

THE PERMANENT WAY INSTITUTION PAST AND PRESENT

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READ TO SOUTH WALES SECTION ON 13TH MARCH 1975

In the first place, can I say how pleased I am to be in Swansea again today and thank you, as members of the South Wales Section, for giving me this opportunity to talk about our Institution, which this year is ninety-one years old and is one of the oldest of the railway societies.

I thought it might be interesting if we considered things as they existed when the Permanent Way Institution was founded, looked back to see what was happening in 1903, when your Section was formed, and then saw how we are faring today.

No talk about the Permanent Way Institution would be complete without reference to Mr. W. L. Meredith, C.E., F.R.S., Superintendent of Way and Works, Midland Railway, Gloucester, who was our first President. He died in 1924 and as many of you will know, his grave in Bedwas Churchyard in South Wales is marked by a stone erected by our members. This was dedicated in September 1925 in the presence of Mr. W. Cleaver, the then President, and a large number of members. It is the scene of a pilgrimage of members, whenever a Convention is held in these parts. Without any doubt whatever, Mr. Meredith was a very far-sighted man, but the best testament to his great work is the Permanent Way Institution itself; without his wise counsel and guidance there is every likelihood that it would never have made the progress which has occurred in the intervening years.

Let us go back to that Annual Dinner of Permanent Way Inspectors held at the Granby Hotel, Nottingham on 5th January, 1884, when Mr. Meredith, who was in the Chair, addressed the assembled company as under: (and I quote)

"We have met on this occasion not only to dine and enjoy a social hour together, but to establish an Institution of Inspectors for our mutual advancement and interests. There can be no better or more appropriate name for it than 'The Institution of Permanent Way Inspectors'.

It should have for its objects the general advancement of a technical training in the art of maintaining the ways and works of railways, and particularly for promoting accuracy and perfection in laying and fitting the complicated permanent way of large railway centres and junctions, the acquisition of a scientific knowledge of preserving the material used in the construction and maintenance of railways to its greatest limit of duration, and a general knowledge of the different kinds of permanent ways and systems of maintenance adopted on British and foreign lines.

To provide for its members opportunities of social intercourse and especially to acquire a higher social status in the community, as a means of popularising the national work of railway way and works maintenance.

To adopt a standard of competency in the art of inspection and work of maintaining and to provide a certificate or diploma of competency to any person who shall have acquired practical knowledge and experience of such work, and on passing the examinations of the Institution.

To encourage the acquisition of technical and scientific knowledge by means of lectures and original papers, descriptive of railway maintenance and construction, particularly on methods of reconstruction or on allied sciences."

When one recollects the isolated positions of permanent way men in the eighties of last century, the attitude of the Railway Companies at the time against the formation of any collective bodies of railway servants, it is clear that Mr. Meredith and his colleagues were well ahead of their time.

As many of you will know, the room at the Granby Hotel, where the original meeting was held, is commemorated by a plaque unveiled by the President in January, 1951. Have a look at it and perhaps have a drink at the same time, when next you are at Nottingham.

The need for the further education of permanent way men was very clear to the Founders of this Institution and at the same time social intercourse was a necessity for men whose work kept them in small groups strung out throughout the railway systems, often in remote parts. His reference to the examinations, diplomas, lectures, and papers showed how the Sectional meetings and the Institution examinations came about. He even gave us an 'excuse' for making visits abroad to obtain some knowledge of the permanent way and maintenance systems adopted on foreign lines.

Mr. Meredith, at the inaugural meeting, went on to say that great savings were possible "as a result of a more perfect technical and scientific training, and vigilance on the part of Inspectors and Foremen in the discharge of their duties. How is this superior training to be acquired by a body of men who seldom see each other?", he asked. "It can be acquired", he said, "by a diffusion of the knowledge we hope to obtain through the Institution we are now met to establish".

On 28th June 1884, at the first *Summer Meeting* held at the Town Hall at Birmingham, with Mr. Meredith again in the Chair, the Rules, Bye-laws, Certificates of Membership, and the Diplomas of Competency, were adopted. It was on this occasion that our first President made his oft repeated words of encouragement, which are as follows:

"Then be you Engineer, Inspector, Clerk, Platelayer, or Labourer, act well your part; make a determined effort to perform your allotted duties; work with energy to make yourselves as members of an honourable institution worthy of the respect and confidence of your fellow men; being not easily discouraged by unexpected reverses nor too much elated by favourable turns of fortune, but keep steadily in view the aims and objects you have determined to attain."

I think you will agree that these resounding words would be appropriate in these 'so called' more enlightened days; they must have had a great effect on the members in 1884.

At the end of that year, the Accounts showed there was a deficit of £4. 0s. 8d. and the list of Council members for 1885 recorded that eight Sections had been formed at: Bradford, Bristol, Birmingham, Derby & Nottingham, Gloucester, Manchester, London and Taunton & Exeter.

The name of the Institution was changed in August, 1895 to its present title to enable other ranks in the Civil Engineering Departments to join. Not only were permanent way men, but clerical and technical staff, as well as representatives from the 'Works' side of the Department, were encouraged to become members. Both then and on many subsequent occasions, there have been discussions as to whether the present name was appropriate to show that all members of the Department, those holding equivalent appointments in certain other Departments of the railways, and persons who have a professional interest in promoting the aims and objects, although not railwaymen, could join the Institution. Whilst it is recognised that the title is not as comprehensive as might be possible, advantage lay in retaining a name which is well-known.

Turning now to 1903, we find that the President in that year was Mr. W. J. Cudworth, Civil Engineer, North Eastern Railway, York. Of the members mentioned in the 1903 Journal, only one is still with us, namely Mr. B. P. Fletcher, who joined in the previous year. Up to 1973 he was a regular supporter at Summer Conventions and other functions.

At this stage, perhaps it would be appropriate for me to refer to my predecessor, Horace Janes and to pay tribute to all his efforts and keenness on our behalf. There is no doubt whatever that nobody spent so much of his spare time in our interests. He was indeed a tower of strength to the Permanent Way Institution for nearly 60 years. Mr. Janes is recorded as saying that one of his first impressions was the vigilant and critical attention given by those present at meetings in the early days of his membership, to any items affecting the general welfare of the Institution, however small. As many attending then were 'Founder Members', or those who had joined soon after 1884, it followed that all matters of a controversial character were thoroughly debated before the executive officers were allowed to proceed.

The cash balance in hand at the time (1903) was £107. Income from subscriptions was £174, but the cost of printing two parts of the Journal was only £48, as against well over £1,000 for one part today and this is still increasing.

The custom whereby the Winter meetings were held each year on the last Saturday in January, as now, was well established and the meeting on 31st January, 1903 was held at the Institution of Civil Engineers, London, which was the venue until about twelve years ago. Membership was rising and the records show that 12 Sections were then operating, viz: Belfast & Northern Ireland, Bishopstoke (Eastleigh), Bristol & Taunton, Derby & Nottingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, India, London, Manchester & Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield and York. Today we have 27 plus five Overseas Sections.

Amongst the papers printed in the 1903 Journal, the following may be of interest:

- Position of Points and Crossings in ordinary and Scissors Crossovers.
- Decimal equivalents.
- Descriptive notes on South Indian Railways.
- Rail joints. Accidents and how to act.
- Notes on Diamond Crossings.
- Transition of curves.

In addition, it was customary in those days for the President to give an Address at the Winter meeting each year. On this occasion, Mr. Cudworth spoke of the attributes required of Permanent Way Inspectors and stressed the value of education and in particular practical training.

Perhaps not so comprehensive as in other years at that time, but nevertheless a mixed bag showing the interest of members in a wide range of subjects, some topical at the time and others still familiar problems with us today.

It is a matter of interest to record that the 1903 Journal was printed by Derry and Sons Limited, Nottingham, as is the case now, and has been continuously since 1900.

The Summer Convention was held at Cardiff in July, 1903, as was the Summer Meeting. As now, the former extended over the period Saturday to Thursday, but this arrangement had been introduced only the previous year. It would appear that ladies were admitted to the Convention for the first time in 1903.

It would also appear that following the successful Convention, when on 22nd July 1903 the members and ladies were the guests of the Town Council of Swansea, a move was made to form a South Wales Section.

It is of particular interest to note that the inaugural meeting was held in the Lecture Hall of the Royal Institution in this City on 10th October of the same year, when Mr. Meredith occupied the Chair. At that time he was Honorary Editor of the Institution and was pleased to have the opportunity of opening yet another Section. Apparently Cardiff members were much in evidence at the Swansea meeting and the members here were encouraged to attend in force at Cardiff on the occasion of the following meeting.

Mr. W. J. Edwards, then Chief Assistant Engineer, Taff Vale Railway, proposed that Mr. Meredith be elected as the first Chairman of the Section, but as circumstances prevented him from accepting, Mr. Meredith suggested that Mr. Edwards would be an ideal Chairman and was heart and soul in the Institution. The proposal was seconded by Mr. Cleaver and accepted unanimously. Mr. Cleaver was elected as the first Corresponding Secretary of the Section.

On 7th November the second meeting was held at the South Wales Institute of Engineers, Cardiff, when the Honorary Secretary, Mr. A. G. Pugh, gave an interesting address about the Institution, giving members in South Wales good advice for their future meetings.

At these two meetings it was agreed that one Section should serve the whole of South Wales, that meetings be held at Swansea, Cardiff and other towns. The third meeting was indeed held at Port Talbot.

Since those days, the South Wales Section has always been one of importance and has acted as hosts at Summer Conventions on four subsequent occasions, namely 1913, 1930, 1953 at Cardiff and 1971 at Barry Island. Tribute must be paid to the many members who have contributed towards its success, notably Messrs. A. W. Dyke, R. H. Edwards, W. D. Johns, to mention only a few. All are worthy of our sincere thanks for all their efforts on behalf of the Permanent Way Institution.

In the last seventy-two years there have been only three Secretaries of the Institution, namely Mr. McLewin (1904-39), Mr. Janes (1940-1960) and myself (1961-1974). Six Treasurers only have successfully managed our financial affairs over the same period.

Many members will recall that, prior to the *Conversazione* being introduced in 1953, it was customary to hold a Winter Dinner in London on the evening of the day on which the Winter Meeting was held each year. 1903 was no exception and the venue was the Mansion House Restaurant, London. The toast list was long as, in addition to the Loyal Toast, it included 'The Permanent Way Institution', 'The President', 'The Secretary, Treasurer and Working Officers', 'The Visitors' and 'The Press'. Eleven speeches in all, because two persons replied to the third toast. Now some members are complaining because we have to listen to four or five at our Summer Dinners. Nevertheless, it would seem from the reports that a very pleasant evening was spent by those present.

Enough of the past, now we must come up-to-date and in doing so, perhaps a few words as to what improvements have been made and a few references as to how the Permanent Way Institution is now organised, will not be out of place.

Many of you will know that in January last year, Mr. H. Ormiston, B.Sc., C.Eng., F.I.C.E., F.C.I.T., Chief Civil Engineer, British Railways, Eastern Region, took up the Presidency of the Institution, the 45th person to do so. There are at present seven Vice-Presidents i.e. for England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Central Africa, Malaysia, and Nigeria., duly nominated by the members in their respective countries. As from 1973, each is entitled to wear a Badge of Office when attending Institution functions and are inducted into their year of Office at a brief ceremony conducted by the President at the annual Winter Technical meeting in London.

Perhaps some reference to the special position of the Vice-President for England will not be out of place. The member elected is now always either a Member or an Associate Member. Sections in England are asked annually to nominate a member in one of these two grades of membership who has worked well for the Institution over the years. Council, on the advice of the General Purposes Advisory Committee, decides which nominee shall be put before the Annual General Meeting for election. It is the highest Office a Member or Associate Member in England can obtain and many excellent men have occupied the position.

The Vice-President for England can take the President's place at English meetings and is a member of the General Purposes Committee. Council are always anxious to have a number of applications from English Sections making nominations for this important Office, which is one of the ways in which the democratic set-up of the Permanent Way Institution is demonstrated.

In addition to the Honorary General Secretary (Mr. Harris) and the Honorary Treasurer (Mr. Starks), the other Officers include the Honorary Editor (Mr. Field) and Messrs. Covey-Crump and Bentall, Honorary Assistant Secretary and Honorary Assistant Treasurer respectively. We also have a professional Auditor, Mr. Townsend. All make an important contribution towards the work of the Institution.

Then we come to the Sections, 26 in the United Kingdom and others in Ireland, Central Africa, Malaya, New South Wales, New Zealand and Nigeria. Each of those in Great Britain and Ireland nominate three members (including the Section Secretary) as Council members each year. The larger Sections, whose members number 200 or more, are entitled to an additional Council member. Council itself is empowered to nominate six additional members who have rendered outstanding service to the Institution. All these are elected at the Annual General Meeting but for convenience's sake do not take up Office until 1st January following. In addition five Past Presidents serve on the Council. For many years the Council was the only controlling body of the Institution, special committees being set up when special points required consideration. It may be interesting to recall that I was brought into active work for the Institution in this way. When the Diamond Jubilee Committee was set up in 1944, I was asked to act as its Secretary.

After the last War, however, it became clear that with such a large Council it would be beneficial to set up Standing Committees. A smaller number of people could meet more frequently and the work of the Institution could be dealt with more effectively. Accordingly the following Advisory Committees were constituted and annually Council elects six members to each Committee and the Officers are ex-officio members of the first two:

General Purposes. Membership and Finance. Journal and Awards.

You will know that there are five grades of membership and I shall not take up your time in detailing these, or in giving particulars of the subscription rates and entrance fees paid in each case. Perhaps, however, it will be of interest to mention Honorary members and Honorary life members and to see the distinction between them. The former are persons elected 'in consequence of their having rendered meritorious services to the Institution, or for other special reasons' These Honorary members are usually those from outside our ranks who have helped the Permanent Way Institution in some outstanding way, like Ir. M. Portmann, Chief Civil Engineer, Swiss Federal Railways, who did so much to make the 1972 Convention at Lucerne possible. Council are responsible for nominating Honorary members. On the other hand Honorary life members are 'those who, having 25 years of continuous membership and having retired from active employment, are considered by Council to have rendered during that period exceptional service to the Institution'. These are our own longstanding members worthy of being honoured for the services they have rendered to the Institution, like Mr. W. D. Johns of your Section. Recommendations under this heading always originate from the Sections.

Up to the outbreak of the last War, gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded for the three best papers appearing each year in the Journal. Since then, book prizes have

been substituted. A new Award was introduced in 1954 available to Members and Associate Members only and this is known as the Tustain Award. More recently, the list of Awards has been increased by the inclusion of the President's First, Second and Third Awards. All these are open to Members and Associate Members.

It is usually difficult to get papers written by members in these last mentioned grades. The Editor is willing to put any such papers or notes in a suitable form for inclusion in the Journal. Section Secretaries are prepared to help Authors in having their papers typed, if they so wish. A list of suitable subjects on which Members and Associate Members might write papers is available from Section Secretaries.

We do want Members and Associate Members to let other members know about their practical experiences, in fulfillment of Mr. Meredith's suggestion. This has never been more important than at the present time. At the last Council meeting the Editor reported that a number of Awards for 1974 could not be made because of the lack of papers from Members and Associate Members in last year's Journals.

Many present will know that in 1971 we published the fourth edition of our Text Book 'British Railway Track: Design, Construction and Maintenance'. Already, well over half of the total number of copies printed have gone. This is the first occasion, since the book was first published in 1943, that the contents have been revised completely and brought up-to-date. Members can obtain a copy at the specially reduced rate of £2.00p and those of you who have not got one, should put this right whilst supplies last. It is a 'must' for all those concerned in any way with the Permanent Way. The cost of the next edition will be greatly advanced.

I think our Benevolent Fund is well known to you, so I will content myself by saying that if you know of any members who are in need of assistance from the Fund, please let your Secretary or Committee members know. We are most anxious to make grants in all deserving cases, irrespective of the grade of membership.

In 1973 (the 1974 figures are not yet available) Sections arranged 195 meetings and 52 visits, with an average attendance of from 13-91 at the former and 16 at the latter. The visits figure is a little restricted by the fact that so many firms have to put a limit on the numbers who can take part and also because Saturday visits are now difficult to arrange because the 5-day week applies so widely.

By way of contrast to the figures quoted earlier, the 1973 Accounts show that subscription receipts totalled £5,920 and the General Reserve Fund stood at £5,633. Our membership totalled 5,665, including Life Members and those overseas.

Had I been speaking to you at the beginning of last year I should have reported that today we had only three Overseas Sections, i.e. Central Africa, Malaysia and Nigeria. The three we had in India and one in Sudan, I regret to say, became moribund with the departure of the English-speaking Engineers. It is good to say, however, that in January, 1974 Council were able to authorise the formation of two new Sections overseas namely those in New South Wales and New Zealand. It is very gratifying to think that the civil engineering Officers and staff of the railways in those two countries, so far away from the United Kingdom, could, in this day and age, find the aims and objects of this old Institution attractive enough to recommend to Council that the new Sections be formed. Many new members have been recruited in each country and both Sections have held meetings. The New South Wales Section held a short Convention in October last and has already published its own Journal in three parts for 1974. We wish them both continued success in the future.

In order that our liaison with the Overseas Sections and members is strengthened, it was agreed at the last Annual General Meeting that an Overseas Secretary should be appointed from 1st January, 1975 and, as you know, I was elected to undertake the necessary duties. There was never sufficient time to keep adequately in touch hitherto and I look forward to maintaining good contact with our Overseas members in the future. It is a good thing also when one or more of the members from our Overseas Sections can visit us here. In 1973, Mr. Pitkin (Vice-President for Central Africa) joined us at the Sheffield Convention, Mr. Schwarzer from New South Wales was at Stirling last June and since then we have had Mr. Xavier (Past Treasurer from Malaya) with us in London. This year we are expecting Mr. Pitkin again at the Convention and also Mr. Bridgeford, the Section Secretary from Central Africa.

Apart from our Overseas Sections, where meetings of members take place periodically and are reported on from time to time in our Journal, there are also 100 or so members of varying grades scattered about in other parts of the world. Their interest in the Institution and its work must be real, as their only means of contact is through the pages of the Journal. English-speaking members in foreign countries have often told me how much they value the Journal, which is a real link for them with their Homeland. Copies

of the Journal are sold to firms and people in all parts of the world and are sent, inter-alia, to Moscow, Peking and the Americas. Much the same can be said for the Text Book.

From what I have said earlier, you will have gathered that many of the present day features of our activities have their origin in the past and have not altered a lot since the early days. In many ways this is good and shows on what a good foundation Mr. Meredith and his colleagues built. Again, in this world of change, we do not want to make changes for change's sake. Nevertheless, an Institution such as ours cannot remain constant, as it would, sooner or later, die. A few years ago we were concerned, say, at General and Winter meetings and Conventions, with the big percentage of elderly members present. We asked ourselves whether young men were enrolling in sufficient numbers. I am pleased to tell you that, from records we took, they were and provided the trend continues, and there is no evidence that it is not, the future of the Permanent Way Institution should be assured, so long as its programme of activities do not fall below their present standards.

From the viewpoint of obtaining replacements of active Officers, the position is not quite so rosy, as at times it is difficult to find suitable successors. We can say, however, that, so far, the position in the Sections is better. There has always been someone to follow on, whenever a Section Secretary has to be replaced. One newer feature is the Regulation whereby an Officer of the Permanent Way Institution is not expected to remain in office after he has attained the age of 65 years.

What other items have been introduced in more recent years that did not apply in the early days? I have already referred to the ever-popular *Conversazione*, in place of the Winter Dinner. This started in 1953 and still attracts well over 500 members and ladies each year. If you have never attended, you have missed a great social occasion when members of all grades can get together in a really happy atmosphere. Ladies have been admitted to membership since 1963 and they are found in most Sections. New and smaller Membership Certificates were introduced two years ago.

Another outstanding feature is the closer liaison now existing with permanent way men in other countries in Europe. Visits commenced in 1948 when the London Section went to Dunkerque and to Holland in the following year. Since then other visits, often associated with the permanent way plant and machinery exhibitions, were made to Elst (Holland) in 1962, and subsequently to Frankfurt, Innsbruck, Munich, Linz and Strasbourg. These have been occasions when permanent way men of different countries have been able to get together. It is noteworthy to record that many younger men took part. At this stage it would be wrong if I did not refer to the close relationship existing today between the Permanent Way Institution and kindred associations in Holland, Germany and France. We are particularly proud that the *Weg en Werken Vereniging* (Holland), which was founded in 1953, was based on our constitution and on the occasion of their 20th anniversary celebrations conferred honorary life membership of their Institution on Mr. Starks and myself. The *Verband Deutscher Eisenbahn Ingenieure* ev. in Germany does not provide for men on the track, other than supervisors, becoming members, but otherwise we find it as the nearest counterpart to the Permanent Way Institution in Germany. The A.V.B. in France was also based on the Permanent Way Institution constitution, having been formed following our Convention in Rouen in 1955, but unfortunately it has now virtually ceased to exist. So far as the *Weg en Werken Vereniging* and *Verband Deutscher Eisenbahn Ingenieure* ev. are concerned, their meetings are often attended by representatives from the Permanent Way Institution and many joint meetings and visits are arranged from time to time by the Sections, particularly to Holland, where the language question is easier. Equally we usually have Officers from these two foreign societies present at our major functions. Such interchange visits accord with the wishes of the *Weg en Werken Vereniging* management who are only too anxious to encourage their members to visit this country and to welcome our members in Holland. The same applies to Germany, but there the language problem is more difficult. As an example, the Dutch brought a party of about 400 persons to Clacton-on-Sea last May and we were able to arrange a programme to suit their requirements and which was much appreciated.

The combined Convention at Mainz in 1968 was an outstanding example of co-operation, although I must confess that at times during the planning I wondered whether all would be well in the end. Patience triumphed in the long run and we certainly have some real friends in both countries. The same can be said for Switzerland and Sweden, although in these countries the numbers are much smaller.

Badges have been reduced in size to meet modern requirements and are always in demand. Special Permanent Way Institution ties in both blue and maroon have been introduced.

Another feature, started some 14 years ago, is the annual meeting of Section Secretaries with the Officers of the Institution. Before then, personal contact was very restricted and the General Secretary, Treasurer, etc., were merely names to those Section Secretaries who were prevented from attending Council and General Meetings, Conventions etc. The annual meetings are of great benefit to the Officers as well as the Secretaries and we find that each year there are a number of matters of mutual interest, which we can discuss in a very informal way.

Although time did not allow me to visit Sections as often as I would have liked, I have, during the last fourteen years, attended meetings of virtually all Sections, on more than one occasion. It was a rewarding task. I was very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting members of all ranks and can picture where the members assemble for their meetings. Last year I travelled well over 10,000 miles in connection with Institution business.

You may think our main task in running the Permanent Way Institution is to enroll new members, receive subscriptions and to arrange meetings, Conventions, etc. This is very true, but there are a few unusual features in which you may be interested. Perhaps you do not realise how many members change their addresses. Each change has to be recorded in the Register of members, required by the Articles of Association. For a recent issue of the Journal alone, the printers had to alter over 250 addresses. At the end of each year over 100 members' names have to be taken off the list because they are in arrears with their subscriptions. When any pay, they have to have their names re-instated and in each case the printers have to be advised again. Each time the Journal is issued, at least three dozen copies, on average, are returned marked by the Post Office 'Gone Away', 'Address unknown' etc. Again the printers have to be advised because, as you may know, the Journals are sent direct to you by them from Nottingham. This is a very convenient arrangement because, apart from time, it would have been necessary to have had an extension built to my house to accommodate 5,000 Journals, three times a year!

We revised the Articles of Association in 1965 and this resulted in close contact with the then Board of Trade. Did you know that the Permanent Way Institution is a Company (limited by guarantee) within the meaning of the Companies Act?

We have been given permission to omit the word 'limited', but nevertheless we have to make an annual return to the Companies Registration Office. For this purpose, all the members of Council are construed to be Directors of the Company. Under this heading the General Secretary of the Institution is the responsible Officer and should there ever be any legal difficulty it looks as if it would be he who would have to go behind bars. I escaped! With the coming into being of the Common Market, it has become necessary to record on our notepaper the number of the Company, its Registered Office, the fact we are Registered in England and are limited by guarantee.

I trust I have not bored you unduly with this record of the Institution activities by including too many items of which you were well aware, and hope I have not omitted too many in which you might have been interested. I feel, however, that at this stage I must say more about the Sections. It is on them that the Permanent Way Institution has been built up and maintained. Unless the Sections are successful, additional members will not be forthcoming and for future success this is essential. I am sure you will realise how much we all owe to local Section officials. Without their continued support and interest, Sections would soon become moribund and gradually disappear and taken to its logical conclusion, the Institution, as now known, would itself die. The fact that the reverse is true underlines very forcefully that there are many keen stalwarts amongst the Officers and members in all existing Sections throughout the country today, who are proud to be members of this most democratic of Institutions, which, as I have said, is one of the oldest associated with British Railways. Long may it continue so, despite the changing conditions experienced by the railways. Such Officers are, however, well deserving of all the support and help of all members of their Sections for what they are doing on behalf of all of us. I cannot miss this opportunity of expressing my personal thanks and appreciation for all the help I have received from the Officers of this Section over the years.

Will you allow me to wish Mr. Lodge every success in the job of your Section Secretary, which he has just taken on. We are indebted to him for agreeing to do this and I have considerable knowledge of the excellent manner in which he has fulfilled similar positions with other Sections and would thank him for the contribution he has made in this respect in various parts of the country.

Before concluding, I thought we might spend a few moments looking at the future and perhaps it would be best for me to give a few ideas as to how I would expect or like the Permanent Way Institution to develop and then leave it to you to give your ideas.

1. *Membership.* The potential for new Members and Associate Members from British Railways alone is enormous and there is great scope to increase our numbers. If every existing member of this Section would enroll only one new member, the result would be stimulating and place the Institution in a numerically strong position. Will you see what you can do? I shall look forward to seeing a successful result.

2. *Sections.* There is evidence, in some parts of the country, that with the curtailment of local train services and the absence of alternative suitable road transport, it is becoming increasingly difficult for some Section members to travel to and from meetings at the customary centres, where some distance is involved. It is possible that in some areas we shall have to revert to smaller Sections, with a smaller membership in each, rather on the lines of the Discussion Group existing in the Far North of Scotland. Alternatively, the larger Sections may find it advisable, as you are doing tonight, to hold some of their meetings at other centres, so that members do not have so far to travel.

3. *The Journal.* If we ever get the considerably increased membership to which I have just referred, the additional revenue ought to allow for a big improvement in the size and standard of the Journal, which we should all like. Unfortunately, it would have to be a sizable increase as otherwise the possibility of realising the ideal seems to be constantly put back by the ever-increasing cost of printing and publishing the Journal, which is the life-line to so many members who do not attend meetings and those abroad, outside the areas covered by the Overseas Sections.

4. *Co-operation with Foreign Institutions.* I would like to think that there will be opportunities to extend our liaison with permanent way men in other countries. Contacts exist between men in other departments of the railways and I am sure permanent way men have something to learn from their counterparts in other countries. I trust we shall be able to make contacts with permanent way men in other parts of Europe, beyond those existing with Holland, Germany and elsewhere in the world.

5. *Conventions.* It is my hope that the relative cost of future Conventions can be kept at a level to attract more and more members each year and that the dates can be organised so that younger people can be attracted to attend in greater numbers, despite the difficulties associated with school holidays and examinations. Those who have never been to a Convention do not know what they have missed. The democratic constitution of the Permanent Way Institution is never better demonstrated than on such occasions.

Thank you for giving me your kind attention whilst listening to these random remarks and may I take this opportunity to wish your Section continued prosperity and success.
