity of the truck was reduced to 5.5m³. I explained that it had to be that way to meet the weight regulations, but the aluminium and steel conveyor's installed weight was just about the weight of that 5.5m³ of concrete. We agreed to a lunch date sometime in the future, and we parted with him saying he would consult with his directors and let me know the outcome.

Three weeks on the road, and keeping 17 appointments for the demonstrator, we managed to get home four times but I decided we would cancel the proposed Northern Ireland visit for we had covered a great deal of England and Wales and we were both feeling the strain. We only covered parts of Scotland to customers I already had on the books. On the whole, most of the sites we were asked to deliver to, we handled well with the conveyor access and placing of concrete. We did have our share of disappointments, but this was only to be expected. I contacted the office every day by phone to find that six companies had decided to buy the conveyor and one in Ellesmere had ordered two. Five of the Companies were firms I had already done business with and one had ordered a large batching plant for a new site in Guildford. The sale of mixer units was exceeding all expectations. Our workshops couldn't keep up with the mounting of mixer units on vehicle chassis, and my assistant had arranged for a local construction and engineering company to take over some of the work. This was the same company who had purchased the batching plant in Tanzania. Their workshops were almost next door and my assistant spent most of his time making sure they were fitted on the truck chassis in the right position over the axles.

I should mention at this time that right through the 60s 70s and into the 80s there was an explosion of companies entering the ready-mixed concrete business. In the main they were businesses who were both quarried stone and gravel producers who had the resources and finance to join the growing demand by builders to buy their concrete ready-mixed. Mixing concrete on site was too slow, laborious and in turn costly. In the early 80s the average radial mile from the base batching plant was just 3.5 miles.

This figure is almost unbelievable but it was a fact. It was this figure across the whole of the England and Wales, and published by the BRMCA monthly, but it just highlighted how many concrete batching plants there were in the Country competing against each other for market share.

PRICE FIXING AND WAS THE MAIN REASON I LEFT THE INDUSTRY!!!

It was an Illegal Cartel and some of you will no doubt remember it was exposed on a television programme and the rest of the media had a field day. No one could hold up their hands and say 'What me?' Everybody was at it, from the aggregate producers to the black top boys and beyond.

Of course it all ended in tears but the number of batching plants in the UK probably reduced by half and the number of owner drivers too. Several companies in the UK were named and shamed

Price fixing in Germany and the rest of Europe was rampant and RMC Limited was fined millions.

Remember the batching plant in Ross? It was taken over by a French conglomerate and then closed. By arrangement with others? We will probably never know.