



Established 1968

WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.168

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Your contributions for future newsletters are welcome.

Items can be posted to me,

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Thanks to all who have contributed to this issue.

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## **Railwells**

Our annual model railway exhibition takes place on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 August. This years Railwells not only commemorates the fraternity's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but also 21 years since the first Scalefour Southwest, now an integral part of the show every year. Chris Challis, the organiser, has arranged the attendance of some very special layouts for these anniversaries, covering a wide variety of themes, including two Somerset & Dorset branch lines. As usual there is a good selection of demonstrations, displays and trade stands.

Prints of David Fisher's painting of the Southern 'West Country' locomotive *City of Wells* will be available for sale. These can be pre-ordered on the railwells web site [www.railwells.com](http://www.railwells.com)

Anyone who would like to help out over the weekend, and who has not already received stewarding instructions from Chris, should contact him on 01749 345612.

Don't forget the Saturday evening social event for exhibitors and helpers – further details from Chris.

## **Pendon Museum – Then and Now, by Chris Webber (Tuesday 8 April)**

Our speaker for the evening was Mr Chris Webber, Chairman of the Pendon Museum Trust, who had acted as our guide when the Fraternity visited the museum in March 2006. His illustrated talk was entitled 'Miniature Landscape and Transport at Pendon' and he began by outlining the background to the museum's foundation in Long Wittenham, near Abingdon, in 1954. Its founder, Roye England, an Australian engineer, had come to England in the 1930s in connection with the registration of a patent for a train control system. He had stayed for a while at Wanborough, immediately falling in love with the Vale of the White Horse district (between Swindon and Abingdon), and was to spend the rest of his life in England. He became concerned that many of the picturesque vernacular buildings in the Vale were being demolished or updated in a totally unsympathetic way. He, therefore, spent much time recording, measuring, photographing and sketching many of the rustic cottages, farms and inns in the area and making detailed models of them. In the post-war years, the idea of capturing the landscape of South Oxfordshire in the 1920s and 1930s by means of a large model took root with the result that the present day model occupies a space no less than 70 by 30 feet. The various farms and settlements are linked by chalky lanes and the landscape depicted is dominated by a large prehistoric hillfort. Road vehicles are rare and only occasional trains on the GWR main line disturb the tranquillity of the scene. The whole is at the model railway 'HO' scale of 3.5mm to the foot (i.e. 1:87) and Mr Webber illustrated the techniques employed by Roye England and his helpers to produce models to an incredible degree of accuracy. At first, cottages were thatched with human hair - although later hemp was used - and cats' whiskers were used for the stems of tall flowers in the cottage gardens! The interiors of some cottages were fully furnished in accordance with Roye England's original meticulous notes and the skill in accurately furnishing a room far less than 2 inches across is truly amazing. Mr Webber told the story of an old lady who was shown the model of a cottage in which she had once lived; she was delighted but drew attention to the lack of a certain item of convenience under a bed - an omission which was then soon rectified!

In the second half of his talk, Mr Webber concentrated on the railway content of the museum. In addition to the main South Oxfordshire scene, a second, of particular interest to the railway enthusiast, depicts a landscape on the edge of Dartmoor. This is dominated by a Brunel timber viaduct of 16 spans - based on that which once existed at Walcombe on the Tavistock branch. Amongst the trains which process across this splendid structure is a GWR coal train with no fewer than 85 wagons, representing a scale length of a third of a mile! A superb model of the 'Cornish Riviera Limited, hauled by *King George V* also features. Each carriage is fully furnished and complete with passengers - and lit so that realistic night-time views can be depicted. The main line disappears from sight only to reappear in a 'showcase' along one wall of the Museum shop, portraying part of the famous sea wall at Teignmouth.

Mr Webber also referred to the museum's Exhibits Room and to John Ahern's pioneering Madder Valley Railway layout. He concluded with photographs of a wonderful model of a church by John Warner and Gerry Hall which is now also on display. He reminded us that although the museum's models depicted rural life of 70-80 years ago, it was still a period of comparative poverty and hardship for many country people at that time. A vote of thanks for a fascinating evening, not only for those interested in railway modelling but also for the general enthusiast, was given by Mr Chris Challis.

## **Docklands Light Railway Visit (Saturday 10 May)**

On Saturday, 10th May, a party of 25 members and friends visited London's Docklands Light Railway. Most of the party travelled on the 08.34 train from Templecombe to Waterloo and from there caught a suburban train for the short journey to Lewisham. Here we made our way to the southernmost terminus of the Docklands Light Railway and travelled northwards, passing under the Thames in the tunnel from Greenwich to the Isle of Dogs, and alighting at Canary Wharf where we had an early lunch. The futuristic station is surrounded by many of the towering office blocks which form the centre of the rejuvenated dockland area, whilst at ground level are many shops, a supermarket, cafes and restaurants as well as pleasant small squares in which one can relax. We then continued on the DLR northwards to Poplar station where a short walk took us to the Poplar Depot and the 'nerve centre' of the Railway. Here we were met by Mr Ralph Harding, Chief Engineer of the DLR, who was to be our guide and who had given us a fascinating insight into the Railway when he was our speaker in Wells in April 2007. At Poplar we were privileged to be able to spend a while watching the activities in the main operations room from which all the trains are controlled by computer and the 39 stations are supervised by means of CCTV.

The DLR is most unusual in that the trains are normally driverless and passengers are afforded an uninterrupted view from the front - or rear - of the train. The DLR, which opened in 1987, has been extended considerably and present work is concentrated on an extension to serve the 2012 Olympic Stadium site at Stratford. Services on the Railway are provided by two-coach articulated units, of which the DLR currently has 94 in service with a further 55 of a technically more-advanced design just being delivered. Trains are normally made up of two of these units coupled together and work is in hand to lengthen station platforms to enable three-unit trains to operate to cater for the vast number of passengers expected during the Olympics. The Games apart, the demand on the DLR has exceeded all expectations with 62 million passenger journeys being made in 2007, a figure expected to rise to 80 million in 2009.

To our delight Mr Harding had provided a special train (which unusually required the services of a driver) to take us from Poplar to the Railway's other depot and workshops at the eastern end of the Railway at Beckton. The journey provided a fascinating view of many of the new buildings which are appearing in the eastern Docklands area, including the ExCel exhibition centre and the new University of East London. Two of the DLR stations - Gallions Reach and Cyprus - are most interesting as they are built within and below large road roundabouts.

Returning to Poplar we said our farewells to Mr Harding. Some of the party then returned to Waterloo for the train home by travelling on the section of the DLR which runs westwards towards the Tower of London before going underground to its terminus near the Bank of England, and then using the Waterloo & City line - affectionately known to Londoners as 'The Drain'. Others opted to return by a later train from Waterloo, having made a detour to visit the superbly refurbished St Pancras Station which now serves as the international terminus for the Eurostar trains running via the Channel Tunnel.

## **Great Western Miscellany, by Brian Arman (Tuesday 13 May)**

On Tuesday, 13th May, the Fraternity met at Wells Town Hall for its final evening session of the current season. Our speaker was Canon Brian Arman who was making his 10th successive annual visit to us. His wonderfully illustrated talk on this occasion was entitled 'A Great Western Miscellany' and we were delighted to see on the screen a wide selection of photographs, many of which Brian had only recently discovered and which had not been widely seen by an enthusiast audience before. Many featured locomotives and scenes on the Great Western Railway (and its originally associated companies - the Bristol & Exeter, the South Devon, the Cornwall and the South Wales Railways) - in the latter years of the broad gauge era from the 1870s until its final abolition in 1892.

Brian then turned his attention to photographs of accidents on the GWR system from the 1870s until the Second World War. These included the most serious accident on the broad gauge - at Norton Fitzwarren in 1890. Brian commented, however, that it was a reflection on the various safety measures which the Great Western introduced from about that time, that there were only two serious accidents on the system during the half century ending in 1940.

The final part of Brian's talk featured photographs taken at Swindon, both in the Railway Works and elsewhere right up until the end of the steam era in the 1960s. A vote of thanks was given by John Uncles.

### **“Great Western Express” Painting for Sale**

The Fraternity has been contacted by Mr P Rayner of Wells to say that he has a framed print entitled 'A Great Western Express' for sale. The original painting, depicting a GWR 'King' on presumably a Bristol or West Country express, was by G D Coulson and dated 1966; the print was produced for the art dealers, Frost and Reed of Bristol. This does not, however, appear to be a limited edition print and Mr Rayner would be open to offers. If anyone is interested in acquiring the print, please telephone him on (01749) 674429

## Visit to The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway (Wednesday 2 July)

The Wells Railway Fraternity has for much of its existence used as its logo (for no particular reason) a silhouette of one of the narrow gauge locomotives of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Partly for this reason and partly on account of a most informative lecture on that railway in 2006, it was most appropriate that a visit was made to North Devon on Wednesday, 2nd July, with the main object of seeing the progress being made in reviving the little railway.

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway was promoted by the millionaire publisher Sir George Newnes and built to a narrow gauge of 1'11½" (60 cm) to connect Lynton with the market town of Barnstaple, some 19 miles to the south. It was opened in 1898 and, despite being taken over by the Southern Railway in 1923, was closed in 1935. Since 1979 a group of enthusiasts have been working to keep the memory of the line alive; in 1995 they were able to buy the station at Woody Bay, about 4 miles from Lynton, and have embarked on ambitious plans to reopen as much of the railway as possible. So far, just over a mile of track has been laid towards Barnstaple, with a temporary terminus at Killington Lane.

A party of 17 members, partners and friends assembled at Templecombe station to catch the 09.14 South West Trains service to Exeter. Here, after a break for morning coffee, we transferred to the branch line train (now operated by First Great Western) to Barnstaple where we arrived punctually at 12.30 p.m. Two minibuses awaited us to take us first of all to Fremington Quay but half a dozen or so stalwarts opted to walk the three miles to the Quay along the former trackbed of the London & South Western Railway line to Torrington (later extended by the Southern Railway to join its North Cornwall line at Halwill Junction). This trackbed runs alongside the Taw estuary and now forms part of the Tarka Trail long distance footpath and cycle track. No sooner, however, had the intrepid walkers set off than a heavy rain shower started - the only one in the whole day which was otherwise blessed with fine weather. Fortunately shelter was near at hand in a subway under the modern viaduct carrying the Barnstaple Western By-Pass over the River Taw until the downpour abated and the sun reappeared.

At Fremington Quay, once reputed to have been the busiest port between Bristol and Land's End, the old railway station area has been most imaginatively transformed into a Visitor Centre and Cafe. After a splendid lunch there, our minibuses took us to Woody Bay station, one of the original 'Nuremberg Chalet' style buildings which still survive and now the headquarters of the revived Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Following a trip over the reopened stretch of line, our train being hauled by 'Statfold', an exquisite little steam locomotive only built in 2005 but to a traditional late Victorian industrial design, a cream tea was enjoyed by all in a marquee on the lawn behind the station building.

Returning to Barnstaple by minibus, a diversion was made to view the impressive Chelfham Viaduct, of eight arches and 80 feet high. This is built in the pale yellow brick characteristic of the district and was restored as a Millennium Project in 2001. Despite the new ambitious plans of the L&BR Association to reopen '10 miles of line in 10 years', we wondered how long it would be, if ever, before trains could be seen passing over this elegant viaduct once more.

Our return was by train from Barnstaple, changing again at Exeter St David's, and arriving back at Templecombe just after 9.30 p.m. A long day out but a most interesting and enjoyable one.

## Parking in Wells

I have been asked to bring to the attention of those who drive into Wells to attend our monthly evening meetings, that changes have been made to the public car parking arrangements in the city centre.

Parking in the Market Place, along the row from Sadler Street to Penniless Porch, is now limited to 30 minutes at a time, and parking in certain car parks is no longer free after 6:00pm.

However, it is believed that the following car parks still do not charge after 6:00pm –  
South Street (behind Somerfield and Nat West Bank)

Union Street (off Chamberlain St with foot access to High St past the Library)

Whiting Way (between Chamberlain St and the Bypass)

Therefore please check carefully when you next park in Wells.

## Fraternity Website

The website address is [www.railwells.com](http://www.railwells.com) and, although it is still early days, it already contains some information about the Fraternity and some photographs.

If there is anything that you think ought to be included, please contact Peter on 01749 671448; e-mail: [art@peterbowen.net](mailto:art@peterbowen.net). He will be pleased to hear from you.

## 2008 Programme

## *40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year !*

All meetings are on Tuesday evenings, at 7.15 for 7.30, in Wells Town Hall.

### 2008

**9 September**

Members Slides and Annual Quiz

**14 October**

Bulleid Pacifics – by Colin Boocock  
and formal unveiling of “City of Wells” painting

**11 November**

Heavy Haulage – by John Wynn

**9 December**

AGM and Members Short Talks

### 2009

**13 January**

Local Railways in the 1960's on film – by Andrew Linham

**10 February**

More Railways in the Snow + 53809 in Closeup – by Philip Fowler

**10 March**

Railway Safety and Level Crossings – by Colin Stanaway

**14 April**

Railway Ancestors – by David Hawkings

**12 May**

Railways of Bristol in the 1960's, 70's and 80's – by Brian Arman

## And finally, a piece of trivia to round off with.

Did you know that the carriages on the Tal-y-llyn Railway in Wales have doors on one side only. Quite sensible, really, as all the station platforms are on the same side of the line.