



FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Registered Charity No: 1179579

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Honorary Patron Mr. Kamal Nassar, Sierra Construction Systems

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021



Loading cocoa on the train in Pendembu, January 1968 (Photo by Barry Isaac, Flickr)

I usually edit the FoSLNRM Newsletter in May, after our annual event at Leeds Industrial Museum, but as that event was postponed, and it was such a cold and miserable month, May seems to have slipped away from me. We are now passed the summer solstice and into July!

Talking of the summer solstice reminds me of the museum team visit to the UK in May 2019, when Messrs Nylander and Kamara were astonished by the late sun in the evenings. In Freetown it gets light around 6 am and dark at about 6 pm every day – much more conducive to a comfortable Ramadan than our seasons.

Whilst we are still awaiting the final easing of lockdown and watching the news for more statistics, cases of coronavirus are also on the rise in Sierra Leone, at the moment. The Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer posted on Facebook the other day that she has become infected and is now isolating, with a plea for people to maintain social distancing, hand washing and mask wearing. The total now stands at 5,575, with 100 deaths. The vaccination programme is now being rolled

out, with some 97,315 doses having been administered. Museum staff are now registering for their first jabs, which is pleasing to note.

Having broken my ankle at the end of April, I still haven't managed to organise a visit to Freetown but am hoping to be able to travel by the end of October, provided Sierra Leone doesn't make its way onto the Red List. Please keep your fingers crossed!

Helen Ashby
Chair

Update from the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum

A pan-African Network of Industrial Museums

For some years the Education & Outreach Officer and I have shared an ambition to set up an African Network of Railway Museums, which would enable networking and information sharing within the continent. We had engaged with colleagues in Nigeria, with whom Steve Davies and I had been working for the past couple of years, who were also interested in the concept.

Then out of the blue, we were approached by the President of TICCIH (the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage) with an invitation to free membership of the organisation with a view to setting up a TICCIH Africa network. There are already networks in Asia, the US, Europe and South America.

Our Education & Outreach Officer has been nominated for the complimentary membership and I have managed to join in support.

Other members represent Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt and Ethiopia and we will be researching other organisations to be invited to join in the coming months. The group has met via Zoom on several occasions to discuss how we can collaborate and is sharing information on WhatsApp. Our first collaborative article has gone for publication in the next TICCIH Bulletin. This is a great step forward as it will showcase the museum on international professional stage. Our long-term ambition is to host the TICCIH Biennial Conference at the SLNRM.

School Heritage Clubs

Now the rainy season has started it is somewhat less busy in the museum, leaving time for the Education & Outreach Officer and Senior Tour Guide to plan future projects. They have been busy planning and costing the development of school Railway Heritage Clubs at a number of selected schools which have direct connections with the Sierra Leone Railway. A concept has been developed and shared with the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, the Monuments & Relics Commission and the schools concerned, and Trustees have agreed a donation of £2,000 to pump prime the project. This has prompted a small contribution from the Ministry's budget and a commitment to support the initiative with advice and manpower.



The first of the Railway Heritage Clubs will be at St Peter’s School, Bauya, which was initiated last year as part of the 15th anniversary celebrations. Our contribution will cover the costs of travel and subsistence for the museum team, learning materials such as photocopying of work sheets, pens, exercise books and light refreshments for the children as they learn about the history of the railway and about the conservation of the remains. We hope that they will learn to respect their heritage and take care of it and will undertake creative activities to help to celebrate their railway history, including music, dance, drama and some interpretation at the station.



The second Railway Heritage Club being planned is at Newton, a few miles east of Waterloo, where the remains of the railway station are located in the compound of the Ahmadiyya Secondary School. We visited the school in November 2019 and spoke with the Head Teacher, who was very supportive of the concept. At that time, we provided materials for the museum team to visit the school to work with the children to tidy the site and repaint the station sign. Since then, Covid19 restrictions have meant it was not possible to develop this work further. The plan now is to work with the children to create a usable space in the old station, where the club can meet and work. As it is not so far from Freetown, our funds will also help to hire a bus to bring the children for a visit to the SLNRM so that they can learn more about how the railway operated and see the locomotives and carriages first hand.



In due course a further club will be planned at Hastings, where the station compound also now houses a secondary school.

New film on YouTube

We are very grateful to Hazel Chandler and Mash P of WAYout Arts, <http://www.wayoutarts.org>, for the amazing new film that they have created in association with film-making students. This has cost us nothing and will provide excellent publicity for the museum as well as helping this most excellent charity.



WAYout's mission it to change the lives of street, vulnerable and conflict affected young people through the arts. They offer training and shelter, make films that can effect change and record music that enables the excluded to re-engage, promoting artistic freedom, education and empowerment.

You can see the film, featuring our President, Steve Davies MBE, the Education & Outreach Officer, Abdul Karim Kamara and the Senior Tour Guide, Mohamed Jabbie.

on YouTube via the following link [Railway Museum 6min 50 sec - YouTube](#)

Women's Empowerment Training event at the SLNRM

On 29th June the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MTCA) conducted Women's Empowerment training at the museum, to support the development of business and entrepreneurship in tourism. The training was chaired by the Coordinator of the National Railway Museum, Mr. Nylander-Kargbo, who commended the Government through the MTCA for the initiative and the UNDP for providing the support fund.

Madam Haja Umu Bhai Gender Desk Officer of the MTCA, gave an overview of the project and called on all participants to make good use of their learning and Deputy Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Mr. William I K Robinson gave the keynote address and performed the official opening. Some 50 invited members of the Cline Town Community participated in the training and the SLPP Chair Lady of Constituency 121, Madam Marie Sesay, gave the vote of thanks.



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

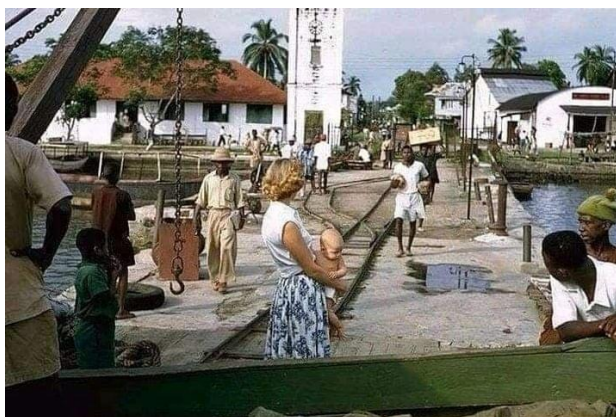
For the past 18 months there has been a recurring theme that we haven't been able to deliver many activities or events because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, but this does not mean that we have been idle.

Jumblebee online auction

Our online fundraising auction concluded on 31st May, with a small number of lots unsold, but many lots going to non-members for excellent prices. The runaway winner was the guided tour of Bekonscot Model Village with former trustee and now TV presenter, Tim Dunn, which went for over £500! Thanks are due to all those individuals and organisations who kindly donated items and experiences to include. The auction raised just over £1,800 and also attracted a donation of £1,000 from a large heritage railway, who preferred to make a donation from the operating company rather than to commit to an experience day. Many thanks to Iain McCall for all his hard work on setting up and administering the auction – it was well worth while!

Research

I have continued to search for images not previously held in the museum collections and to save them for future reference. Most of these are available online, but in a wide variety of locations, so for museum purposes it is useful to have them all in one place. I am planning to fill a hard drive with images that can be easily accessed in the museum, which I will deliver on my next visit. Here are just a few examples:



The Jetty at Bonthe in the 1960s. This is new one for me – a short length of railway track for hand-propelled wagons unloading at the quay.

This image was posted on the Facebook Page 'Old Photos of Sierra Leone', it was unidentified but I'm pretty sure it is Hastings Station. You can see the water column in just the right place.



This lovely photograph of the interior of the Governor's Coach was sent to Steve by Patrick Keef, along with other images of the interior of the building before it became the museum.



As reported in the Spring Newsletter, Tim Procter has been researching material found in the Leeds University archive collections, of which he is the custodian and is busy writing up his research. As a starter, here is his fascinating article on Achievements in Sierra Leone:

Paper Tracks Past: *Achievements in Sierra Leone* – a celebration of independence in print

The 60th anniversary of Sierra Leone's independence seemed to be an appropriate occasion to start what will hopefully be a regular feature in the *Newsletter*, looking at historical sources which shed some light on the railway and its place in Sierra Leone's history.

Independence in April 1961 was marked by a slew of celebratory publications, mostly from the Department of Information, part of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in the new government headed by Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai. The constitution was printed and distributed; the national anthem's words and music were published as a two-page leaflet; there were booklets proudly titled *Sierra Leone – the 100th State at the United Nations* and *Sierra Leone's constitutional story*; and there was a more general 31 page booklet, *Sierra Leone - an illustrated souvenir of the birth of a new nation*. All of these were printed by the Government Printer in Freetown, and their survival is relatively rare. The online catalogue of world library holdings, [WorldCat](#), records only six copies of *Sierra Leone – the 100th State at the United Nations*, one in the University of London and the rest in American university libraries.

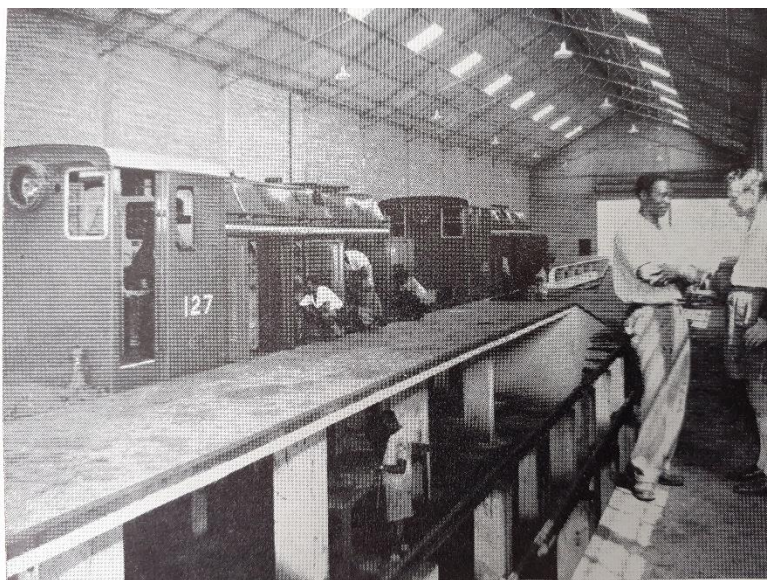


Achievements in Sierra Leone is much more extensive at 71 pages, and is much more readily available. This is possibly due to the fact that while it was also written by the Department of

Information, it was printed not in Freetown but in London, by Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., so may have been more widely distributed than the Freetown-printed publications. A copy even made its way into a folder of material on Sierra Leone assembled by President John F. Kennedy's Secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, in advance of Kennedy's meeting with representatives of the newly independent government.

Achievements in Sierra Leone conveys the excitement of independence and a nation rapidly modernising, with a pride in its history and culture. So alongside portraits of developments in mining, housing, health, agriculture and the like, there are sections on culture and tradition, and Sierra Leone's historic firsts such as the first West African newspaper, the first African to gain an Oxbridge Fellowship, the first West African postage stamp – and the first West African railway.

Railways feature both explicitly and implicitly as part of modern Sierra Leone. The section on Communications highlights the programme of track improvements, and the new diesels which had been arriving since 1954, illustrated by a photograph of some of the Hudswell Clarke Enterprise diesels being maintained in a running shed.



“Diesel Locomotives of the Sierra Leone Railways”

This may be inside a running shed at Cline Town or Fisher Lane.

Elsewhere, *Achievements in Sierra Leone* shows how the railway was used by industry. The new Shell bulk oil terminal is highlighted, as part of the provision of a modern fuel network. In a 2-page advert, Shell point out that the facility has both rail wagon and road tanker loading facilities.

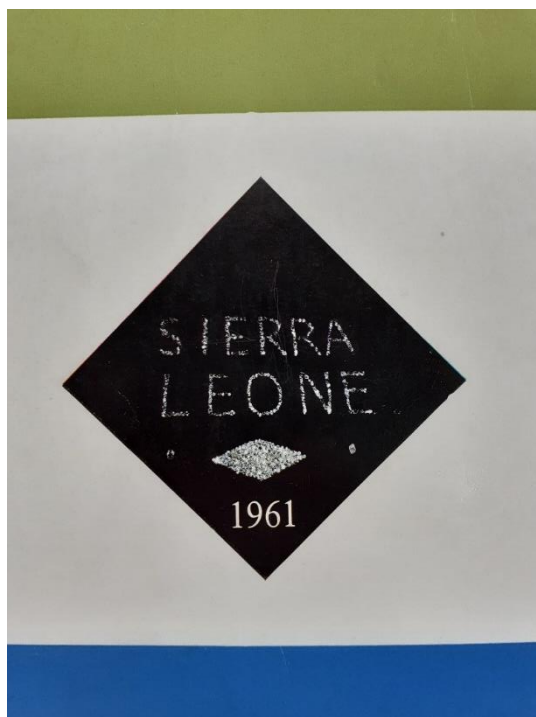
The activities of the new nation's other railway owner, the Sierra Leone Development Company (the “Delco”) are also prominent in *Achievements in Sierra Leone*. Highlights include their gift of £25,000 to the Engineering Department at Fourah Bay College, the plan to increase the output of the Marampa mines to 3 million tons of iron ore per annum, and acquisition of land to extend the Delco railway line to Tonkolili. In their advert, the Delco, keen to curry favour with the new government, highlight investment of £6 million as a demonstration “in practical terms of their faith and confidence in the future of Sierra Leone after Independence,” including the building of Delco House in Freetown, progress in promoting Sierra Leoneans to supervisory positions, and the replacement of steam locomotives with diesel electrics on their railway line (the was the replacement of the Garratts with the 1000hp Sulzer / Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. locos, which had started in 1955).



“Iron ore being loaded at
Pepel, Sierra Leone River”

The end of the Delco’s
railway line.

Achievements in Sierra Leone is full of optimism. However, with hindsight it is hard not to see ominous portents in its pages, both for the railway and the nation. The section on Development talks of a programme for industrial development – “The chief basic requirements for this programme are better transportation facilities, in particular better main roads...” There is no mention of the railway. The diesels were proving unreliable and tricky to maintain. The Transportation Consultants Inc. report, which doomed the Bauya-Makeni branch line and arguably set the railway on the path to closure, was less than two years away. In a rare equivocal moment, there is an admission that the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme to licence locals to dig for diamonds had only been partially successful. And it is hard not to see the back cover’s display of Sierra Leone spelt out in diamonds as grimly ironic. However, in 1961, *Achievements in Sierra Leone* was a snapshot of a proud nation looking forward, to “become known in the world not as ‘Ancient and Loyal Sierra Leone’ but as Modern and Progressive Sierra Leone where democracy will prevail for all time.”



The copy of *Achievements in Sierra Leone* used for this piece was sourced from Leeds University Library (Official Publications 663 Misc A). It can also be searched on [GoogleBooks](#). Copies can also occasionally be found on secondhand book sales sites such as AbeBooks and Biblio.

The file of material from the Kennedy Presidency is part of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum and has been completely digitised, including the copy of *Achievements in Sierra Leone*. It can be accessed [here](#).

New Acquisitions

This framed official works photograph of SLR Beyer-Garratt locomotive No 65 has been donated by Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Trustee and Driver, Simon Bowden, who visited the museum with us in November 2018. It will go on display in the museum when we next visit.



Future Programme

Leeds Industrial Museum, Armley Mills – 28th to 30th August 2021

As suggested in the Spring Newsletter, our planned event at Leeds Industrial Museum had to be postponed because of ongoing coronavirus restrictions. The event has been rescheduled for the August Bank Holiday weekend. Details will be circulated when finalized.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Transport Festival 2021 – 4th to 5th September 2021

This is likely to be a smaller event than the usual annual Gala, and may require pre-booking for visitors. However, we have been asked to attend as usual and will welcome anyone who would like to volunteer for a few hours on the stand.

It will be great to get out and about with the stand again this year. It's been a long time.

If you have any suggestions for events, venues or fundraising activities, please contact Helen or Anthony using the contact details at the foot of this newsletter.

In the meantime, stay safe and continue to follow us on Facebook

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

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

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