

Activities of Japan National Trust and *Trust Train* Project

Junichi Yoneyama

The Japan National Trust was founded in 1968 based on the model of the British National Trust.

In addition to preserving cultural and natural heritage assets, the Trust runs the first steam train in Japan to be preserved by volunteers on the tracks of Oigawa Railway. It is known as the *Trust Train* and is composed of a Class C12 2-6-2 tank engine hauling three vintage second-class coaches (all of which once belonged to JNR). The inaugural run was made on 25 July 1987 from Shin Kanaya to Senzu.

Summary of Japan National Trust Activities

The Japan National Trust is registered

with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport as a charity. It uses tax-free donations from individuals and corporations to preserve a wide range of assets including thatched houses, historic gardens, natural landscapes, intangible assets such as folklore, and last but not least, industrial heritage assets such as vintage trains.

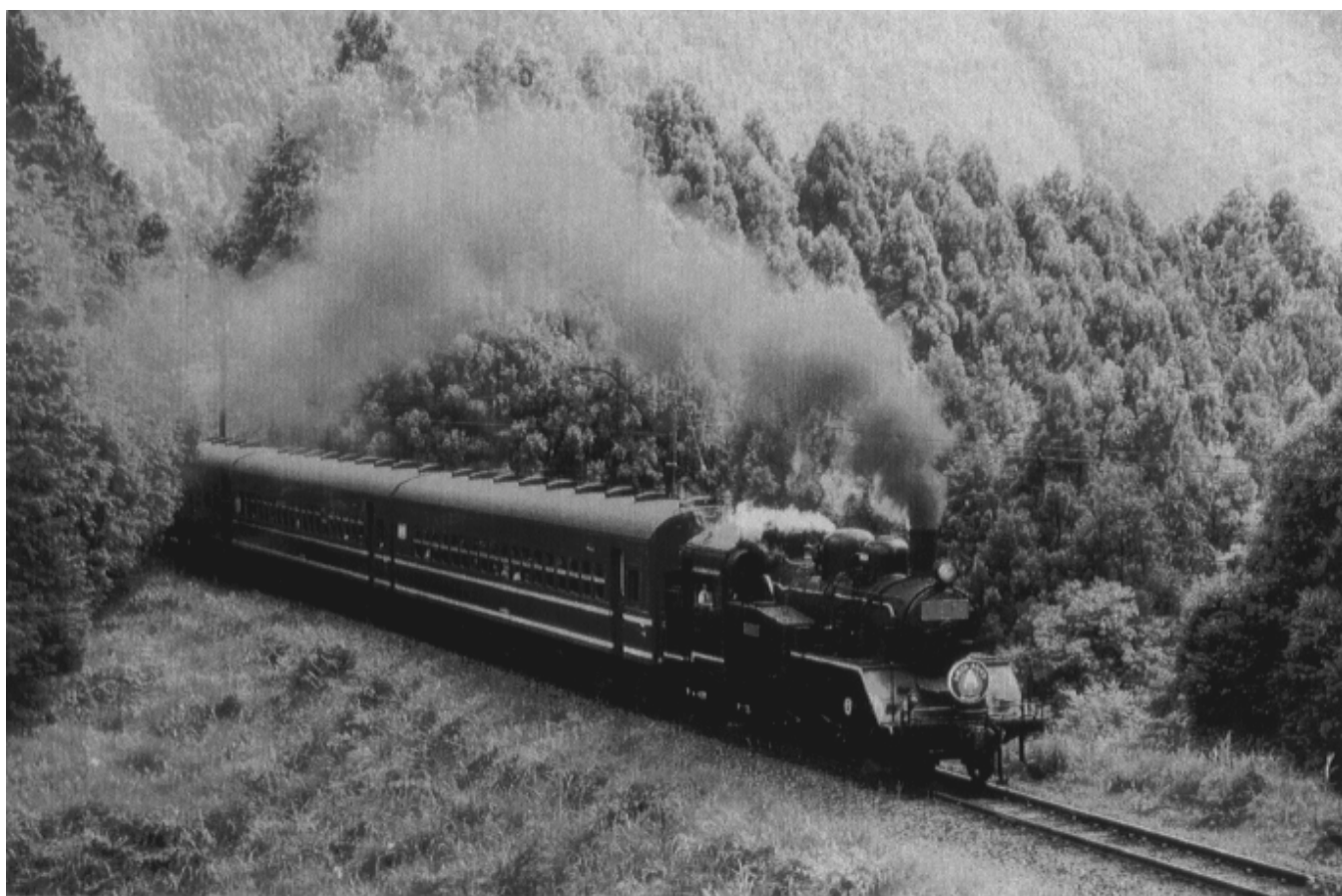
Fourteen Years of *Trust Train* Operation

Operating a prewar steam train for 15 years since its inaugural run has required huge resources in terms of money, labour and resourcefulness. Most of the necessary funds have been raised by donations but one novel source of funds

has come from awarding an honorary seat with name plaque in one for the three coaches to anybody donating ¥30,000 (¥100 = US\$0.78).

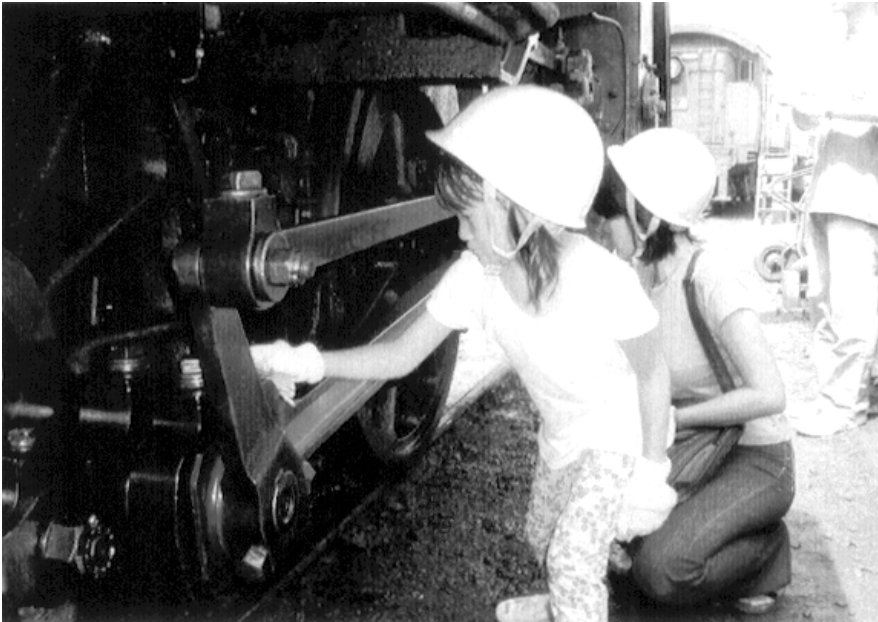
The hard manual labour of the train and coaches, including repainting, renewal of roof panels and sunshades, has been done mostly by volunteers but more sophisticated technical work on the locomotive and boiler, is left to engineers at the Oigawa Railway Workshop. The former Ministry of Transport recommended replacing every window-pane with new safety glass and Asahi Glass Co. Ltd., generously donated more than 120 panes for the three coaches.

As a result of this goodwill on the part of individual volunteers and companies, the Trust has been able to operate the *Trust*



The C12-160 *Trust Train* running on the Oigawa Railway near Zina Station

(J. Shirakawa)



Young volunteers cleaning C12 2-6-2 tank engine

(J. Shirakawa)

Train on the tracks of the Oigawa Railway without serious incident on most summer Saturday afternoons for 14 years. (For more details of the *Trust Train* operations, see *JRTR* 30 pp. 16–19).

Networking between Trust and Heritage Railways

Oigawa Railway in Shizuoka pioneered operation of vintage trains in Japan when it started preserving steam locomotives in working order in 1970. (For more details of Oigawa Railway, see pp. 30–32 in this issue.) Its vintage workings became so popular with Japanese train enthusiasts that the railway was the natural choice of operator when the Trust decided to preserve and operate a steam train in 1987. As a result of this successful partnership, in 1990, the Trust established the Railway Preservation Society of Japan (RPSJ) with members drawn from 24 non-profit organizations, local authorities, private railway companies, etc. The RPSJ holds an annual convention to

discuss subjects of mutual interest including:

- **Handing on preservation skills**
Many volunteers at heritage railways are nearly as old as the trains they are driving and overhauling, so there is an urgent need to find a new generation of volunteers who can be trained in the necessary skills. The RPSJ members are trying to find ways through school education, etc., to raise public awareness.
- **Overcoming financial problems**
As more railway preservation societies are formed, each group finds that it has fewer volunteers and visitors because the number of people interested in vintage rolling stock is limited. How can we increase and

recruit new enthusiasts? The *Trust Train* has had some success by using volunteers to sell souvenirs to visitors (especially children) to encourage repeat visits.

- **Stimulating local support and development**

In the days of the Japanese bubble economy during the mid-1990s, many local authorities were keen to assist with preserving vintage railways in working order because they expected that the trains would attract tourists and stimulate the local economy. However, the long recession in Japan has seen decreased consumer spending and fewer visitors to railway parks. Some have been forced to either scale-back their operations or even close. A hot topic at recent RSPJ meetings is how to encourage taxpayers who are not railway fans to support projects like the Japan National Trust, the *Trust Train* and the operations of other preservation groups. ■

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Junichi Yoneyama

Mr Yoneyama is Business Section Manager of Japan National Trust for Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation. He graduated in foreign language from Dokkyo University.