

WRHTS



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO STEAM

A RESPONSE TO THE RCTS

In *Link 104* – in his article 'What Really Happened to the 9Fs' – **Roger Butcher** claimed that the RCTS disposal tables in Volume 4 of the *British Railways Standard Steam Locomotives* series were not factually based.

As a consequence of that article, and a follow-up article in the May 2013 issue of *The Railway Magazine*, Gordon Davies, the RCTS Chairman, devoted the centre pages of the June Railway Observer (RO) to an attack on Roger and the work of the HSBT team. At the time of this issue of *Link* going to print the RCTS is stonewalling Roger's request for a right to reply in the RO. As all ten members of the HSBT team are ESS members, featured below is Roger's response to Gordon Davies' attack.

Although Gordon's article was so badly structured and contradictory it reminded me of a barrister who had seen his briefing papers for the first time as he entered the courtroom, the fact that he has publicly called me a liar means I have to take the article seriously – difficult though that is. (Note, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, being 'economical with the truth' is a euphemism for lying.)

£20,000 CHALLENGE

As the owner of a successful publishing company whose reputation is built on my integrity and attention to detail, I am reserving the option to take the matter through our legal system because in doing so both sides would have to exchange evidence and the reality is that the 9F disposal tables are not what John Walford claimed them to be in his email to Keith Gunner and myself on October 31st, 2010. And to claim that we never provided any information for the amendments book is ludicrous, as John can't even claim he didn't receive our e-mail of October 23rd, 2010 as he replied to it on the 28th and 31st October.

I am, therefore, proposing that, to save lawyers getting rich at our expense, an independent panel is given access to the HSBT Database on 9Fs and the RCTS 9F database which it is claimed is based on direct correspondence with the scrap dealers involved. That will show who is telling the truth and who is not. I am pleased to say that Brian Dotson, Editor of the SLS Journal and Chairman of the Welsh Railways Research Circle (WRRRC); Paul Smith, Editor of *Link*; and the senior editorial team of *The Railway Magazine* - Phil Marsh, Chris Milner and Nick Pigott - have all offered to be involved. All are independent of the RCTS and the HSBT team and their integrity cannot be questioned.

If I am proved wrong I will pay £20,000 to a charity of the choice of the RCTS Management Committee. If the independent panel find in favour of the HSBT team, the RCTS will pay £20,000 to Naomi House Children's Hospice - my chosen charity.

IS THE RCTS SOME SORT OF CADET FORCE?

As Gordon has publicly rebuked me for failing to submit a letter of resignation to the RCTS that does, of course, entitle me to respond publicly as to why I no longer wish to be associated with a society that I was once proud to be a member of.

The seeds of my disillusionment can be traced back to 1984, shortly before my first book on BR on-track plant was published, when letters were received on behalf of the RCTS Management Committee by both the BRB's Public Affairs Organisation and the Databank Manager of the BR Rolling Stock Library (RSL), Chris Darrall. The letters contained the 'revelation' that Roger Butcher was not authorised by the RCTS to visit the RSL on its behalf.

The story of my special relationship with the RSL is one for another day but, suffice to say here, it had begun in 1975 and there are very few RSL staff of the last 38 years who do not know me personally and with whom I have not kept contact.

So for the RCTS to claim ownership of my special relationship was preposterous but it made me realise – for the first time – that the culture of the RCTS was changing and that the society had become a 'legend in its own mind'. With hindsight I should have resigned from the RCTS but I convinced myself that the mean spirited and jealous actions of some members of the RCTS Management Committee were not representative of the society as a whole. The positive side to this sorry tale was Chris Darrall's response when he stated that who visited the RSL was its business, and also came up with his famous put-down (to the RCTS) 'Is the RCTS some sort of cadet force?'. Five years later, when I retired from 13 years of preparing the departmental column, and answering hundreds of members' letters, I didn't even get the courtesy of a thank you in the RO, despite some members, including Roger Harris (now

one of an ever increasing army of ex-RCTS members) pointing out the 'oversight' to the Managing Editor of the *RO*. It would seem, following the humiliation of the RSL response to the RCTS Management Committee, I was *persona non grata*!

ZULU

The practice of claiming 'ownership' of private research by RCTS members seems still to be in evidence today, as can be seen by Gordon's claim that Rowland Pittard's recent very welcome input to the HSBT Project was on behalf of the RCTS. As Rowland is also an ESS member, a SRRS member and a WRRC member I would suggest that the credit goes to Rowland as an individual!

In contrast the RCTS is disowning its member's fabricated input into Peter Hands' WHTS books. In fact the June 2013 *RO* claims '*as far as we are aware Zulu was not an RCTS member.*' Note the '*as far as we are aware*' caveat. Well, yes, he was a member actually and I would suggest that if the society cares to check its membership records properly they will find he was a member from (at least) 1976 to 1992. His identity is known to the RCTS Management Committee, although the fact his surname is the same as a member of that Committee is, I believe, a coincidence, albeit a slightly unfortunate one!

John Redgate has pointed out to me – quite rightly – that its notorious Northampton Branch member was not acting on behalf of the RCTS. However, how does one reconcile which RCTS members one wants to claim credit for? As was once famously said '*Success has many fathers, failure is an orphan.*'

SUPREME IRONY

The irony of Gordon Davies absolving himself and John Walford of any blame for well everything was that the July 2013 issue of *The Railway Magazine* printed his letter on the same page as Peter Hands' apology to those who bought his WHTS books.

So, whilst Gordon was in 'Shoot the Messenger mode', Peter Hands had the courage to apologise for the errors in his books. In simple terms, Peter put the importance of railway history before personal pride and I thank him for having the strength of character to do so. We can all move on now.

As for the RCTS's continuing intransigence, surely there are enough strong voices on the RCTS Management Committee to not be fobbed off by the deliberately evasive nonsense that John Walford and Gordon Davies continue to express. If I was an RCTS member, which I no longer am of course, I would be very concerned at the path the society is being led down. So, rather than talking defiantly of a 'robust response', simply produce the evidence you claim you have to back up yours and John Walford's statements. For the sake of the future of the RCTS you must break out of the self-congratulatory bubble you and John have helped create.

TREACLELAND

Richard Strange did warn me that any attempts to deal with the RCTS Publications Committee, or more precisely John Walford, would be like 'walking through treacle'. In Richard's experience John was incapable of ever admitting he was wrong and rarely, if ever, were his (Richard's) questions answered properly.

Naively I believed with the evidence the HSBT team had amassed and published in the October 2010 *Railway Magazine* that John would say something on the lines of '*Yes, we got caught out too!*'. Nothing to be ashamed of, and the line taken by all the publishers I have listed in previous articles. How wrong could I be! So Richard, I have publicly to admit you were right and I was wrong!

It should be noted that Gordon appears to use the same tactics as John by responding to questions that were never asked (a tabloid trick). Anything but answering the main questions posed in Link 104.

So, as a reminder, here they are again: RIGHT OR WRONG?

1. Am I right in saying that the sales dates in the 9F disposal data are not factually-based?
2. Are you still claiming that a significant amount of the disposal data is not based on Peter Hands' books (Zulu fabrications, formula-driven scrap dates, etc.)?
3. Are you still claiming that John True 'wrote directly to the scrap dealers involved and was able to resolve outstanding issues.?'
4. Why did your Volume 5 not publish the complete list of fabricated standard locomotive disposals that was sent to you on October 23rd, 2010, nor the list of corrections sent on October 28th, 2010?
5. Why did Volume 5 not draw attention to the work of the HSBT Project?

COPYRIGHT

Gordon ended his article with an offer to chair a meeting with the HSBT team to resolve matters. Inevitably he has to add what I assume he thinks was a 'clever' way to finish the feature - to claim copyright on the information published in the *RO* during the 1960s!

Clearly, Gordon has no understanding of the law of copyright and I would suggest he should have had a chat with the RCTS's legal representative before he made such a claim. Much of the information in the *RO* came from BR internal notices and whoever sent them in was not in a position to assign any copyright to the RCTS. A look at the RCTS Management Committee's minutes for 1982 will show him why the RCTS was unable to pursue Peter Hands (who drew heavily on the information in the *RO*) and will improve his understanding of copyright law.

It might also be helpful if he reads Richard Strange's article on locomotive sale dates on pages 60-61

of this issue of Link! In addition, as Peter Hands has rightly stated, it is now clear that a significant amount of errors found their way into the *RO*. As far as the work of the HSBT project team is concerned, Richard Strange's findings mean that we have to discount *The Railway Observer* (a secondary source) as a reliable source of data. Fortunately most of the accurate primary information we require is still available and has been taken into our database.

SUMMARY

Gordon accuses me of a '*determined RCTS bashing exercise*'. An attempt, I would suggest, to rally the troops behind himself and John Walford. However, not once did Gordon deal with the principal issues raised in the articles I have written and summarised on the previous page.

Gordon, how can you justify damaging the reputation of the society you represent by refusing to accept /acknowledge/apologise for the Zulu fabrications included in Volume 4? The amendments book, Volume 5, was a perfect opportunity which John Walford chose to ignore. Why is everything always someone else's fault? Why is defending your friend more important than the reputation of the RCTS? How can you possibly justify taking two phrases from two separate letters I have written to two separate people and putting them together to make up a fabricated quote which you then attribute to me? (*RO* paragraph 6 page 2). In law this is gross misrepresentation. Do you not understand that?

So, please accept that you and John Walford have made some misjudgements, accept the truth of what the HSBT team is saying and let us move on. If you persist in defending your position I will not go away. Quite simply, myself and the HSBT team are determined to break the circle of a perpetuation of errors that have so embarrassed our wonderful hobby – and we will!

Editor's Note. The RCTS's response to Roger's £20,000 challenge will be published in Issue 107 of Link, as will the RCTS's response to the specific questions raised by Roger.
