

Established 1968

WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

www.railwells.com

Newsletter No.174

July 2011

Your contributions for future newsletters are welcome.

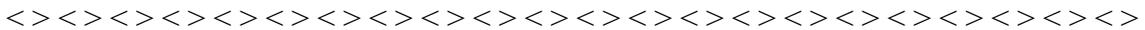
Material can be posted to me,

Steve Page, 36 Lower Whitelands, Radstock, Somerset, BA3 3JW,

Tel: 01761 433418, or email to page.steve@virgin.net or steve.page@railwells.com.



WRF members admire transport of yesteryear at the London Transport Museum Depot
Photo by Simon Tucker



RAILWELLS 2011

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 August

Once again, our annual model railway exhibition takes place in Wells Town Hall. Opening times are from 10.30 to 5.30 on the Saturday, and 10.30 to 5.00 on the Sunday.

Don't forget that Fraternity members get **FREE** entry on production of their membership card!




The West Country's Quality Model Railway Exhibition

Wells Town Hall

Saturday August 13th 10.30-5.30
Sunday August 14th 10.30-5.00

Admission Adults £5. Child/Senior £4.
accompanied children 14 & under FREE

Includes Scalefour Southwest
And building a layout



Enquiries phone 01749 938362
Full details on www.railwells.com

Organized by the Wells Railway Fraternity

This year's exhibition includes the Scalefour Southwest 2011 P4 Layout Challenge, where the challenge is to build a layout which fits into the owner's vehicle along with no more than two operators. Already five layouts in this competition have reached the stage where they should be finished in time for their debut at Railwells.

Details of the trade stands and layouts on display are on the Railwells website www.railwells.com

HELP WANTED – if you can assist at any time with the setting up or during the opening times of this event, even just for a couple of hours, please contact the organiser, Chris Challis, on 01749 938362, or email cgchallis@yahoo.co.uk

2011 Railwells Layouts

P4 New Mere S&D 1950

Chris Longley

P4 Draycott Park Colliery

Tony Barnes
North Staffordshire coalfield 1950's

P4 Allt-y Graban Road

Bernard Baker
South Wales 1950/60's

P4 Lower Exbury

Jo Palmer
Hampshire light railway terminus 1952

P4 Crockherbtown

Robert Foot
Cardiff area 1950/60's

EM Villier Street, Diesel stabling point

Tony Wood, Ian Manderson,
Peter Johnson

00 Somewhere in Southern England 1944

Phil Smith

0g Stodmarsh, East Kent Railway

Kevin & Judy Cartwright

Scale7 Y Cae, South Wales colliery

Simon Thompson

0-16.5 Gweek North Quay

Falmouth Model Railway Club
The Helford Valley Railway
South Cornwall

0-16.5 Bridport Town

David Taylor
Narrow gauge railway in South Devon

AGM and MEMBERS SHORT TALKS (Tuesday 14 December)

The Fraternity's Annual General Meeting was held at Wells Town Hall on the 14th December and, following the formal business, we enjoyed two short presentations by members.

First, Paul Burdett intrigued us by asking if we could suggest any connection between the lubrication of the big ends on a steam locomotive and a problem with domestic egg production. He explained that some years ago, whilst working for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, complaints were received that a substantial proportion of eggs being sold displayed a strong fishy smell. The answer to this mystery was eventually found to be related to rape seed oil. After the oil had been extracted from the plants, it was found that the mush was being fed to poultry and that this contained traces of an acid which led to the unpleasant smell in some eggs. The oil, containing the same acid, was the preferred lubricant for steam locomotives at the time - and hence the unusual connection. Paul then taxed our minds further with some thoughts on the unusual relationship between the tractive force developed by a steam engine and the horsepower generated.

The second offering was given by Ken Smith and featured a photographic record of an open day at Eastleigh in 2009 in celebration of the centenary of the founding of the railway works there.

BUILDING THE BATH & WEST RAILWAY (Tuesday 11 January)

On the 11th January, our speaker was Canon Roger Davis, Chairman of the East Somerset Society of Model and Experimental Engineers, and his subject was 'The Building of the Bath & West Railway'. A native of North Somerset, Roger served in the RAF where he trained as an electronics engineer, and then worked for some years for BBC Television. He then entered the church, serving in various parishes in the London and Home Counties area, before finally retiring to Wells.

Visits to model engineering exhibitions in Bristol led to an interest in miniature railways and in 2001

Roger attended an exploratory meeting at Bowlish which led to the founding of ESSMEE. A search for a permanent headquarters became pressing after the society acquired the track and rolling stock from a closed miniature railway at Brean. Various locations in the East Mendip area were looked at and for a while members helped with the running of the miniature railway at the Hunter's Rest near Timsbury. Finally, the society obtained the use of a redundant building at the Bath & West Showground.

Whilst members set about refurbishing this building to provide a clubroom and workshops, the society provided a portable miniature railway at the 2004 Show and, as it was considered that a permanent railway could be an added attraction at the Showground, work then started on building such a line. This was to a mixed gauge of 5 and 7.25 inches and initially took the form of a circuit of the headquarters building.

An ambitious project was then commenced, extending the line running on either side of Prestleigh Brook and around the ornamental lake near the southern boundary of the showground site, a total length of over half a mile. This took four years to complete and required the building of two substantial bridges. The first train ran over the completed railway in February 2008.

The society obtained a 25-year lease in 2007 and the little railway has proved a great success, over 60,000 passengers having travelled on it to date. Apart from a small grant, all the substantial costs have been met by means of loans from members - who also provided almost of the labour involved. Roger then outlined developments with regard to the locomotives and other rolling stock operated on the railway. Current projects included the provision of a new station building and the construction of the society's own steam engine.

The talk was accompanied by a splendid power point presentation which included video of the two royal visits to the line - by the Duke of Kent in 2005 and the Prince of Wales in 2009. A vote of thanks was proposed by John Blatchford who congratulated the society on the extremely high engineering standards which we had seen illustrated.

THE TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT (Tuesday 8 February)

The guest speaker at our meeting at Wells Town Hall on 8th February was Simon Castens and his subject was 'The Titfield Thunderbolt and the Camerton Branch'. After a computer hitch had been overcome we settled down to an evening of pure nostalgia. Simon began with a brief outline of the history of the branch line which linked Camerton with the Avon Valley at Limpley Stoke. The line was partly built on the route of the old Somersetshire Coal Canal and opened in 1910. It was destined to have a fairly short life of just under a half century, ending shortly after Camerton Colliery closed in 1950 - the other major colliery served by the line, at Dunkerton, had stopped working earlier, in the 1930s. The line was then used by the BR Bridge Department for storage and the rails were finally lifted in 1958.

Simon pointed out that when Ealing Studios decided to make the film 'The Titfield Thunderbolt', the Talylyn Railway was the only enthusiast-run line anywhere and speculation has taken place as to whether the little Welsh railway was the inspiration for Tibby Clarke's story. There can be little doubt that the film served as encouragement for the movement which has resulted in today's preserved and heritage railway tourist industry. With the help of old photographs of the line and stills from the film, Simon then spoke of the making of the film in July and August 1952. The station at Monkton Combe served as that of the fictional village of Titfield, the name being a composite of Titsey and Limpsfield, two adjoining villages in Surrey. The film company hired two ex-Great Western '1400' Class tank engines from British Railways and these were transferred to Westbury (Wilts) for maintenance whilst the other locomotive which starred as 'Thunderbolt' was the Liverpool & Manchester Railway 'Lion', built in 1838. This veteran was brought to Bristol and amazingly was then allowed to run under its own steam from Bristol to Monkton Combe. The ancient carriage used on the branch train came from the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway and, sadly, this historic vehicle was broken up for scrap following the filming, although a similar vehicle does survive today in preservation.

Simon then featured various locations on the line and gave brief summaries of the careers of most of the stars who featured in the film, including John Gregson (the Squire), George Relph (the vicar), Godfrye Tearle (the bishop), Naunton Wayne (the town clerk), Sid James, Gabrielle Brune and Edie Martin. We also learned something of the Bedford bus which was hired from a local company at Winsley and the steam roller which was involved in the duel with the branch line locomotive. Most of the cast stayed in two local hotels and we were intrigued to learn that the waterwheel at Limpley Stoke Mill was used to generate electricity to enable film clips to be shown there. Not all the scenes in the film were shot locally; for example, the attempt to steal a replacement tank locomotive was filmed at Oxford engine shed whilst scenes of it running through the streets were taken in Woodstock.

A vote of thanks was proposed to Simon for giving us a fascinating evening which for many of us brought back many memories of a time now gone for ever.

AMERICAN NARROW GAUGE LOCOS (Tuesday 8 March)

The speaker at our meeting at Wells Town Hall on 8th March was Richard Pelham whose subject was 'American Narrow Gauge Locomotives'. He interpreted his topic so as to cover not only locomotives found in the United States but also the numerous examples built by American manufacturers (such as Baldwin, Lima, Porter and Alco) for service throughout the world. He pointed out that the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia was the world's most prolific manufacturer, producing during its existence of well over a century some 76,000 steam locomotives; it was not surprising therefore that many of the machines which we would see during his presentation came from that stable. American firms were generally able to meet very short delivery dates and consequently won many export orders when British and European companies were often unable to compete in this regard. For example, a repeat order for engines for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway went to Baldwin, despite all previous examples having been built in Britain. During the First World War, American firms built many small narrow gauge locomotives for use on

the light temporary lines laid to feed the Front Line with supplies and ammunition. Several of these engines still survive and Richard's first photographs were of one recently restored and in action on the Leighton Buzzard Railway in Bedfordshire. This was followed by a second example on a heritage line in Northern France. There then followed a whirlwind world tour taking us to India, South East Asia and South America and we saw examples of all manner of steam locomotives, built to a variety of gauges between 2'0" and 3'6", geared and articulated types and those burning not only coal but wood, oil or biogas. In Brazil we saw massive compound locomotives built in 1947 and in Ecuador the very last American-built narrow gauge engine, which appeared some six years later. Also in Ecuador we were treated to amazing views of steam trains toiling up to the Devil's Nose, some 12,000 feet above sea level. The first half of the evening concluded with a brief visit to Cuba where the last survivors of a once large number of American-built engines still find use on the sugar cane plantations at harvest time.

Resuming after a refreshment break, Richard the turned to the USA itself. First we went to Disneyland to see a couple of narrow gauge engines which had been drastically rebuilt so as to represent the great man's idea of the iconic 'Wild West' locomotives of the 1880s - completely unrecognisable from their original appearance. Richard then outlined the history of the extensive network of 3'0" gauge lines built up in the late 19th century in Colorado, Utah and northern New Mexico by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad and other companies. A few of these lines still survive as tourist railways, the most well-known being the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, which extends for some 63 miles, and the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. Both of these use classic Denver & Rio Grande steam locomotives, particularly of the 'Mikado' type. The earliest batch of these, which appeared in 1903, earned the nickname 'Mud Hens' on account of their tendency to derail, whilst the peculiar 'bear trap' spark arrester gear fitted to their chimneys gives a rather strange appearance to British eyes. We also learned that one of a later batch of 'Mikado' engines had belonged for many years to the famous screen cowboy Gene Autry. Richard showed us breathtaking views of trains on these lines against the backdrop of the

southern Rocky Mountains and ended his talk by saying that on his latest visit to the Cumbres line, there had been an unseasonal light snow fall and this produced a truly beautiful enhancement to the last pictures in his presentation. In addition to his talk, Richard also brought an interesting selection of memorabilia in the form of works plates from a variety of American-built locomotives. A vote of thanks for a fascinating evening was given by Ken Smith.

25 YEARS OF ELECTRIC TRAINS TO IPSWICH (Tuesday 12 April)

The guest speaker at the Fraternity's meeting at Wells Town Hall on the 12th April was Mr John Day who had travelled from Ipswich to be with us. His subject was '25 Years of Electric Trains to Ipswich' and we were treated to an in-depth look at a 30-mile section of the Great Eastern main line between Colchester and Haughley Junction (about half-way between Ipswich and Norwich), together with the 11-mile branch line from Manningtree and Harwich, both before and after electrification in the 1980s. The 25kV electrification of these lines from London was authorised in 1982 and reached Colchester in 1985 before extension to Norwich, completed in May 1987.

John explained that thanks to the nature of his work he had often been able to slip away to the lineside and photograph all manner of trains over the years and he began by showing a variety of diesel-hauled trains, both passenger and freight, in the years immediately before electrification work began. There followed scenes of the civil engineering work involved, including the lowering of the floor of the tunnel immediately south of Ipswich station. Incidentally the latter work was carried out twice, the first time to accommodate the overhead electricity supply for the trains and, on the second occasion some 20 years later to improve the loading gauge to allow larger containers to pass through Ipswich en route for Felixstowe.

In recent years, there has been considerable growth in container traffic using the ports at Harwich and Felixstowe and this has resulted in many more intermodal trains passing through the area.

Since the advent of privatisation, there have been many changes with regard to the franchised companies operating on the Ipswich line and this led to a wide variety of colour schemes as each company's livery gave way to the next. First came Anglia Railways until 1997, followed by the oddly named 'one' company (which John told us could have been an abbreviation for 'Owned by National Express'). This name caused untold confusion amongst the travelling public and the strange livery adopted for its trains of a lightish blue enhanced by a broad 5-colour rainbow stripe was considered bizarre by many. The unorthodox name was eventually dropped in favour of National Express East Anglia and the livery replaced with the much more attractive National Express corporate grey and white.

Freight services in the area are now mainly in the hands of the Freightliner company although, as John explained, the present national shortage of front-line diesel locomotives was resulting in a bewildering incidence of companies hiring engines from one other so that there was a fascinating variety of motive power to be seen nowadays. To satisfy the steam enthusiasts amongst us, John included a selection of various steam-hauled special trains which had visited the area in the period under review.

A vote of thanks was given by Chris Avery, who had himself lived in East Anglia for some years. He congratulated John on giving us an excellent insight into the many changes which this comparatively small area had witnessed during a quarter of a century.

RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT (Tuesday 10 May)

The final meeting of the season was held at Wells Town Hall on 10th May when Canon Brian Arman from Bristol paid his annual visit to us. This year he gave us a three-part slide presentation on Great Western subjects. The first part featured a selection of photographs taken during the late 1930s by Mr G H (Bill) Soole, who then lived in Bristol.

Bill Soole worked professionally in the Engineering Department of the Great Western Railway and this afforded him access to many locations denied to the

general public. He always carried his camera with him and, having something of the eye of an artist, produced superb photographs of the railway scene which have seldom been bettered. Brian commenced his selection with shots taken at Patchway, north of Bristol, many featuring trains at the end of the long climb from the depths of the Severn Tunnel. We then moved southwards through Bristol, stopping for views of trains at Temple Meads station and finishing a few miles southwest of the city on the main line to Exeter. Members were intrigued by studies of the GWR's experimental (and somewhat bizarre) semi-streamlining of a couple of locomotives - a 'King' and a 'Castle'. Brian referred to the various public relations promotions made by the GWR in pre-war days to combat the increasing popularity of coach travel and private motoring. These often took the form of extremely cheap excursions and we saw a 'Castle' class locomotive at Temple Meads with a large headboard proclaiming 'Conducted Tour to Pinewood Studios'.

The second instalment featured scenes on the Midland & South Western Junction line, which ran from Cheltenham to Andover via Swindon Town and Marlborough and became part of the Great Western empire in 1923.

Brian started with some photographs taken during the building of the line in the 1880s and followed these with a variety of photographs taken up until the line's closure in 1961. Brian told us that he was born near Swindon Town station and regaled us with a couple of humorous anecdotes relating to his railway experiences as a young schoolboy.

Brian entitled the final part of his presentation 'Nostalgia and Fun' and this took the form of a rapid trip from Paddington to Penzance with glimpses of various locations, branch lines and so on, en route, nearly all dating from the steam era.

A vote of thanks for a wonderful evening of GWR nostalgia was proposed by our Chairman, David Stephens.

VISIT TO LONDON TRANSPORT MUSEUM DEPOT

(Saturday 21 May)

Unfortunately, we have run out of space in this newsletter, so Andrew Tucker's report on the day out will appear next time.

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following, who has recently joined: Terry Miles (Shepton Mallet)

WANTED

If you have any historical information that you would like to share or have any interesting railway related stories and or photos please send them to platform1@railwells.com

AND FINALLY:

Did you know that the village of Little Bytham in Lincolnshire once had a station on the East Coast Main Line, between Peterborough and Grantham. The station has long since closed, but the location will always be associated with an important event in railway history, which occurred nearby, on the 3rd of July 1938. In the village, close by the railway line, is a pub called The Mallard.....

Little Bytham is a scenic small village in South Kesteven in south Lincolnshire, situated between Corby Glen and Stamford on the B1176, which is straddled by brick railway viaducts of the East Coast Main Line (Victorian and later) as the road passes through the village.

On the edge of the village to the east is the West Glen River. Further east lie Witham on the Hill and the large estate of Grimsthorpe Castle. To the west is Castle Bytham and, over the county boundary into Rutland, Clipsham. Careby is just to the south of Little Bytham.

The village was formerly an important railway interchange.

The name Bytham is first recorded in 1067 (as a monastery that rapidly translated to Vaudey Abbey), and comes from the Old English word bythme meaning Valley bottom, broad valley

2011 - 2012 Programme

All meetings held at the Town Hall, Wells, Somerset on the second Tuesday of the month at 19:30

13 September 2011

Quiz followed by
Paddington Sleeper Accident 1983 Presented by Roy Kethro

11 October 2011

Crossrail
Presented by Bruce Nottrodt

8 November 2011

Eastleigh Works
Presented by Colin Boocock

13 December 2011

Annual General Meeting
followed by – Member's Short Talks

10 January 2012

Dinorwic Quarry and its Locomotives Presented by Julian Birley

14 February 2012

Steaming Through West Somerset Presented by Peter Triggs

13 March 2012

Traction in the Deltic Era(1961-1981) Presented by Hugh Ballantyne

10 April 2012

DLR - the run up to the Olympics
Presented by Ralph Harding

8 May 2012

Great Western Miscellany
Presented by Brian Arman