

Shropshire Railway Society MAGAZINE



Issue no. 581
January 2023

Shropshire Railway Society

Founded 1969

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Meetings: **Thursdays 7.00pm – 9.30pm** Note new times for 2022/3

Check for any changes and further details (if available) at saloprailsoc.org.uk/, Programme, Meetings.

12 Jan:	40 years of SLR photography	<i>Keith Davies</i>
26 Jan:	Railway Allsorts	<i>Jason Cross</i>
9 Feb:	World Steam	<i>Robin Coombes</i>
23 Feb:	Subject to be confirmed	<i>Richard Corser</i>
9 Mar:	UK steam in the preservation era, with a touch of the modern railway	<i>Jack Boskett</i>
23 Mar:	The last years of Iberian steam	<i>Jeremy Nicholls and Geoff Cryer</i>
13 Apr:	Mineral traffic in Northumberland and Durham	<i>Doug Capewell</i>
27 Apr:	AGM and buffet	

Committee Meeting: 7.15pm, Wednesday 18 January at the Abbey Station

Outings: Our 2022 programme has ended, and ideas for 2023 are under consideration. Possibilities include a further visit to the **Isle of Man**, which this year will celebrate 150 years since the opening of the first part of the island's steam railway system, the line from Douglas to Peel.

If you are interested in going to the Isle of Man, keep the dates Saturday 22 July – Sunday 30 July free in your diary: if we do visit, it will be in that time slot, when the 150th anniversary festival is planned.

Visit the SRS website saloprailsoc.org.uk/, Programme, Outings for latest information on all outings as and when they are arranged.

Front cover:

Lydney Junction on the Dean Forest Railway, 21 September 2022: small prairie no. 5510 runs round for its journey to Parkend *(Photo: Mervyn Pritchard)*

Rear cover upper:

It won't be long (yeah yeah...) Merseyrail's late-70s EMUs will soon be history, replaced by the new Stadler class 777 units. On 5 December 2022, 508 103 is seen at Liverpool Central, which was GB's 23rd-busiest station in 2021-22, with 10,747,030 entries and exits, just a whisker above Lime Street, which was in 24th place. See page 27 to see how Shropshire's stations fared... *(Photo: Jeremy Nicholls)*

Rear cover lower:

Saturday 19 November 2022: 45596 *Bahamas* steams northwards near Wistanstow with the 'Christmas Cheshireman' from Bristol. The return trip was hauled by 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland* *(Photo: Barrie Hawkin)*

FOREST OF DEAN: STEAM AND COAL

Mervyn Pritchard

Part 1: Free Mines and a Heritage Steam Railway

The Forest of Dean

The Forest of Dean is a geographical, historical and cultural region in western Gloucestershire. It is a roughly triangular plateau bounded by the river Wye to the west, Herefordshire to the north and the river Severn to the south-east, with the city of Gloucester to the east. The area is characterised by more than 110 square kilometres (42 sq m) of mixed woodland, one of the surviving ancient woodlands in England. There is much wildlife such as fallow deer, whilst it is also home to feral wild boar. For such a rural and forested area there has been a significant amount of industrial activity to exploit natural resources including forestry, charcoal production, extraction of ochre which contains iron ore, coal mining and iron ore working. Ochre was mined two thousand years before Roman times whilst coal and iron ore were exploited by the Romans. A complex railway network to serve industry was developed in Victorian times preceded by a number of tramroads, but now industry has declined and the railways have all but disappeared.

Free Mines

A unique feature of the Forest of Dean, free mines have existed for hundreds of years. A Freeminer is an ancient title given to coal or iron miners who have earned the right to mine personal plots, known as *gales*. Formalised by the Dean Forest (Mines) Act 1838, this right is granted to those born and abiding within the Hundred of St Briavels, aged over twenty one years, and who have worked for a year and a day in a coal or iron mine within that Hundred. A number of these mines still exist and some are active at present, each operated by a handful of freeminers. All produce coal: there are no iron ore free mines still active.

An article about visits to the free mines appeared recently in the News magazine of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society. Five are still producing whilst four are under care and maintenance and another three are moribund. Most have narrow gauge railways of about 2ft gauge or less and use small mineral wagons, tubs, or skips to convey mined coal or excavated rock spoil to the surface. Haulage from within the mine is by wire rope on rollers between the rails to a small winding house above ground, just like a funicular. Elsewhere both above ground and within the mine manpower is needed to move the rolling stock, there are no locomotives. The coal is often sieved before loading into road transport or bags. The installations on the surface are quite small, of basic construction eg corrugated sheeting for buildings or redundant freight containers, and are not on the large industrial scale that characterised former NCB collieries. The accompanying photos should give a good impression of the extent of the facilities.

The article sparked my interest, so when I planned a short break last September I



Left: Free mines – New Venture Mine surface plant seen on the hillside above Wallsend Colliery.



Above: Hopewell Colliery (*left*) A tub being hauled up to the sieve and export point, and (*right*) the exit from the public tour shaft with 2' 0" gauge rails still in place

Below: Monument Mine (*left*) A general view of the lower section of the mine equipment, including sieving installation, and (*right*) the underground entrance with the cable for haulage on the railway. Note the use of a simple single-bladed point

decided to go to the Forest to visit some of them. I would also include other railways within the Forest, offering a variety of railway experience. The NGRS article's author kindly provided me with more details of locations than in his article, otherwise I am sure I would not have found them. I visited the following five operational mines. They are not operated every day – only two of the five were working when I visited.

Hopewell Colliery: This is adjacent to the B4226 road from Coleford to Cinderford, so is easily found. Apart from being an active producer of coal this mine operates tours for visitors. There is also a museum devoted to free mining and a cafe. To take a tour I joined a group for a safety briefing and the issue of hard hats and lights by our guide, a free miner. Immediately after entering the access tunnel, a previous production shaft, we commenced to descend at a moderately steep angle. Fortunately handrails were installed and were helpful in assisting the return climb. The height of the shaft was at least 6 feet, so that bending, even allowing for the extra height due to the hard hat, was not necessary. The floor still had the rails of the narrow gauge line, 2ft gauge, that had been used for export of the mined coal, but no rollers for a cable. The current mining of coal is operated through another access shaft. After about ten minutes of descent and perhaps 600 yards our tunnel was joined by another at right angles, which also connected to the open air. This was the limit of our entry and we were now about 200 feet underground. Here our very knowledgeable guide explained the operation of such mines. He stressed the importance of ventilation and the possibility of an alternative route for escape. The means to support of the roof, mainly with timber baulks but also with some steel hoops, was pointed out. The excavation of the coal was described referring to a 30 inches thick seam, it being a totally manual operation. The identification of a site for starting mining is by discovering some signs of coal at the surface.





Above left: Monument Mine – railway layout for access to sieving; note the use of a wagon turntable
Above right: General view of the Reddings Level Mine. The mine access is in the rock face to the right of the blue barrel. Mined coal is taken to the upper level on the left near the blue compressor for sieving
Below Wallsend Colliery (left) The entrance to the mine, and **(bottom right)** the steep route of the railway from the mine entry/exit. The sieving equipment is beyond the blue tarpaulin on the left



Monument Mine: This was easily accessed along a vehicle track which runs from the B4234 New Road near Cannop Ponds, north of Parkend. The track crosses the Bixslade Tramroad remains described later. This is the most productive free mine. The railway, of 1ft 7½ins gauge, runs up from the drift entrance and tubs are hauled up to a tipping point. Coal is worked several hundred yards underground and communication to the surface is by bells.

Reddings Level: This was easily found as its mine entrance and facilities are squeezed in alongside the Eddys Lane public road in Ruardean. It had been closed for many years, but now the entrance into the rock face has been reopened and a 1ft 7½ins gauge track runs out, rounds a very sharp curve and climbs up to the tipping area. The only tub is hauled by cable. A sign on the road invited purchase of coal, presumably including bags for members of public.

Wallsend Colliery: Access to this mine was from Fancy Road,

near the entrance to Mallards Pike, by following a trackway that was once the railway siding for another colliery, Howbeech. Wallsend was opened in 2016, below the former Howbeech Colliery site. It is a drift mine served by a 2ft 0in gauge railway, the track on the surface being long lengths of substantial bridge rail formerly used at the Morses Level Mine. Tubs are hauled by cable from the mine and up a very steep, short incline to the grading area, with waste being hauled up to a further level for tipping. A large heap of riddlings was very visible. Morses Level, which has not produced coal for many years, is close by. Its impressive stone portal remains, and a short 1ft 9in gauge line runs out to a tipping area. Haulage was by a road vehicle using a rope and pulley.





Above: New Venture Mine (*left*) the above-ground railway with a stub point and a siding leading to the waste tipping point (*right*) The access point to the mine, with its steep railway line to the above-ground facilities. Note the simple turntable

New Venture Mine: This mine is a recent development that is just coming into production. Its location is close to the Wallsend Colliery free mine but perhaps 100ft higher on a the wooded hillside above the site of the former Howbeech Colliery. The mine entrance is set into the hillside, with its railway track rising steeply up to the former Hamblins Mine turntable, which is close to the site building. From this one track runs a short distance to the former entrance to an adjacent mine, where now spoil is being tipped. Another track runs around the outside of the building and down the hillside, where coal will be transferred to road vehicles. With new stone walling around the mine entrance portal, steps up to the site and a bench outside for tea breaks this mine looks very established, and it is hoped that it will be a working mine for many years to come.

Dean Forest Railway

The standard gauge heritage Dean Forest Railway is 4½ miles long running between Lydney Junction (close to the Severn Estuary and where there is a connection to the main line between Gloucester and Cardiff) and Parkend. The railway has plans for a northern extension from Parkend, possibly as far as Cinderford, when the line length would become 10 miles.

Norchard, about 1½ miles from Lydney Junction, is the headquarters of the railway. It has the curious arrangement of a station on the through line at high level, with a bay platform at a lower level. Workshops, storage sheds with sidings, and offices are adjacent at the lower level. Trains generally depart from Norchard's upper platform for Lydney Town, which has a passing loop, to arrive at Lydney Junction, where the loco runs round to depart in reverse. The train passes through Norchard non-stop, stops en route at Whitecroft, before arriving at Parkend. To run round the loco makes use of the level crossing, then the train returns to Norchard to complete the trip.

Lydney Junction used to have a connection with another railway which crossed the estuary on the Severn Bridge



Lydney Junction used to have a connection with another railway which crossed the estuary on the Severn Bridge

Left: Dean Forest Railway – “Here’s the staff for your return!” The small prairie no. 5510 uses the level crossing for its run round at Parkend



Above: View of the lower-level platform at Norchard with two early DMUs and Class 31 no. 31210 in Railfreight livery in the sidings. The arched roof in the background is over an extension to the workshop building behind it. **Below:** That's all for now! 'Small prairie' no. 5510 departing Norchard for Lydney Junction on the Dean Forest Railway

to Sharpness and thence to Berkeley Road on the Gloucester to Bristol line. Unfortunately on 25 October 1960 a runaway sea-going oil tanker barge, with another attached, hit the bridge and dislodged two spans. Subsequently it was decided not to effect repairs and demolition of the entire bridge followed. Lydney Town station brought back happy childhood memories of when, whilst holidaying nearby, my father took me on the local train (pannier hauled if I can believe my memory – the literature suggests that an 0-4-2T also worked this service) over the bridge as far as Sharpness, the first station on the south bank.

The railway's motive power and rolling stock has a GWR influence, perhaps unsurprising given the predominance of the GWR in the Forest. My train was in charge of a 'small' prairie; other steam locos are two pannier tanks and several industrial tank engines. I rode first class in a Hawksworth designed inspection saloon, similar to that enjoyed by SRS members on the Severn Valley last April. I was also able to have a conducted tour of the well-equipped workshops and see the restoration of locos and carriages in progress. On querying the availability of coal I learnt that free mine coal was being used satisfactorily and that the railway had contracted for its supply for 2023.

(To be continued)



STEAM AT THE GROUPING

The new locomotives of 1923

Geoff Cryer

The first day of January 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the grouping, which created those very familiar 'Big Four' companies – GWR, SR, LMS, LNER. They lasted just 25 years, being nationalised in 1948, but their names and achievements are possibly far better known than those of their predecessor companies, some of which had been in existence for three times as long. The Great Western Railway was created in 1833, its first trains running in 1838. The so-called 'Premier Line', the London and North Western Railway, was formed in 1846. A merger in 1854 brought the North Eastern Railway, the biggest company not serving London, into existence. Eric Geddes, Minister of Transport in 1923, was responsible for the 1921 Railways Act which led to the grouping. Between 1911 and 1915 he had been the NER's deputy general manager, and his involvement with that company, seen by many as a relatively benevolent monopoly, may have helped him to develop his plans.

Given that the year 1923 also marked the appearance of some notable locomotives – the first GWR 'Castle', and the birth of *Flying Scotsman* – it seems appropriate to take a brief closer look at locomotive construction in the first year of that new era. This could have been a very difficult task, but for the excellent BR Database website <https://www.brdatabase.info/> from which I was able to create a list of all locomotives built by the main line companies in 1923 ('Locomotives' tab, then 'Build Dates').

The GWR works at Swindon turned out 44 new locomotives in 1923, and although Collett had taken over from Churchward in early 1922, most were to the latter's

Below: Born in 1923 – 4472 *Flying Scotsman* crosses Capernwray viaduct, near Carnforth, with the 'southern leg' of a Cumbrian Mountain Express, 25 February 1984





Left: Last-built and only surviving NER P3 (LNER/BR J27) 0-6-0, 2392 (BR 65894) runs round its train at Grosmont, during the summer of 1973

designs: 20 43xx 2-6-0s, 13 42xx 2-8-0Ts, three 47xx 2-8-0s and the final six 'Star' 4-6-0s. Then came Collett's first two 'Castles', 4073 *Caerphilly Castle* and 4074 *Caldicot Castle* (the last 10 'Stars' dating from 1922 and 1923 were later converted into 'Castles'). We should also mention the two 2-6-2Ts built for the Vale of Rheidol, nos. 7 and 8...

Sixty-one locomotives were built at three LMS works during 1923: 30 at Crewe (Beames 0-8-4Ts), 21 at Horwich (Hughes 5P 4-6-0s) and 10 at Derby (4-4-2Ts to Whitelegg's LTSR design). Withdrawal of the 1923-built 0-8-4Ts began in 1944, and all had gone by the end of 1951. Most of the Hughes 4-6-0s went before the second world war. The 1923 4-4-2Ts fared only slightly better – all survived to nationalisation, but just two lasted beyond 1952.

In total 124 locomotives were built for the LNER, 40 at Darlington, 26 at Stratford, 18 at Doncaster, 18 at Gorton and 12 at Cowlairst (the former North British Railway's works). Cowlairst's output consisted entirely of Reid's N15/1 design of 0-6-2T, of which a further 10 were built by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn during the same year. Darlington turned out 30 Raven 'S3' (LNER B16) 4-6-0s and the last 10 Worsdell P3 (LNER J27) 0-6-0s. The final P3 would become BR 65894, the last locomotive of the 'Big Four's 1923 build to remain in normal service, withdrawn on 9 September 1967 and now preserved.

The first locomotive to leave Doncaster's 'Plant' in 1923 was the aforementioned *Flying Scotsman*. A further nine Gresley A1s were built that year, before production switched to build eight O2 and O2/1 2-8-0s. All but one were in service until the early 1960s. Gorton's output of 20 locomotives that year was similarly split, with 10 4-6-2Ts (LNER A5/1) and eight B7/2 4-6-0s, all to Robinson's designs. All the latter had gone within three years of nationalisation; the A5/1s lasted until 1960.

Twenty-six new locomotives left Stratford in 1923, all to Hill GER designs. Three J20 0-6-0s were followed by 10 D16/1 4-4-0s, 10 J68 0-6-0Ts and three N7 0-6-2Ts. Almost all lasted until the late 1950s; all were gone by September 1962.

The Southern Railway built just seven locomotives during 1923. The first three were 'King Arthur' 4-6-0s, which left Eastleigh during the first three months of the year. Four 2-6-0s were built at Ashford, two each of class N (2-cylinder) and N1 (3-cylinder). All seven were in service until the 1950s and early 1960s.

What to make of the unavoidably-complex picture? A total of 238 locomotives from 12 different works, to more than 20 different designs; some remarkably successful, some competent performers that would never hit the headlines, and some (look at the withdrawal dates above) at best mediocre. A handful are still with us (along with several others built to the same designs) at museums or on heritage railways around the country. Others slipped away – what price an LNWR 0-8-4T, a North Eastern B16 or a Great Eastern D16 today? ◀

SNOW HILL ROSE AGAIN

– like a phoenix from the ashes

Mike Page

Some stations, which were well known during ‘trainspotting days’ in the 1950s/60s, have either closed completely, died slowly or have been totally rebuilt. A station that underwent all three phases was Birmingham (Snow Hill) where at one time, writes Mike Page, a local spotter could sit back happily and watch a busy steam show:

When I was eleven (1953) my parents at last allowed me to explore the local railways alone or with train friends. We lived in Moxley, located on the old A41 between Wednesbury and Bilston (say four miles southeast of Wolverhampton)

Wolverhampton (Low Level) was an attraction reachable by trolley bus (two old pence for a ‘child’) or by walking to Bilston (Central) on the ex-Great Western (GW) Wolverhampton–Birmingham line and paying about eight old pence for a cheap day return. If pocket monies allowed, Birmingham (Snow Hill) was also reachable.

Local trains, until June 1957 when Class 116 DMUs took over, consisted usually of a ‘51XX’ 2-6-2T and four or five ex-GW suburban coaches. An alternative was the Didcot/Oxford–Wolverhampton semi-fast service, which called at Bilston (Central). Motive power could range from a ‘43XX’ or ‘93XX’ 2-6-0 up to a ‘Castle’. I was too late to experience one of Leamington’s (84D) ‘Saint’ 4-6-0s, such as 2902 *The Lady of*

Below: ‘Kings’ meet: watched by the crew of 6021 *King Richard II*, former Plymouth Laira ‘King’ 6016 *King Edward V* arrives at Birmingham Snow Hill with a Birkenhead–Paddington express on 9 June 1962. 6016 had been reallocated to Wolverhampton Stafford Road. A railman holds up what is presumably a newspaper for one of 6016’s engine crew.

Opposite: Tyseley shed’s class 57XX 0-6-0PT 9753 is down to walking pace while heaving a weighty transfer goods train from Hockley to the Bordesley yards at Tyseley on 14 July 1961. We are looking north towards Birmingham’s ‘Jewellery Quarter’. The name on the factory building on the right – ‘Taylor and Challen’ – was well-known to me for specialised power presses for deep-drawing of metal goods and forging presses for producing items like brass valves, domestic water tap bodies and the like.





the Lake or 2933 *Bibury Court*, which used to work one of these diagrams until 1950 or so.

The Snow Hill station of 1953 was essentially as rebuilt during 1909-11. The impressive overall roof used prefabricated steelwork supplied

by EC & J Keay of James Bridge, Darlaston. The roof protected two wide island platforms, which had buildings sporting decorative glazed brickwork. It was open over the through roads of the central four-track layout. Glass screens protected passengers on the east side (Snow Hill Ringway) and on the west side (Livery Street). A rather grand hotel building containing ticket offices and other facilities, including a taxi rank, fronted onto Colmore Row. I still have an early childhood memory of seeing the trams leaning over as they came out of Snow Hill Ringway into Colmore Row (late 40s up until 1952).

There was a two-track tunnel at the south end, and a subterranean parcels depot on the west side. As the land fell steeply away to the north, much of the station was built on a brick-walled embankment so the station always had an 'airy' feel about it. Each island platform had two bay platforms at the north end, which accommodated local trains to and from Stourbridge, Dudley and Wolverhampton. The lines crossed Great Charles Street at the north end and then descended sharply into a wide cutting and two short tunnels under Birmingham's 'Jewellery Quarter' before emerging into Hockley station and goods yards. The gradient rose from the north at about 1 in 47 and from the south, through the tunnel, at 1 in 45!

Busy flow of freight traffic

The main difference between Snow Hill station and the London Midland Region's (LMR) New Street station, as far as train-watching was concerned, was that Snow Hill had a busy flow of freight traffic. LMR freight mostly avoided New Street by using the Camp Hill line.

At Snow Hill you could expect anything the old GW could offer in the form of locomotives and coaches of most builds since 1900 or so. If you had been watching in, say, 1947, the spotter might have seen one of two outside-framed 'Aberdare' 2-6-0s (2625 and 2663) based at Oxley (84B). A 'Bulldog' 4-4-0, such as 85A Worcester's 3393 *Australia* or 84F Stourbridge's 3450 *Peacock* could turn up on a local from Worcester. A 'Saint' might appear on an Oxford-Wolverhampton semi-fast service, or a 'Star' on a slower service to Paddington or a cross-country service to Margate, Weymouth or Cardiff.

In 1953 a few 'Stars' survived, such as Wolverhampton (Stafford Road) 84A's 4049 *Princess Maud* and 4053 *Princess Alexandra*, while the new excitement was to see one of Old Oak Common's (81A) 'Britannias' (initially 70017/18/20/23 and joined later by



Above: Snow Hill station was often good for light and shade as shown here. We have Oxley-based 'Castle' 4-6-0 5063 *Earl Baldwin* waiting for the 'right away' with the southbound relief 'Pines Express'. Ex-GW lines north of Banbury had been transferred to the London Midland Region, while the former Somerset & Dorset lines were now part of the Western Region, which was keen to close the route. Consequently the 'Pines' was transferred to the Crewe–Market Drayton–Wellington (Salop)–Birmingham–Oxford–Basingstoke route. The relief ran via Shrewsbury, usually with a 7P. This day was 20 June 1964

70015 from 30A Stratford) or Cardiff Canton's (86C) 70025-29. The latter would occasionally work a Cardiff–Birmingham service, sharing with 'Castles' and 'Halls', until the Swindon-built 'Inter-City' DMUs (class 120) took over in 1958 or so. By then, the 'Britannias' based at 81A and 83D Plymouth Laira (70016/19/21/24) and 70022 at 83A Newton Abbott had all been transferred to join their other WR sisters at 86C.

The 1950s saw named trains such as the 'Inter-City' (Wolverhampton–Paddington), the 'Cambrian Coast Express' (Paddington–Aberystwyth/Pwllheli) and the 'Cornishman' (Wolverhampton–Plymouth/Penzance). In the summer, the latter service could include one or two reliefs – producing locos from 83D or Newton Abbott (83A), and even 83F Truro. Summer specials serving Margate, Hastings and Weymouth produced engines from Reading (81D), Oxford (81F) and Weymouth (GW - 82F) – or any loco going spare.

The specials and 'reliefs' to the Welsh Coast resorts could sport 'Dukedog' outside-framed 4-4-0s from 89C Machynlleth as well as their 'Manor' 4-6-0s.

The 'Kings' from 84A and 81A worked the heavier Birkenhead–Chester–Shrewsbury–Wolverhampton–Paddington service to and from Wolverhampton. 'Kings' were banned north of Wolverhampton until around 1959.

Through freight trains were mostly fitted/partially-fitted Class 'C', 'D', 'E' or 'F' along with 'block' trains of bananas/fruit, oil and iron ore. The latter served integrated iron & steel works at Round Oak (near Dudley) and Stewarts & Lloyds (Bilston). Outgoing goods ranged from metal products such as forgings, castings and pipe and manufactured goods – you name it! Destinations included Southampton, London, Newport (South Wales) as well as Swindon.



Left: Tyseley's 56XX 0-6-2T, 6604 takes a Hockley–Bordesley transfer goods southwards and meets fellow shedmate 51XX 2-6-2T 4111 waiting to fetch empty stock at Snow Hill on 9 June 1962

Below: Midland Region takeover: a Hockley–Tyseley transfer goods is in the hands of Tyseley's Ivatt Class 2 2-6-0 46442 (formerly of Skipton!) on 20 September 1965. It meets Saltley's Stanier 8F 2-8-0 48016 heading a through northbound goods

Locos included the ex-GW 2-6-0 classes, the 4-6-0 'Manors', 'Granges' and 'Halls' as well as 28XX/3850 and ROD 2-8-0s. It was usually in the early mornings or later evenings when an 81A or 84B 47xx 2-8-0 appeared a fitted freight. The occasional Stanier 2-8-0 and ex-London & North Western G2/G2a 0-8-0 ('Duck Eights' to us Midlands spotters!) off the Central Wales line would appear as well. Banbury (84C), Bristol (St. Philips Marsh – 82B) and Cardiff Canton might send their WD 2-8-0s along too.

A real treat to seasoned spotters could be seeing one of 81A's condensing pannier tanks (9700-10), a spark arrestor pannier tank (like 84F's 1621 – sub-shedded at Kidderminster for working the Cleobury Mortimer–Ditton Priors branch, a 'Dean Goods' or a 'Cambrian' 0-6-0. Other 'foreign' pannier tanks appeared too from far-flung sheds. Very uncommon were the 67XX pannier tanks, which were mostly based in South Wales. There were not many pannier tanks in the 77XX series in the West Midlands either. Such visitors would have been overhauled or repaired at Wolverhampton's Stafford Road Works or had visited Birmingham's Tyseley (84E) shed repair shop. Not so common either were the 'push-pull' 14XX 0-4-2Ts, of which Stourbridge had three.

There was plenty of local freight for the 0-6-0PTs (nicknamed 'match boxes' by us!), including transfer trips between shunting yards at Halesowen (via Old Hill), Stourbridge Junction, Soho & Winson Green, Hockley and Oxley (Wolverhampton) to Bordesley yards (between Snow Hill and Tyseley).

Stourbridge Junction's (84F) 56XX 0-6-2Ts would appear on local freights too as well as repaired engines 'running in', including 'Dukedogs'. Those pannier tanks bringing 40 wagons up the 1 in 45 in the tunnel always appeared to have 'just made it', as they emerged from the gloom, their exhaust echoing around the station. They probably had taken a 'run' at the climb. Larger engines had always shut off as they left the tunnel – unless they had been checked on the approaches. Certainly a checked 'King' or a 'Castle' would let everyone on the station know about it!

The locos with heavy freights that always seemed to have matters well under control on the approaching gradients were the ex-GWR 2-8-0s, and later, the Standard Class 9F 2-10-0s.

What about diesels? Well, in the 'steamy' days until June 1957, ex-GW railcars



would sidle in on some off-peak locals from Dudley and Stourbridge Junction. 84F maintained W8, 14 and 29W. One of the two ex-GW parcels cars, W17W, based at Southall (81C) often appeared, usually with a GUV in tow, on its way to and from Wolverhampton (Low Level).

As for diesel shunters: Tyseley (84E) had 15103 in 1952 until it was replaced by 13004 from the first batch of '08s' in 1953. Then 13025-29 appeared followed by 13192 so that by 1956/7, you might see one grind through Snow Hill on its way to shunt at Hockley.

82000ers arrive

1953 saw the first batch of 'Standard' Class 3 2-6-2Ts (82000-9) allocated to 84E and new Standard 4 and 5 4-6-0s from WR sheds. The 82000ers seemed to concentrate their activities on Birmingham (Moor Street) to Stratford-on-Avon services, only occasionally appearing at Snow Hill. A year later, they were all sent to South Wales, but spotters could cop the ex-South Wales 56XX and 41XX locos sent in exchange.

A brief look at LMR visitors: apart from the Western Region-based Stanier 8Fs and ex-LNW 0-8-0s, occasional visits by Stanier 'Black 5' 4-6-0s were made on football excursions, say from Manchester, to Snow Hill (usually for West Bromwich Albion matches – the 'Baggies'). The trains for the 'Baggies' unloaded at The Hawthorns halt near the stadium and the locos, after depositing the stock at Handsworth & Smethwick, came through for servicing at Tyseley. But no average trainspotter (me included) could recover from the surprise – nay shock – of Crewe North's 'Coronation' 4-6-2 46237 *City of Bristol* one May Saturday in 1955 when she had charge of the 14.35 Wolverhampton–Paddington. 46237 was undergoing 'road tests' on the WR for a week or so.

LMR Pacifics appear again

LMR 'Pacifics' appeared at Snow Hill again in February 1956: the 'Kings' had had to be withdrawn for inspection owing to bogie frame fracture(s) so the LMR lent two 'Princess Royals' and two 'Coronations'. These were: 46207 *Princess Arthur of Connaught*, 46210 *Lady Patricia*, 46254 *City of Stoke-on-Trent* and 46257 *City of Salford*.

The 'Princesses' worked some Paddington–Wolverhampton services and the 'Coronations' the Paddington–Plymouth trains. 'Castles' from other sheds were also drafted in. A couple of weeks later, most of the 'Kings' were back in action again.

Well apart from the dieselisation of local services, nothing much more happened until the advent of the 'Blue Pullman' service in 1960. The station area was also resignalled to full 'colour light' operation operated from a new signal box at the north end of the station. Then, as electrification works on the Euston–Crewe route got going in 1961, the (Birkenhead)/Wolverhampton–Paddington services were increased to hourly while dieselisation of the Paddington–Plymouth services saw 83D's 'Kings' transferred to 81A much to the joy of West Midlands spotters!

Joys are often short-lived as the 'Western' (TOPS 52) diesel-hydraulics began to appear from June 1962 onwards and soon we were to say goodbye to the 'Kings' after 10 September 1962. We gained a new 'titled train' working, the 'Pines Express'. This train running south of Crewe used to avoid Wolverhampton and followed the old Grand Junction route via Bescot to Birmingham New Street and on via Bath Green Park to Bournemouth.

(To be continued)



OSWESTRY'S SANTA TRAIN

Colin Hatch

Sunday afternoon, 11 December: England have been beaten in the World Cup quarter finals. I need cheering up. What can I do? I'll go and photograph the Cambrian Railways' Santa Train.

It's very cold – I'll wrap up well. I first checked the times at Oswestry station – the next service would leave Oswestry at

14.45, returning from Weston Wharf at 15.15 – great!

There's a spot on the route from Oswestry to Weston Wharf less than half a mile from home, beside a builders' yard where there's a foot crossing, ideal for me. I drove there, parked and made my way onto the crossing. Just after 14.50, the three-coach train came into sight with 0-4-0ST *Henry Ellison* at the front and class 73 loco E6036 *City of Winchester* on the rear. *Henry Ellison* was built by Andrew Barclay in Kilmarnock, no. 2217 of 1947. E6036 (73129) was built at the Vulcan Foundry, Newton-le-Willows in 1966. I must have seen it years ago on one of my many trips to London, probably at Clapham Junction, working the Gatwick Express.

After the train had passed, I jumped into the car, drove to the end of the line at Weston Wharf and into the car park of the adjacent Stonehouse Brewery. I didn't even get out of the car! It was still very cold, and the car park was very busy, so I made my way back to my earlier spot to wait for the return working.

The return working was due to leave Weston at 15.15, giving me a few minutes to get organised, ready to photograph the electro-diesel on its return journey back to dear old Oswestry. Having got my shot, I returned to Oswestry for some more photos. By now it was getting really cold – time to return home. It had been a very cold but enjoyable hour or so out of the house. ◀

Top: *Henry Ellison* approaches the foot crossing

Below left: The return working: heading back to Oswestry from Weston Wharf is E6036 *City of Winchester*

Below right: *Henry Ellison* at Oswestry, preparing for the next Santa Special

All photos: 11 December 2022



REMEMBRANCE IN THE DERBYSHIRE MIST: WIRKSWORTH

Martin Connop Price

The village of Duffield lies a few miles north of Derby on the former Midland main line to Sheffield, and in 1867 Duffield station became a junction with the opening of an 8½ mile branch line running north-west to the small town of Wirksworth, and nearby limestone quarries just beyond. The hills of the Peak District rise so steeply above Wirksworth that a rope-worked incline was needed to create a connection with the old Cromford & High Peak Railway across the moors. Meanwhile, as the Midland Railway had already completed a line to Matlock and Buxton in 1863, there was little point in striving to take the passenger service any further. Stone became the staple commodity sustaining the Wirksworth freight service, but the proximity of the branch to Derby works made it a favourite testing ground for newly built or repaired engines. Under both the LM&SR and British Railways it also became the setting for many publicity pictures of both new and historic locomotives.

The regular passenger service to Wirksworth ended as long ago as 14 June 1947, but freight traffic – mostly limestone – lasted until 4 December 1989. In between those dates there were visits by a few railtours, and the year 1984 was notable for a programme of charity DMU trips over the branch under the marketing name of The Wirksworth Phoenix. By then the main station building at Wirksworth had been removed to make way for a stone loading platform, but the buildings at the intermediate stations of Hazelwood, Shottle and Idridgehay still stand, although now in private hands. In several ways the actual branch was always an ideal candidate for preservation, and almost as soon as the freight service ended a campaign began to re-open it as a heritage railway, named The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway. This project succeeded, and the EVR opened to the public in 2002. A ¼ mile extension over former quarry track to Ravenstor was opened by 2007, but this steeply-graded section is now rarely used.

Whilst visiting the north Midlands one weekend in November, I managed to find the time to visit Wirksworth and the EVR. It was Remembrance Sunday, and Derbyshire lay under a fog. Fortunately, that day the EVR was one of the few preserved railways to be operating a passenger service. That was the good news. The not so good news was that the EVR has become one of many heritage railways to abandon traditional Edmondson card tickets in favour of issuing what is basically a computer printed paper receipt. No doubt this saves some money, but (to my mind) it denies the traveller the intended full heritage railway experience. However, this had to be accepted, and I made my way over a foot crossing to the island platform usually used



Left: one of the bowsters formerly used to convey water on the old Cromford & High Peak line, standing in Wirksworth yard. It is thought to have been an ex-LNWR Webb tender. Sixty years ago the C&HP had quite a few vehicles of this kind; this is the only one in existence which retains three axles

The EVR hopes to use it as a remote water source for trains running along the line to Duffield



Left: Standard 2-6-4T 80080 in the mist at Wirksworth, prior to departure for Duffield

for the passenger service. The first train, consisting of Standard 2-6-4 tank loco No.80080 (bearing a wreath of red poppies) and five smart Mark 1 coaches, was due to leave at 10.50 am. Given the occasion, though, the departure time had been adjusted to a respectful 11.02am – directly after the national two minutes silence. Back in September I had been on a Pathfinder railtour from Pwllheli which

had paused for two minutes on the Barmouth bridge, to allow for reflection upon the Queen's life of service – but this was the first time I had heard a steam locomotive mark the start and finish of the silence with a short blast on the whistle. Could anyone design a whistle to play the Last Post?!

Suffice to say that at 11.02am we eased away from Wirksworth, with a brief glimpse of a rather ghostly locomotive swathed in drifting steam. Within a mile we passed over the Gorsey Bank level crossing and, thanks to the mild autumn, we were able to head south through some brilliant autumn colours showing on some surprisingly leafy lineside trees. Before long we drifted over a level crossing into Idridgehay, the first station. Here the main building is fenced off, but at the south end of the platform a raised "Harrington hump" has been created, allowing passengers easier access to and from the trains. This certainly assisted a large family group who appeared out of the mist and settled down in three bays of seating in our carriage. As we set off for the next station, Shottle, cheerful chatter filled the air, the younger children present being urged to look out at partridge, pheasant and even an owl, sitting on a post.

Shottle has a passing loop and siding, a Midland style signalbox, and a modest amount of traditional mechanical signalling. The station building, in good order, is on the east side of the line, and the name here (and at the other stations) is presented in Midland fashion, with square maroon boards carrying a white circle shape merged into a white rectangle, with the name spelt out across its length. Although this is the main intermediate station, unfortunately the station yard is privately owned, and the parking of cars is strongly discouraged. This did not prevent a party of rambles from finding their way onto the platform, some to read the information boards, and for two to join the train.

Between Shottle and Duffield the Ecclesbourne brook becomes a small river, eventually running into the Derbyshire Derwent below Duffield. Here the railway is never more than a field away from the stream, and as we were running late the driver got the train moving, and we rattled past a timber yard located at the closed station of Hazelwood. The lineside along this length looked well maintained, and piles of concrete sleepers on the trackside suggested that more relaying might be planned. We slowed down to pass through a short tunnel on the outskirts of Duffield before arriving at the curving EVR platform at the junction station, a location now somewhat overshadowed by modern blocks of flats. The original station building is long gone, but the EVR has erected an appropriate timber structure just opposite Duffield's Midland signalbox, which controls the run round loop and siding. In order



to recover time lost earlier, the engine was soon detached to run around the train, and within ten or twelve minutes we were back on board for the journey up to Wirksworth.

By now I had been incorporated into the conversation flowing in the friendly family group. The head of the family was clearly a distinguished looking man with silvery hair, and a generous, but well-trimmed white goatee beard. Although dressed as a civilian, he was wearing a large pectoral cross, rather like a bishop. Plainly he was not of the Catholic persuasion, but I thought he might well be an Anglican. At a suitable moment I asked if he had, or had had, his own diocese. "No", he replied, "I'm a Methodist minister." "So, I don't have to call you 'My Lord'?" I asked, tongue in cheek. "Certainly not." he said. "Or even 'Your Grace'?" I suggested. His family were listening, and fell about with laughter. Clearly this man did not assume any airs, let alone graces. Their reaction seemed both healthy and hopeful, and quite properly the man said "This weekend, I'm Grandpa."

Soon we were back at Wirksworth, in platform 2. The outer face of the island platform (No.3) which in the past has been used for an additional service up to Ravenstor, was now occupied by stored rolling stock. These days the EVR is putting its energies into improving facilities at Wirksworth, both for railway operation and for visitors. The EVR's sensible scheme deserves success, and plenty of public support. If you get the chance, do pay a visit!◀

Above left: 80080 running around at Duffield. Note the wreath on the smokebox door

Above right: the same procedure, back at Wirksworth

Below left: 80080 running round at Wirksworth

Below right: the Midland Railway station buildings at Shottle, in a view looking south
Martin apologises for the lack of photos of diesels – although there were several around (31601,33103,73210 and D9537) he couldn't get a usable photo of any of them...



BIRKENHEAD MEMORIES

BRIAN PENNEY Edited by **Richard Bond**

Brian Penney continues to provide memories for publication, via my friend David Clough. David asked Brian if he had any memories of Birkenhead, and this was Brian's response.

Birkenhead was a major traffic centre for the GWR and was quite a loss when transferred to the LMR after nationalisation. The fact that a high number of northern passenger services from Paddington continued to run through to Birkenhead underlined its importance.

When I was an apprentice at Worcester shed one of the older fitters there was Charlie Allen. He had served his apprenticeship at Worcester and, as was the practice before 1939, he was given notice to leave the service at the end of his apprenticeship. The policy then was to find employment as a fitter at another depot and then apply to return to his original depot when a vacancy arose. In many cases a fitter would settle in at his new depot, perhaps take up with a local girl and stay there.

In Charlie's case he was offered a job at Birkenhead shed and spent some time there before eventually moving back to Worcester. He obviously enjoyed his stay there because he would say to me "Kid, when you come out of your time, go and get yourself a job at Birkenhead, it's a marvellous place". I didn't follow his advice but went to Swindon instead.

My only visit to Birkenhead was in 1962, when I was in the Shrewsbury District Traffic Superintendent's office. A coach in a Paddington express had been side-swiped by a crane working on an adjacent line and had been detained at Birkenhead. I went there to record the damage sustained. After completing the examination, I had some time to spare and caught the ferry service across the Mersey to have a quick look at the Liverpool waterside.

On a later occasion, I joined a Birkenhead train from Shrewsbury to Birmingham and found two of my fellow travellers to be Charlie Allen and his old mate, Bill Burford. I had no need to ask them where they had been. Both were well into retirement and are now long gone but if heaven is anything like Birkenhead, Charlie will be very happy.

The 47xx 2-8-0s were very good runners, and with 5' 8" driving wheels, the same as a 'Grange', they could show a good turn of speed. With heavy summer holiday traffic, they often deputised for express passenger locos and could be seen on prestige trains, such as the Torbay Express. I had worked on 4704 during a general repair at Swindon in 1956 and went trials with the loco to Little Somerford and back. I regretted not having a longer trip on these fine locomotives. With the smaller Churchward cab and lever reverse they looked even more impressive. There was a scheme to fit a screw reverser but I don't think that this got beyond the drawing stage. ◀

Right: 2-8-0 4701 approaches Shrewsbury from the east with the Tallylyn Railway special on 24 September 1960. 'Dukedog' 9017 and mogul 7330 took over for onward journey to the Welsh coast
(Photo: Russell Mulford collection)



FIFTY YEARS OF INTERRAIL – 1972 RECALLED

Part 3

Jeremy Nicholls

Travelling south from Skopje, the 'Athens Express' would be home for the next 16 hours. It was part of table 15 in Cook's, a complicated group of inter-connecting services that started at London Victoria and ran as the 'Direct Orient Express' from Paris to Belgrade. Here, multiple carriages were added and detached: depending on the day of the week, the 'Athens Express' conveyed through carriages, including Wagons-Lits sleeping cars, from Paris and Munich, seating carriages from Milan and a Soviet Railways sleeping car from Moscow. This was the era of the German economic miracle and Gastarbeiter from Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy travelled in their scores of thousands to work in Germany. We were grateful to find seats in a compartment of a DB 2nd class carriage.

After a lengthy halt at the Yugoslav border station of Gevgelija, we edged the short distance over the border into Idomeni, where an ex-WD 2-10-0 was attached for the 75-minute journey to Thessaloniki. After the war, Greece acquired sixteen of these locos, which had been operating in the Middle East. They were based in the Thessaloniki district and the 'Athens Express' was one of their regular turns. Two of the Greek locos have been repatriated to the UK and are based at the North Norfolk Railway and the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.



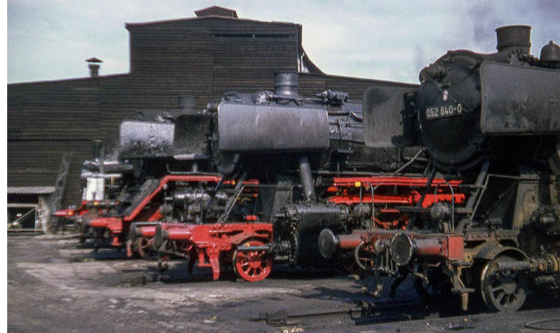
The 'Athens Express' was scheduled to take 9½ hours for the 507 kms (317 miles) from Thessaloniki to Athens over the original Piraeus-Platy Railway. This was a mainly single-track line, with long, mountainous sections at 1 in 50. Inevitably, traffic was easily disrupted and our train made numerous, out-of-course stops. At stations and passing loops, women and children would appear bearing trays of delicious food: 'tiropita', a pastry filled with cheese and egg found throughout the Balkans; rice pudding with cinnamon and yoghurt with honey. No Greek currency? The vendors were happy to accept a few German coins.

Athens was unbearably hot, so we took off on the metre-gauge Peloponnese railway, crossing the dramatic Corinth canal onto the peninsula. Our destination, Kalamata, 330km to the south, took eight hours in a railcar, in stifling heat.

Above: Former Hellenic State Railways (OSE) WD 2-10-0 no. 3672 seen here in the early 1990s at Grosmont on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.
(Photo: Ken Nicholls)

Right: A pair of OSE class A9101 locos (ALCO) cross the Corinth Canal bridge with the 14.30 Piraeus to Pyrgos on 3 November 1992
(Photo: Phil Richards from London, UK, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons)





Above: Hof depot with (left) an 0-6-0 well tank (can anyone identify it?) and (right) several class 052 2-10-0s stabled around the turntable awaiting their next duty. Nearly 7,000 'Kriegsloks' were built from 1942 until the early 1950s and after the war, could be found all over central and eastern Europe

Below left: ÖBB class 1020 'Grünes Krokodil' (Green Crocodile) pilots a class 1042 on a heavy westbound Arlberg line express between St Anton and Feldkirch, August 1972

Below right: USATC class S-118 'Mikado' 7105 (Vulcan Iron Works, Pennsylvania 1947) with a mixed train at Kalamata, August 1973

Returning north, on a Belgrade to Budapest train, at the Yugoslav border station of Subotica, I experienced the nervousness of a country fearful of its northern neighbours. (Yugoslavs were acutely aware that Soviet troops had put down the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and in 1968, had invaded Czechoslovakia to suppress the 'Prague Spring'.) During the interminable border controls, an ancient tank engine drew up at the adjacent platform and I pulled the window down to take a photo. A few minutes later, a stern-looking woman in uniform opened our compartment door and pointed me out to armed policemen. They took me off the train to a platform office where I was questioned. Fortunately, they spoke some German and I have never been more grateful than at that moment for having taken 'O' level German. With the help of a *Railway Magazine* I was carrying, I persuaded them that I was a harmless railway enthusiast. Unfortunately, they confiscated the film from my camera, a roll that included most of my Greek and Yugoslav railway photos.

After a brief passage through Hungary on a 48-hour transit visa, we spent time in Austria again; travelled over the scenic Arlberg line to Switzerland and returned to the UK via Mâcon and Paris.

Despite the discomfort and brushes with the police, we'd been bitten by the Balkans bug (probably literally) and would return the following summer. In 1973, travelling south through West Germany, we visited Hof, a steam stronghold close to the borders with East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Later, in Kalamata and Patras, I found active steam on the Peloponnese metre-gauge network.





Above left: Outside the National Transport Museum in Budapest, (L to R) David, Dr Varga, Jeremy and the museum director. Who decided flares were a good look? (July 1973)

Right: Dr Varga behind his model of 6235 *City of Birmingham*



We also returned to Budapest, with me carrying a heavy parcel of books, a gift from railway historian and co-founder of the Historical Model Railway Society, George Dow – who lived in my home village of Audlem – to a contact of his, Dr Alex Varga. In his day job, Dr Varga was chief counsellor to the Hungarian State Railways: in his own time, a prolific model engineer and builder of live steam locomotives, including several British ones. In a whistle stop visit, he took us to the national transport museum, where his friend, the director, gave us a guided tour, and to a sumptuous dinner in a very grand railway hotel. Quite an experience for two scruffy youths!

The social and political impact of Interrail was remarkable and possibly went far beyond what UIC officials anticipated, let alone some of Eastern Europe's repressive governments. Hungary, the GDR and Poland joined the scheme passively, allowing in Interrailers from the West, but not allowing their young people to participate in the scheme. Poland and the GDR got cold feet and quickly dropped out of the scheme, though surprisingly, Romania joined in 1973.

Through Interrail, young people, including disproportionate numbers of fair-haired Nordics, unaccompanied by parents or teachers, appeared in places where strangers were people from the next village (and where blonde hair was unknown!). Yugoslavia was particularly difficult for us western teenagers to understand. In the cities and coastal resorts, it generally felt relaxed, even liberal, though in Belgrade, a policeman poked us in the ribs with a gun as we slept on a park bench. In the Balkan interior, we were completely out of contact with our home world: no mobile phones or internet then. In Sarajevo, let alone Titograd, English was as much use as Martian, though the troubled history of the Balkans meant that a few, older people spoke a little German or Italian. Witnessing a poverty and insularity way beyond our experience, we were uncomfortably aware of our relative affluence – with our Levis, brightly-coloured rucksacks and cameras – and our freedom.

By contrast, in Hungary, with a more urban and educated population, young people were desperate to make contact with visitors from the West, as we discovered when we visited Lake Balaton, Hungary's 'seaside'.

We travelled over narrow-gauge lines that were a throwback to the Habsburg Empire and would close forever within a couple of years. We travelled over standard-gauge lines which were new or still to be completed. Many lines would be put out of action during the terrible conflicts that followed the collapse of Yugoslavia.



Left: Guy Georget (1911-1992) designed the inaugural Interrail poster for the International Union of Railways (UIC). The style and colour palette present a fine example of the period. He got the guitar right but not the suitcases. From the late 1940s, Georget worked for Wagons-Lits, the French Railways, Air France and Philips.

(Thanks to the UIC for permission to reproduce the poster)

jeunes de moins de 21 ans

PARCOUREZ L'EUROPE
avec
INTER RAIL

renseignez-vous
dans les gares et
organismes de voyages

UIC
CINQUANTENAIRE DE L'UNION
INTERNATIONALE DES CHEMINS DE FER

We experienced humanity at its most generous, such as the peasant people on the train to Skopje who shared their simple food with us, total strangers. Or our experience in Trieste, where we hovered anxiously outside a modest restaurant, looking at the menu and the lire notes in our wallets, wondering whether we could afford to eat. A waiter came to the door and steered us to a table. A carafe of wine arrived. Soup was followed by a pasta dish, a dessert and coffee. We were worried that we'd gone far beyond our available cash, but when we came to pay, we learned that another customer had paid for our meal. He'd already left.

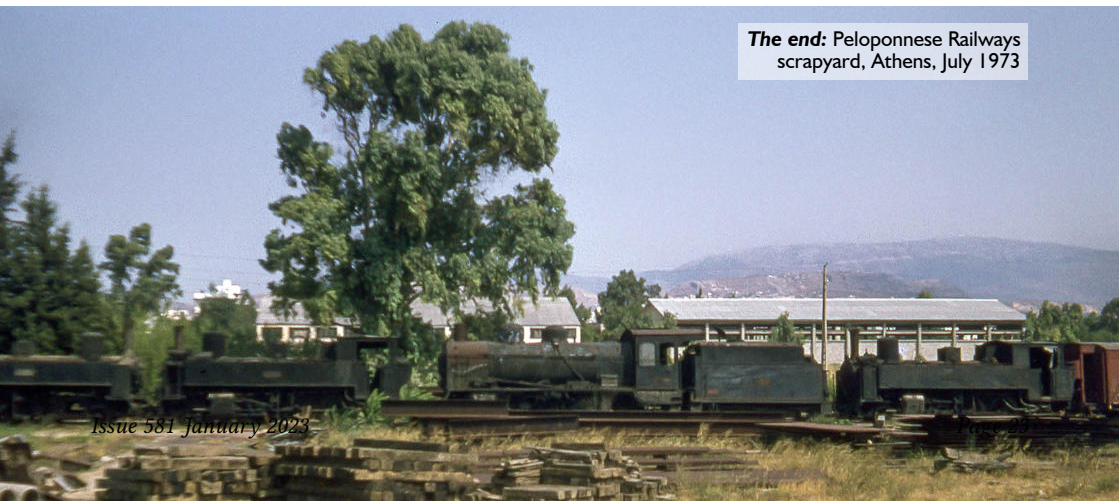
We experienced the paranoia of the Cold War, where crossing the Iron Curtain involved heavily armed soldiers standing along either side of the train whilst

others carried out a minute inspection of the underside and inside of the carriages, with luggage, passports and visas checked at gunpoint. Yes, there was more to life than rural Cheshire.

The world and not least, leisure travel, have changed enormously in 50 years. Interrail has evolved in response to changing travel patterns and competition from cheap flights. The 'global' pass now covers 33 countries; a wide range of time periods is offered, from four days to three months and all ages are covered from child to senior. There are even 1st class options¹. Would I do it again? Yes, because travel in a foreign country is always fascinating, especially train travel, which is so much more sociable than the private car or plane. But, for better or worse, it would be a very different experience to interrailing in 1972. ◀

1 Interrail example standard class fares: one month youth (12-27) pass £433/ senior (60+) pass £519. Two month passes cost around £45 more than a one month pass. <https://www.interrail.eu/en>

The end: Peloponnese Railways scrapyards, Athens, July 1973





STEAM AROUND WREXHAM

Photos by Roger Amies

This page – above: Stanier 8F no. 48134 at Rhos Ddu with mineral wagons on the ex-GC line from Shotton. Rhos Ddu is just north of the Wrexham stations

Below left: Collett 0-6-2T no. 6665 blocks the main line for a time as it shunts mineral wagons at Croes Newydd

Below right: The fireman on ex-GW 2-8-0 no. 3850 is hard at work on the climb from Croes Newydd to Brymbo near the village of New Broughton

Opposite page – upper: 9F no. 92247 with a block oil train passes Rhos Ddu on the ex-GWR line from Chester.

Centre: Standard class 5 no. 73067 passes through Wrexham General with a southbound fully fitted freight.

Lower: Black Five 44800 passes Croes Newydd North Fork Signal Box with a short freight for the Brymbo line

All photos taken in July 1965





MEETING REPORT

8 December: **Salute to Steam** *Rob Smout*

When I joined the SRS many years ago, the first person to introduce himself was John Massey, who died more than 20 years ago. In April 2022, Alistair Grieve, who visited our society on a number of occasions died suddenly. This evening's presentation was dedicated by chairman Rob to his two late friends .

Rob and John went out on many occasions photographing many subjects including signal boxes – the first image of the evening was Wellington No 2. Steam images around the local area followed in various locations. We moved on to the many different preserved steam locomotives which have been seen locally. One particular picture of double-headed locos, numbers 80080 and 80079 stood out for me. Absolutely brilliant photography by Rob!

Many parts of Britain were covered including my favourite line, the S&C. Preserved lines such as the North Yorkshire Moors and the Llangollen Railway featured. Rob showed some memorable images taken on the night shoots which were a yearly event at Didcot. As well as standard gauge, we visited narrow gauge lines – several 'great little trains of Wales' such as the Talylyn and the Fairbourne Railway, a little further up the Cambrian coast. We also visited the 15"-gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway and the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

Alistair was a regular at the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway: Rob joined him on several occasions to take yet more pictures (see below). Gaynor and I visited this railway several years ago, and though the day was miserable and windy, we both thoroughly enjoyed our visit. Rob had also visited the narrow gauge lines at Threlkeld quarry railway in Cumbria and the now closed Penrhyn Quarry near Bethesda with Alistair, taking some memorable photos there. Finally we saw the Snowdon Mountain Railway, closing with a posed shot of John high up on the mountain on a hot summer's day. Thanks Rob for a fitting tribute to John and Alistair. **Colin Hatch**

The last train from Abergavenny to Merthyr ran on 5 January 1958, hauled by a 'Coal Tank' and a 'Super D'. The event was recreated on the LNWR metals of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway on 13 September 2013 (Photo: Rob Smout)



SHROPSHIRE* STATION USAGE 2021-22

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Station name	2021-22 Entries and exits	2020-21 Entries and exits	Change %
Shrewsbury	1,582,378	549,692	188%
Telford Central	698,194	205,242	240%
Wellington (Shropshire)	469,520	182,092	158%
Ludlow	199,780	65,540	205%
Gobowen	154,392	37,790	309%
Shifnal	114,584	39,078	193%
Church Stretton	114,430	45,818	150%
Whitchurch (Shropshire)	94,134	23,424	302%
Wem	74,000	24,242	205%
Craven Arms	71,224	23,912	198%
Albrighton	56,078	16,886	232%
Cosford	49,816	15,688	218%
Oakengates	47,932	19,736	143%
Knighton	9,652	1,118	763%
Yorton	6,494	3,004	116%
Prees	3,362	1,676	101%
Bucknell	2,132	566	277%
Broome	452	34	1229%
Hopton Heath	346	28	1136%

Published by ORR, 24 November 2022

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/>

After a year of lockdowns and other Covid-induced restrictions on travel, we would have expected to see a significant year-on-year increase – and we did! Shropshire's total entries and exits for the year very nearly tripled; in terms of the ORR's figures, as shown in the table, that's a 199% change. (It should be remembered that the Central Wales line figures for 2020-21 were exceptionally low due to a six-month suspension of services that year)

Putting the county's figures into the national context, eight of the top ten stations were in London, the other two being Birmingham New Street (8th place, 22.7m entries and exits) and Manchester Piccadilly (10th, 19.6m). Glasgow Central was 16th (15.3m), Edinburgh was 19th (13.6m) and Cardiff Central 32nd (7.5m). Shrewsbury was 248th, just above Aberdeen (251st) and just below Selly Oak (245th). We are minnows!

* Including Telford and Wrekin

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

Hope you all enjoyed it!

I'd be interested to hear of successful completions. Some of the clues were straightforward, some a little bit cryptic, and one or two were perhaps tricky. Any headaches would, of course, have been self-inflicted during seasonal celebrations, and not caused by my puzzle...

B	A	L	D	W	I	N		I	N	G	L	E	B	Y
O		A		O		A		M		O		N		O
M		U		N		G		O		I		L		M
B		A		L		R		I		E		R		K
A		R		R		O		W		N		I		N
Y		K		I				G		A		I		I
						N		E		A		T		H
H		S		D		B		A		H		S		L
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2023: a word from the editor:

Firstly, a Happy New Year to everyone. In the words of John Lennon, "Let's hope it's a good one".

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed material to this and previous editions of the magazine. Keep it coming! Photographs (as jpgs, ideally unedited) and text (any word-processor, or typed straight into the body of an email) are what make the mag! Email your material – or any questions – to editor@saloprailsoc.org.uk

Geoff

