



**Formerly 'Linesiding with John'
First Issue
December 2019**

Background

A select group of people have participated in Linesiding with John Tours since I ran the first one in 2011 to Shibanzi, China and I now count these people among my friends. They usually know other participants on a tour which makes for a good, generally easy-going atmosphere - friends doing what we enjoy doing together. The tours are normally small in size (6-8 being the average) which further makes for a friendly tour.

Announcement

Linesiding with John has become The Linesiding Club. This came about as a result of analysis of who has signed up for a tour with me in the last 2 years. The conclusions: It's only a small group of people. For the 4 tours, there were 32 participants making an average of 8 per tour. Some people participated in 2 or 3 out of the 4 tours while others were probably 'one offs' which means that only around 16 people made up the core audience for all four Linesiding Tours in 2018 and 2019.



Huanan Revival 2019 L-R Mike, Nigel, Paul, Rod, Mike, me, Cliff & Graham

Contrast that with the fact that as recently as this September I was offering 4 tours for the rest of 2019 and 2020 and clearly, there are not enough potential participants for more than 1 or 2 of these tours to run.

There are also other previous participants I'm still in touch with (on this email database) who may be tempted to join a tour again in future. This means that my current client base is probably 20 to 40 people only. I don't pay for advertising and I have limited ways to attract new participants so I've come to the conclusion that I've been running tours primarily for these 20-40 people (perhaps without knowing it at the time) and I should continue to run tours for them as long as they wish to join them. You can count yourself a full members of The Linesiding Club if you have been on more than one of my tours and hope to participate in more. In future, I plan to tailor my tour offerings more closely to what you want. I am still open to new participants but that's not my primary focus.



My first tour - Shibaxi 2011 - most of the participants (8 out of 10?) in Bagou Front, Terry, Standing L-R, local woman, Paul M-B, John A, Tianya Guesthouse Host, Bruce, Tianya Guesthouse Host, Ron, Peter, Paul S, local man, Elmar

Most regular participants really only want one 'Linesiding' tour a year not the 3 or 4 I was offering as recently as this September! That doesn't mean you don't go on other trips - I'm know from conversations I've had that you also travel privately or with other tour operators. However you really only want to join one of my tours every one or two years and only if it appeals to you. Trying to

offer more than one or two tours a year means diluting the sign up for any one tour and runs the risk that more tours won't have enough participants to run.

Not all my tours appeal to all the Linesiding club members, though. Some don't want to go to China, others don't want to sign up for European tours. Some like any sort of narrow gauge or industrial operations, others really only want all-steam content. I try to bear that in mind.



Celebrating Indonesian Independence Day 17 August 2017 Purwodadi L-R Elmar, Nigel, Graham, loco crew, Agus, loco crew, Ross, Chris, Peter, Satpam

I have only so far run tours to China, Java, Bosnia and Romania. As long as there is more to see or interesting times to be had, I believe that I can offer further tours to these places but not more than 2 tours a year maximum or there will not be enough people for any tour. With that in mind, there are 2 tours on offer in 2020 - China and Romania - which may appeal to different audiences:

China Narrow Gauge III

The China Narrow Gauge III tour has 1 booking and 13 more who are interested. If 7 more people sign up, we will have the basis for a good tour. If all want to 13 sign up, there will probably be more people than is suitable for the places we are going. With that in mind, if I get to 10 signed up, I will need to put anyone else on a waiting list. I encourage you to make a payment of a fully refundable deposit to secure your place as soon as possible (and at least before the end of 2019 if you want the early-sign-up discount). I'll update progress on this in early January and hope to be able to report that the tour is declared go at that point.

There have been a number of requests to include the Yongchuan Coal Railway in the tour (currently a substitute in case Matian closes). If there is enough

interest, I propose extending the main tour beyond Chongqing to give 2 days at Yongchuan before moving on to Shibanxi. The best place to drop off anyone prior to the Shibanxi extension is Chengdu airport or an airport hotel (KLM still flies direct to Amsterdam 3 days a week). I've sent a revised itinerary proposal to likely participants. Please ask if you are interested.

You can read the current version of the Tour Proposal here.

http://rabylee.uk/China_NG_III_Tour_Proposal.pdf

It doesn't yet include Yongchuan.



Yongchuan March 2019 Top Paul, Bottom shed staff x 2, Graham, Rod and me

Romania

Romania is in the program because it is a summer European steam destination with 6 active tourist steam lines (if I get the timing right and they don't have a loco failure) so it may appeal to those who don't want to go to China. The first exploratory tour this year worked really well and we can improve on that with more steam lines in 2020. If there is enough interest from within the Linesiding Club in the next few months this can go ahead. Otherwise, it will have to be postponed to 2021 and beyond.

You can read what I propose here:

<http://rabylee.uk/October2019.pdf>

You will need to scroll down to near the end (page 5 of the pdf) for

Romania

Proposed Romanian Narrow Gauge 2 Tour

I am still waiting for Carpathian Travel to send me a price quotation but I don't plan to hurry them up until I have some indications of interest in this tour proposed for July-August 2020.

To give you an idea of what Romanian steam in the summer is like, I have uploaded a 40 minute 4K UHD video of Moldovita to my Google Drive. You can access it and download it here.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ub_a6WN89h-0mJXFQW94QJrPCId0TmaR



Still from the Moldovita video

Although you can play it online it will be at very low resolution so I recommend that you download it first to see it in High Definition. It will play with Quicktime Player or VLC (among other video players).

Tours to Other Countries

Some participants have suggested possible future tours and I try to listen to these suggestions. Australia and Japan have been proposed: I know Japan better than Australia, speak some Japanese and have some Japanese friends who are railfans. I'll give some thought to offering a Japan tour which would focus on riding and linesiding minor lines in Japan using a Japan Railpass including some heritage steam operations - does anyone like this idea for 2021? Australia would most likely need to be self-drive unless anyone can suggest an affordable way to do this by minibus. Some lines are accessible by public transport but not the sugar lines. I've also had a suggestion that Sumatra Oil Palm and Java Sugar Cane might make a good combined tour for

those who like Indonesia and Java sugar railways but want something 'new' as well. Any interest in any of these ideas?

Private Explorations

After proposing a Romanian Christmas steam tour that it seems only I was interested in and taking advice from friends that the Harz Mountain Railway is still suffering from steam loco availability problems, I am now thinking of a UK winter break using a North East Rover ticket (7 days of travel) from 2 January. After leaving university (Manchester) and teacher training college (York), I spent most of my working life abroad and haven't really explored the current UK national rail network. Now seems a good time to start. By starting on 2 January, I can attend an NGRS meeting in Leeds with the topic of Bord na Mona (the Irish Peat Board) railways on the first night. As I'm planning a 10 year anniversary revisit to the peat railways in May, that appeals. I also plan to travel the Settle and Carlisle line in winter, visit the Bridge folk club in Newcastle, Locomotion at Shildon and travel from Scarborough to Hull along the coast by train. I may also visit the Thornbridge bar on Sheffield Station if it's still there. Saltaire has also been suggested. Any suggestions on other routes to travel or places to visit en route would be helpful.



Down the pit Sandaoling March 2016 L-R John, Elmar, Geoff, Peter, CJ

The north east lines I will have access to with my rover ticket iare here:

https://d2cf7kiw5xizhy.cloudfront.net/images/maps/2016-09/rangers-rovers/North-East-Rover_Map_A4.pdf

Of course, if you live along these routes and would like to meet up for a beer or know the area well and can offer advice, please get in touch.

**John Raby
The Linesiding Club
December 2019**



John Parker (right) and me, Banovici Works Bosnia on 10 October 2018.



Romania 2019, trolley ride on the Sibiu - Agnita Railway between Hosman and Cornatel with L-R on the trailer Rod, Norman, CJ (front) and Ron