



FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Registered Charity No: 1179579

Hon. President: Col Steve Davies MBE
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Sierra Leone Government Railway Hunslet 2-6-2T No 85 of 1954, operating on the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, mid-Wales, c2009. Photograph courtesy of Geoff Gauntlett.

Whilst Spring is springing in the UK, Sierra Leone approaches the end of the dry season and looks forward to coming of the rains. These are difficult times for us all, after two years of restrictions to our freedom because of the coronavirus pandemic and the current effects this is having on our economies. As fuel prices soar in the UK, so they do in Sierra Leone, with the government price cap being increased significantly.

The government has recently announced the date for the Presidential elections, which have been delayed for a year, also because of ongoing restrictions throughout this term of office. The elections will take place on 24th June 2023, simultaneously with the elections of ordinary members of parliament and local council representative. We will watch with interest as the campaigns of the different parties unfold.

Some new programmes of work have already been started by the current government, in order to be seen to investing in popular developments and win votes.

Of particular interest to us is the re-starting of the project to complete the Kissy By-Pass Road, which will enable us to get from the west of Freetown to the museum without going through the busy city centre.

Another welcome project that has been launched since the last newsletter is the refurbishment of the old Fourah Bay College building, which is being funded and facilitated by the World Monuments Fund. This is of vital importance to the museum, not only because of its proximity in Cline Town, which will encourage more visitors, but also because after World War 2, the building became the headquarters of the Sierra Leone Railway and therefore has an important part to play in the stories that the museum seeks to tell.

I wonder if any of you managed to catch the TV programme 'The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan' on BBC 2 in mid-March? I only managed to see it following a tip of from FoSLNRM member Barry Witham, just before it started, but it was an excellent programme, highlighted lots of interesting places and outlining some of Sierra Leone's rich and often traumatic history. If you missed it, it's worth a catch up on iPlayer!

*Helen Ashby
Chair*

Update from the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum



At the beginning of February, the museum was delighted to welcome a new intern from the Milton Margai College of Education & Technology, Freetown, Aminata Kamara. Aminata is a final year student and began her placement with a programme of deep cleaning, starting with the children's play area. She engaged in a broad range of activities during her placement and brought a little diversity to the museum team!



Old Fourah Bay College



On Thursday 17th February the museum team attended an official ceremony, in the precincts of the old Fourah Bay College building, for the acceptance of a grant award from the United States Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, to start restoration work on this iconic monument. The project will be led by the World Monuments Fund and supervised by the Monuments & Relics Commission.



The ceremony was attended by senior officials of the US Ambassadors’ Fund, the World Monuments Fund, the Sierra Leone Government and the Monuments & Relics Commission as well as a wide range of local stakeholders.



Fourah Bay College was the first university in West Africa and was at the centre of an idealistic endeavour to create a new and just society out of the awful destruction wrought by the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. During World War 2 the university moved outside the city and a new larger site was then provided at Mount Aureol. The old Fourah Bay College building became the Headquarters of the Sierra Leone Government Railway, until the railway closed in 1975 and was later used as a magistrate's court.



The building went out of use in 1990 and was badly damaged by fire during the rebel war in 1999.

In 2021 World Monuments Fund began a project to develop a plan for the stabilisation of the building and its reuse as a museum and cultural hub, working in close collaboration with the community to create an educational facility and visitor destination that further stimulates the nascent tourism industry, creates economic opportunities, revitalizes

a historically important but badly neglected district of Freetown, and helps to build a stable and prosperous society.

The launch of the project was followed up by a series of stakeholder and community engagement workshops, facilitated by the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs and the US Ambassador’s Fund, to ensure that the project meets the needs of the local community and produces the benefits envisaged. On Wednesday 23rd March the first workshop was held at the SLNRM for local community groups, officials and other local stakeholders, including the Freetown Chapter of the Friends of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum and members of the museum team.



This was followed on Friday 25th March, by a similar workshop held at Bishop Crowther Primary School, adjacent to the museum site, to engage school pupils from the Cline Town community about the preservation and protection of old Fourah College Building.



We are delighted to know that this wonderful monument is going to be restored. It represents another bit of our railway history and, as it is just round the corner from the museum, will attract more tourists to Cline Town to appreciate our rich heritage.

Museum visitors

The last few weeks before the start of the railway season is traditionally the busiest time for the museum, and 2022 was no exception.

On February 25th, Dawn International School from the Goodrich Community, west of Freetown paid a visit to the Museum. The kids enjoyed a guided tour, a ride on the pump trolley and various activities and their packed lunches. They all had a great time!



On the same day the team was delighted to welcome our good friend and former Monuments & Relics Commissioner, Dr Kitty Fadlu-Deen to the museum with her family.

Kitty has continued to maintain a keen interest in the work of the museum, since she stepped down from the Commission in 2018 and it is always good to see her.

The museum team have been proud to welcome:

- Children and staff from Bright Beginnings Preparatory School, Freetown.



- Leaders and young people from the Sierra Leone Girl Guides Association



- Tutors and pupils from the College of Travel & Tourism Studies.



Museum projects

At the beginning of March, the Education & Outreach Officer, Abdul Karim Kamara, contacted us to report that there was an ongoing problem with members of the local community coming into the museum compound to use the toilets. On finding them locked, they have then been going behind the building to relieve themselves as the toilet block is kept locked until required by members of staff and visitors, to ensure security and cleanliness. This is a major issue since

the area behind the toilet block constitutes part of the children's play area!

It was agreed that a fence was needed round the play area to ensure that the area could only be accessed by children under the supervision of the museum team, or, in the case of school parties, by their teachers. We were able to transfer funds to the museum to purchase wood for the fencing and for new sand for the play area floor and the museum team were able to erect a fence with a lockable gate.



Training visit to UK by members of museum staff

Thanks to a generous anonymous donation we are now in the process of planning a visit from two members of the museum team, who will spend a month in the UK shadowing museum and heritage railway professionals and observing how railway heritage is managed. They will be staying in York but travelling to a wide variety of venues in England and Wales to see railways in operation and museums at work.

Mr Abubakarr Nylander-Kargbo, Museum Coordinator and Mohamed Jabbie, Senior Tour Guide, will be joining us in mid-June (provided their visas arrive in time) and will be undertaking studies at the National Railway Museum, Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, Bristol City Archives, Thorpe Light Railway and a number of other places. At the end of June they will be joined by a delegation of senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs for a series of meetings and presentations at the Science Museum and both branches of the National Railway Museum.

Detailed reports will be provided in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Friends of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum in action in the UK



Whilst we have not had any FoSLNRM events during the past quarter, we have not been idle.

Trustees have continued to meet regularly online to discuss our various activities including fundraising for the restoration of SLR No 85, the museum floor and other projects.

Helen has completed the selection and cataloguing of over

a hundred images from the museum collection and collated the story of the Sierra Leone Railway for the Google Arts & Culture Project, which is due to go live in the near future.

She has also been working with the museum team to arrange a further training visit for the Museum Coordinator, Abubakarr Nylander-Kargbo and Senior Tour Guide, Mohamed Jabbie and to liaise with officials at the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs to facilitate a delegation to the National Railway Museum. The visa application process is slow, but it is hoped that the visits will take place in June/July this year.

Trustee William Bickers-Jones has continued the construction of Sierra Leone Railway rolling stock in 16mm scale, including Manning Wardle diesel locomotive No 133 and the Wickham railcar



FoSLNRM member Barry Witham has also been busy these past few months. He has been building a layout in On30 gauge, which is 1/4" = 1ft, or 1/48 full size. The layout is 24ft x 12ft when all set up and Barry is busy recreating the Sierra Leone landscape, through which his amazing models will run. So far he has built one of the Beyer-Garrat locomotives, almost finished two 4-8-0s, created a set of etches for a 6-car rake of Independence coaches, and 3D-printed bodies for ten of the all-steel van, as per the one in the museum.

His latest project is a station building, which he writes about here:

Sierra Leone Railway Modelling - The Station Building, Barry Witham

My model railway, as conceived, only has one decent building, which is the station building itself. There will also be a depot for the plantation, but that lies in the future. My layout vision is for a fictitious location but exhibiting all the signature features to place this model nowhere else in the world. I have chosen to call my location "Koindu", which is an actual town in Sierra Leone, although the railway never stopped there. That's not the whole story though, as in the very early post-war years there was, according to Best's book, an agreement made at a West African transportation summit, that the SLR would be extended into Guinea, terminating at the town of Gweckedou, which of course would have made the line an international carrier!

Of course, this was never implemented, but had it happened the line would almost certainly have embraced Koindu. So, as I've said above, I did not want to dream up a building for this station from thin air but wanted something that "screamed Sierra Leone" to a knowledgeable spectator. I have long admired the type of building which existed at Hastings, Waterloo, Songo, and probably a few others, and these had accommodation for the station master upstairs, with an attractive veranda to the front (track-facing) elevation.

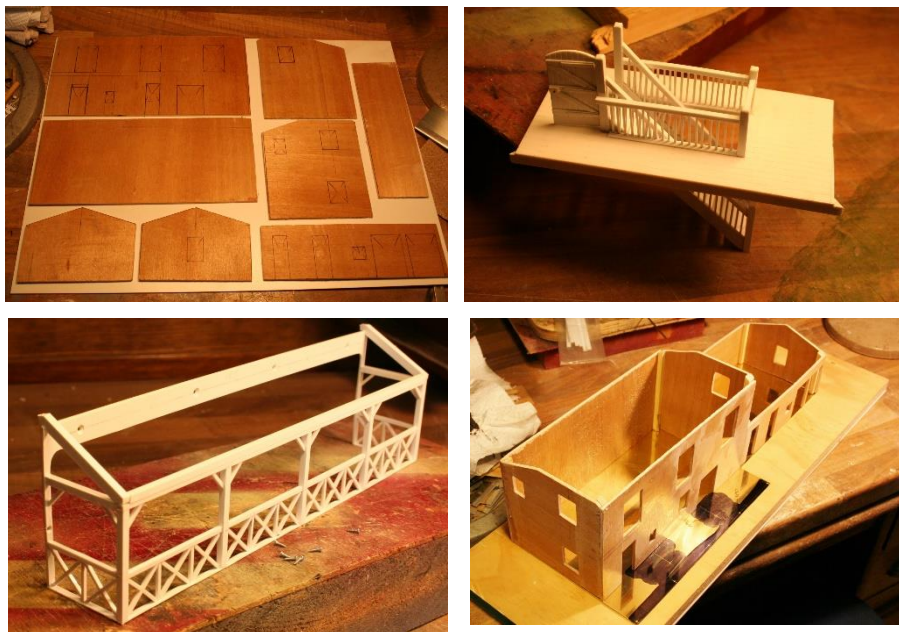
On one of my trips to Freetown, I visited the burnt-out remains of Hastings station building, and took many photographs. I only photographed the front and the sides, and anybody reading this who is a railway modeller will understand why the rear elevation didn't interest me. On a model railway all such buildings have the spectator-facing parts modelled, while the rear is left plain, being only on view to the operator(s). One of the pictures of the model under construction shows this feature.

However, I took the advice of my model-making friend, Richard Simon, and had the building mounted on a removable base, which bolts to the rear face of the appropriate baseboard. This gives a decent area of platform in front of the building, so typical of an SLR station. Therefore, upon arriving at a venue the station building and the extension board it sits on would be taken out of its box and bolted in position. Richard was adamant that this board should have a depth of 12", giving the prospect of an approach road behind, and the scope for lots of model trees.

I complied with this, installed the building, and at once could see that there was a wonderful opportunity for photography, over the shoulder of the building, as it were, to frame a train at the platform. Great idea, though I now had to decide on placement of doors and windows to the rear, with all this cutting, sawing, and filing to a building that was already assembled! Not for the faint-hearted. I played with a few ideas, none of which entirely convinced, and decided there was no alternative but to model it how it actually was.

Luckily my brother-in-law, Clifton, lives in Freetown and he agreed to drive up to Hastings and take a few pictures of the rear of the building, something I wish I had done at the time, as when he got there, the building was in the throes of being repurposed in connection with the adjacent school and there were already new concrete staircases in place at the back. Try as I might, I couldn't turn the clock back using Clifton's photographs to get a feel of how the building was before work started, and I was back to guessing.

More in desperation than anything else I did a Google search on both Hastings and Waterloo station buildings, not expecting much if anything, and I was truly amazed to find a picture of the latter, taken from the public entrance side of the building, while under construction, and now I could decipher the information in the present-day photographs, and lay plans for my upgrade.



The end result is as you see in the pictures. There are a few points which may interest. The shell of the building was 3mm plywood, held together with PVA adhesive, reinforced at the corners with square material, something I was heartily grateful for when I had to perform major surgery on the rear face of the building. All of this is mounted on a sturdy sheet of 1.5mm

brass. The random laterite stonework was created by spreading "natural wood"-coloured Polyfilla onto the surface, then painting it with Humbrol 113 "Rust", which seems about the right colour. Then the mortar joints were scribed out with a pointed dental scraper to reveal the filler, which is quite a good colour for mortar. The corrugated iron was the 7mm scale offering in plastic from Slater's. All of the other work was carried out in styrene sheet or Evergreen styrene sections and strip. The clear glazing material was from broken CD cases.

The model is approximately 17" long, 6" deep and 7" high. I model to a scale of 1/48, or 1/4" = 1ft, hence not a millimetre in sight! I have to say that I'm quite pleased with the result, and people who've seen pictures and know the line, tell me it conveys the spirit of the SLR.



Of course, at the moment it looks most unrealistically "squeaky clean", and will benefit from the attention of weathering powders, I think. I also need to arrange some weather flashing between the main wall and the single-storey roof, and the open upstairs window needs some half-height net curtains (see the Middleton Press book picture 1.39).

I now need to create a water tower, and plan to have the one at Waterloo as my model, with the tank constructed from the well-known "Braithwaite" panels. I also have in stock an etch to give me the face of the station name-board, and when constructed, pictures of these two will appear in this newsletter (Editor permitting).

However, before that happens, I have a model to make of one of the line's iconic travelling post offices.

Future Programme

We can now confirm the following dates for our annual 'pop-up museum' events:

Trains, Trains, Trains – Leeds Industrial Museum, Armley Mills, Saturday 27th August 2022

Model trains galore, including some new additions to members' models of Sierra Leone Railway locomotives and rolling stock. Our usual pop-up museum display and a new display focussing on Sierra Leone Railway Hunslet 2-6-2T No 85. Hopefully supported by material from the Leeds Industrial Museum collection and wonderful West African food.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Gala, 3rd and 4th September 2022

Our usual pop-up museum and sales stand, alongside displays of all sorts relating to 2ft 6 in gauge railways around the world and other transport treats. Trains will be running all weekend and a 16mm scale railway will be operating in Llanfair Connections.

New Acquisitions



This steam locomotive water gauge was kindly donated by the widow of the late Lieutenant Colonel Lennox MacEwan, who was an avid steam enthusiast, particularly interested in African railways. A volunteer at the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust in Darlington has kindly polished it to perfection and mounted it on tropical hardwood. It will be taken to Freetown for display at the first possible opportunity. This gauge glass was made by Beyer Peacock of Manchester who built our Garratt steam locomotive.

The gauge glass was used to determine the water level in the boiler and each locomotive had two.

The photograph of the firebox back head is marked with a white border to show where the gauges were originally fitted.



This lovely postcard of a train crossing Nicols Bridge in Freetown was posted in Freetown on 21st September 1903 and reached the recipient in Ghana (then Gold Coast) the following day. The landscape has changed dramatically since then, but Nicols Bridge is still there between Brook Street and Guard Street!



Research

We have continued to research various aspects of the Sierra Leone Railway and have made some interesting discoveries. I hope that those of you who are also members of the Friends of the National Railway Museum in York will forgive the duplication, but the following article was published in their most recent newsletter and I felt was also worth sharing with members.

From Freetown to Fencehouses and back: William Richard Rowland Norman – Last General

Manager of the Sierra Leone Railway, Helen Ashby

In 2012 FNRM and FoSLNRM Trustee Frank Paterson and I were lucky enough to carry out an interview with Richard Norman, the last General Manager of the Sierra Leone Railway.

We arrived at Richard's house one sunny July morning, never expecting that the interview would take us not only to Sierra Leone but also to various regions of British Railways, including County Durham.



Richard William Rowland Norman was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone 23rd of September 1927. He was educated at St Edwards Primary School and subsequently at St Edwards Catholic Secondary School in Freetown - one of the country's most prestigious schools.

When he left school in 1942, Richard wasn't sure what he wanted to do. He played in a band called the Blue Rhythm Dance Band and used to go from place to place in Sierra Leone and he saw the possibility of running his own business. But that didn't last too long.

Following a visit to the iron ore mines at Marampa, he then thought of being an industrial chemist, but then he realised that to reach the mining areas you had to travel by boat and then road. Road transport was very difficult in those days and the railway was the main artery going from Freetown to Pendembu and then up to Makeni and that area.

He applied for and was offered a scholarship by the Consul General of the Liberian Embassy, to go to America to study Marine Engineering but, as Sierra Leone had always been British, he took the offer but went to Britain rather than the USA, where he studied at Sunderland Technical College and then Newcastle College of Commerce. He eventually joined the railway in 1950 - the Traffic Department of the British Railways London North Eastern Region.

He was sent to York for a medical examination and within 24 hours was told to report to the South Shields Goods Station for training and from there he went to various passenger stations as relief staff. He appears to have enjoyed being relief staff, as he laughingly said " ..relief staff - you know what that means? Expenses!"

He started off working in the Booking Offices, and then moved on to Goods Yard and that sort of thing. He got a few railway certificates by studying in the various courses going and then eventually he became a junior controller.

His association with the North East continued when he eventually became Goods Agent at Fencehouses, County Durham, where he was responsible for five accounting areas: Hetton-le-Hole, Penshaw, Houghton-le-Spring and of course Fencehouses itself (at 85 Richard could not remember which was the fifth)



Fencehouses Station in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of <http://disused-stations.org.uk/> (John Mann Collection)

Penshaw Station, 1959. Photo courtesy of <http://disused-stations.org.uk/> (I S Carr)



He then began studying for the Institute of Transport Certificate but that meant going to London to finish off the course, so he resigned from the London and North Eastern Region in 1962. This was probably fortuitous, since the stations he worked at were largely victims of the Beeching cuts and closed by 1964.

However, when he got to London his colleagues at the Eastern Region Liverpool Street Headquarters said 'You shouldn't waste all that experience you have got now. You could still continue to work but continue to study.' So, he was offered work at King's Cross where they were responsible for the new Deltics coming into service.

He was then promoted to Liverpool Street Headquarters, in the Statistics Department and got a three-year bursary from the British government to complete his studies. In the event, he only took eighteen months to complete the course and was awarded Associate Membership of the Institute of Transport.

By 1965 Richard had begun thinking of returning home and was soon head hunted and invited to an interview for a job in Sierra Leone and was appointed Assistant Traffic Manager Special Duties, Sierra Leone Railway. His role would be to take charge of the modernisation of the traffic side of the railway.

At that time, the General Manager of the Sierra Leone Railway, Solomon A J Pratt, was seeking investment in the railway to upgrade the infrastructure and improve efficiency. A major infrastructure loan was requested from the World Bank, who commissioned a feasibility study via the International Monetary Fund. The feasibility study concluded that investment should be made in the roads and the railway should be phased out.

Despite assertions by both Solomon Pratt and Richard Norman that the phasing out of the railway would signal the beginning of the decline of the economy of Sierra Leone, in 1967 the Sierra Leone Government approved the proposal to close its railway.



In 1969 Mr Solomon A J Pratt, left to join government as Minister of Development and, after a period of vacancy, Richard Norman was appointed General Manager of the Railway in 1972, and given the task of closing it down.

The last passenger train ran between Freetown and Waterloo on 17th November 1974, and the railway was officially closed in 1975.

Richard sadly passed away in London, where he came to live during the Rebel War in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, and sadly passed away only a few months after we interviewed him.

Sierra Leone Railway Hunslet 4-6-2T No 85 restoration appeal

Members will recall that in the last newsletter we announced the agreement reached with the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway regarding the restoration of SLR No 85 to operating condition in time for the 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. A campaign has now been launched and we have begun to raise money towards the project, with donations received ranging from £10.00 to £10,000.

Articles have appeared in Heritage Railway Magazine, Narrow Gauge World and Locomotives International and we have launched a Facebook Page dedicated to the locomotive. Further advertising will take place shortly and Trustee Iain McCall is working on a range of activities that will help to increase funds.



2-6-2 Tank locomotive No 85 of 1954 was the last of this class of engines built by the Hunslet Engine Company of Leeds for the Sierra Leone Railway. It remained in operation until the railway closed in 1975, when it was purchased by the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway in mid-Wales. It worked on the W&LLR until 2010, when its boiler certificate expired.

The Friends of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum are now working in partnership with the W&LLR to get the locomotive back in operation.

If you would like to see No 85 steam again, please use the attached form to make your donation.

I wish to make a donation to the Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum to help No 85 steam again.

- I enclose a cheque for £ (Cheques payable to Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum and posted to Helen Ashby, Chair – FoSLNRM, 141 Manor Drive North, York YO26 5SD).
- I have donated online at <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/18554#!/DonationDetails>
- I have donated online direct to the Friends of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum and referenced No 85 (Account details: Bank: NatWest, Payee: Friends of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum, Sort Code: 56-00-70, Account No: 42630053)

TitleForenames

Surname

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone: Email:

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate
Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ to the Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Signed **Date**

<https://www.facebook.com/sierraleonerailwaymuseum>

<https://www.facebook.com/FoSLNRM/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Sierra-Leone-Railway-No-85>

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