

BSRA Entertainment Report for January 11, 2014

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for January 11, 2014)

January 11, 2014. A Spanish and Dutch Outing and a return to New England Herb Pence reported on his trips to Europe in 2012 and 2013, where he rode and photographed some interesting LRT and heritage tram line, with a few metro snapshots. We started in Madrid (Spain) in 2013, with a note that the Spanish part of the trip was cut short by a failure of Herb's film camera combined with a complete lack of availability of replacement film cameras. We saw the Madrid bus rapid transit service in marked lanes. Madrid also has a heavy rail metro, and a light rail (Metro Ligero) system that fans out into the suburbs. The Spanish government purchased 42 Alstom "Citadis 302" all-low-floor light rail vehicles (of 5 segments each) for use on light rail lines throughout the country. This is more LRVs than it can currently use, and so some have gone to systems elsewhere, while others have gone into storage pending the building of additional lines and/or the extension of existing lines (which may be some time coming due to the economic crisis in Spain). Other cities that received surplus vehicles include Adelaide (in Australia), which received 6 of them in September – November 2009 and now uses them on its Glenelg Tram line; Metro Ligero LRV numbers 165 – 170 correspond to Glenelg Tram numbers 201 – 206. We saw some of these very modern "Citadis 302" light rail vehicles, including interior photos, showing the ticket validators.

Going back to Herb's 2012 trip to Europe, Herb showed us the Netherlands, where he went by way of London and France, and we got to see a photo in France. In the Netherlands, we first saw the very ornate front of the central railway station in Amsterdam ("Amsterdam Centraal"), followed by a very full bike lot (so full and large that people can have real trouble finding their bicycles). Then we saw the tram system of Amsterdam, which has both older 3 segment articulated streetcars (at least some of which have non-digital destination signs) and new 5 segment articulated streetcars which have digital signs. All of these trams have very large destination signs, and nearly all are single-ended, and make use of very wide turnaround loops at the ends of the lines. *The older cars were made by La Brugeoise et Nivelles (now part of Bombardier) and were the first low floor trams in Amsterdam. The newer cars are Combino trams built by Siemens (and 4 of these are double-ended, but the other 151 are single-ended); these had dangerous structural flaws requiring major repairs from 2004 – 2008; unfortunately, the last of the old articulated streetcars from the 1960s had been taken out of service in 2004, thus making them unavailable to compensate for decreased availability of the Combinos.* The trams in Amsterdam have conductors (in addition to the drivers) to reduce fare evasion and vandalism. We also got to see interior photos of the new cars, including the electronic signs that show the next few stations that the tram will go to, and an interior photo of an Amsterdam Metro car.

At this point we got an interlude giving us news of the construction of the 3.6 mile streetcar line in Cincinnati, featuring an all-too-common tale of US politicians doing their utmost to kill public transit, in this case stymied only by an unusually rapid response from the Federal government threatening to call in all the money that had been spent on the system. *A full recounting of this interlude is outside the scope of this report, but a similar report (currently lacking the very recent news about Federal intervention) can be found in the Cincinnati Streetcar article on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cincinnati_Streetcar).*

Back to the Netherlands, we saw the tram system in Den Haag (The Hague), which has a fleet of modern articulated trams, but also a large museum fleet (not shown) of cars used for special occasions and sometimes on weekends. Some trams in Den Haag run in the curb lane of the street ("gutter running", in this case on the right), so that passengers do not have to board and exit through a traffic lane; this means no parking on streets having these lines. The streetcars are older articulated units, all of which are single-ended and have doors only on the right side; they have a center section that is low floor for disability accessibility. A notable feature of this system is some of the line poles that are only one side of the double tracks, having long arms to hold the wires over both tracks.

Next we saw Arnhem (still in the Netherlands). For those who remember the movie and book A Bridge Too Far, Arnhem is a familiar name. It was here that the Germans stopped the World War II British, Polish, and American offensive named "Market Garden". In the battle for the bridge, Arnhem was destroyed. City transport (all built since then) consists of both electric trolleybuses (including articulated units) and diesel buses. The central bus terminal is huge, with a feel like Boston's Haymarket Station but larger, and with electric trolleybuses, which get power from copper rods that substitute for trolley wires in the station. Arnhem has the only electric trolleybus system still operating

in the Netherlands. It also has the Openluchtmuseum (Open Air Museum), which features historic buildings that have been moved there (including houses from times back to Medieval in which people lived together with their livestock, and somewhat later houses in which people slept in cupboards for warmth). During World War II, refugees from the battle in and around Arnhem lived in these buildings. This museum also has a tram line run by volunteers. This system even has a device at each station for providing wheelchair access (although we did not get to see one in action, they appear to be a combination of ramp and lift, and more compact than the Boston "portable" wheelchair lifts, and otherwise of very different appearance) Most of the cars on the line are ex-Rotterdam trams consisting of motor + trailer sets, but the museum also has an ex-Amsterdam work car, photographed in the shop, along with a replica (built by the museum) of an Arnhem car.

After this, Herb took us to the western United States, to Yakima, Washington, where we saw the Yakima Electric Railway Museum, which operates on the original tracks of the Yakima Valley Transportation Company, which was an electric short line subsidiary of the Union Pacific until November 18, 1985. *The Yakima Valley Transportation Company had operated streetcar service from 1907 to 1947 and operated the local bus service until 1957, when the city took over bus service. Museum streetcar service started in 1974. Service was not running when Herb photographed the system. In response to questions asked during the show about whether the Yakima Electric Railway Museum still exists, the web site (<http://www.yakimavalleytrolleys.org/>) still exists, but the latest News & Updates on the web site is dated October 2, 2012, and the latest schedule is for May 25, 2013 through September 2, 2013.* The infrastructure is largely intact, having been donated to the city by the Union Pacific (with the city having acquired the last part, the car barn, in 2008), but theft of the copper wire has been a recurring problem that interrupts service. Operable streetcars include some Yakima Valley Transportation Company streetcars built by Brill that had gone to Portland, Oregon for the latter part of their regular service years, and a Portuguese streetcar (of which we got to see an interior photo). The museum also has a 1909 vintage line car and a 1922 General Electric steeplecab locomotive, and freight cars were visible in some of Herb's photographs. Herb showed us the Union Pacific and Northern Pacific stations in Yakima.

After this, Herb took us to his old home, the Manchester Transit Authority (MTA) in New Hampshire in the 1970s; Herb was General Manager of the MTA from 1975 – 1981. We started with snow-fighting equipment (consisting of a pickup truck with a plow and a trailer designed to lay down salt and/or sand without spraying it), and then proceeded to see the GM New Look ("Fishbowl") buses (mostly 35') in 1977/1978, including a view of a downtown street plowed so as to put the snow temporarily in the middle, dividing the street until the snow could be hauled away. Herb gave details of how the authority added buses to the service during snowstorms to ensure that buses could always leave end points of their routes at the scheduled time even when the buses were slowed down along their routes. He also showed us several photos of a 35' motor coach used for charter service. Charter service provided approximately 13% of the revenue of the Manchester Transit Authority. On one night, MTA buses were in charter service for airlines which diverted planes from such cities as Burlington, VT; Bangor, ME; Portland, ME; Worcester, MA; and Boston (Logan Airport), MA. The Manchester Transit Authority also provided school bus service. The bus garage of the Manchester Transit Authority stored overnight buses of other owners, including a motor coach owned by fast food giant McDonald's. We got to see some special events displays of Manchester Transit Authority, including a streetcar from Seashore Trolley Museum displayed on a low flatbed trailer, and buses in several commemorative paint schemes, including 5 years of the Manchester Transit Authority (founded 1973), the US Bicentennial (including a parade), and 300 years of government in New Hampshire (with the bus appearing in front of Weston Tower). Fishbowl buses were painted for these celebrations, because ad wrap was not available in the 1970s. We also got to see a photo from 1974 of the then-new Fishbowl buses alongside their predecessors (GM Old Look buses).

Finally, Herb showed us some photos of the light rail system in Pittsburgh, devoid of streetcars due to the operating headways of approximately half an hour in 2011, and ended with a photo of a Shannon-Washington (interurban running south of Pittsburgh) PCC at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum in 2011.

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for January 11, 2014)

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