

A VISIT TO THE LONDON TRANSPORT MUSEUM DEPOT (Saturday 21 May)

A party of twelve members and friends made their way to Acton for this behind the scenes look at the London Transport Museum collection. We were met by the depot manager who introduced us to two of the friends of the museum who were to act as our guides. Both proved to be very knowledgeable; Fred being a long serving LT employee now retired with Mike a younger enthusiast.

Splitting into two groups we started our tour looking at the larger exhibits in the main hall. The underground was amongst the first of the electrified railways and the motors and other traction equipment appeared to us to be massively constructed. This also seemed to be the case for other equipment such as lifts. A short section of spiral escalator is a fascinating relic. This was very much experimental and although one was installed at Holloway Road in 1906 it was never opened to the public. Items of tunnel linings, track, signalling and all the other infrastructure are stored in the depot in considerable quantities but the centrepieces are the trains, trams, trolleybuses and buses held over from the main displays for the public at the LT Museum in Covent Garden.

We found that one track in the middle of the building was empty. We were told that the museum's set of 1938 tube stock is normally stabled here but that it had been taken out for some runs in connection with the Rickmansworth festival the following day. The 1922

Metropolitan Railway electric loco *Sarah Siddons* was also away to haul trains at the same event. Tube and sub-surface cars from other eras were lined up in various stages of restoration. Our guides pointed out how these illustrated the development of the underground trains from the loco hauled gate stock through to the driverless trains of the Victoria line and up to the present day.

Alongside a tram in the far corner of the building was a section of the electrical supply conduit. This was the system adopted in parts of central London to avoid the need for unsightly overhead wiring. Again the components that would have been buried in the ground appeared huge when on display and it was easy to see why it was prohibitively expensive to extend this type of current collection. The arrangements that were made on through routes for the changeover from underground to overhead supply were explained to us.

The natural successor of the tram, the trolleybus was also represented including one of the 'Diddlers' from the early 1930s (the origins of the name are unknown). Many tram routes went straight over to motor buses and we were shown a wide range of examples from pre-first world war through to the de-regulation period of the 1990s. They had been restored to a high standard and it was good to hear that many are regularly driven to and from Covent Garden and outside events.

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From the larger exhibits we moved on to the extensive collection of enamel signs and other 'platform furniture' and then upstairs to the controlled environment where posters, maps, architectural and engineering drawings and all manner of other documents are stored. London Transport commissioned a wide range of art work for their posters and many of the original paintings are held in store together with at least one of almost every printed poster. The map of the Underground first designed by Harry Beck in 1932 and likened to a wiring diagram (rather than the previous cartographic presentation) holds pride of place. Not only are its successors still in use in London but the idea has been widely copied around the world.

The collection is very wide ranging and gives a strong impression that following the emergence of all sorts of new technology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries then this all came together with the creation of London Transport in the early 1930s to form a highly developed

system. Everyone at the museum is to be congratulated and we gave our thanks to the two guides for an extremely interesting tour.

Having spent an hour longer than expected at the depot we hastened to Covent Garden for a late lunch in the café of the London Transport Museum there. Just five of us then went on across London to St Pancras International for a quick (very quick) trip on a class 395 Javelin. Billed as the world's fastest commuter train it was a very interesting contrast to the stock that we had seen at the museum. Acceleration was certainly impressive and after the first stop at Stratford International we soon arrived at Ebbsfleet International where we crossed the platform to board an up train. St Pancras is of course a superb example of how a historic station can be restored and adapted for new services. We stopped on the concourse for a cup of tea and soaked up the atmosphere before returning to Waterloo for the journey back to Templecombe.

QUIZ and MEMBERS SHORT TALKS (Tuesday 13 September)

The 2011/12 season of meetings got under way at Wells Town Hall on the 13th September with the traditional quiz, the coveted trophy being won by Cliff Ison.

After refreshments, the second half of the evening was taken up with a brief but most interesting talk by Andrew Tucker, entitled 'Chippenham, Junction for Calne'. We were shown a selection of his photographs taken a half century ago, recording the railway scene at Chippenham during the period of transition from steam to diesel operation and included scenes on the now long defunct five mile branch to Calne. It provided for many of us a nostalgic glimpse of the past.

A VISIT TO THE BATH & WEST RAILWAY

(Sunday 25 September)

A small group members and friends met at the Bath and West Railway during the open weekend in late September. We were met by Canon Roger Davis who had invited us to make a visit when he gave his talk on building the railway to the Fraternity in January.

The railway is normally open for the Bath and West Show and other major events at the showground. On these occasions a charge is made for the trip along the line but on the open days admission is free as is travel on the trains. Our first journey around the half mile line was behind LADY MARION a 7¼ inch gauge 0-4-2T. The Fraternity's headboard was carried on the smokebox lamp bracket. This loco hauled the special train at this year's Bath and West Show with Sophie Countess of Wessex on board after she had officially opened the new station.

On our return Roger introduced us to George White who is the chairman of the East Somerset Society of Model and Experimental Engineers (Roger is the President). We were shown around their well equipped headquarters with storage and workshop facilities, library and the essential refreshment facilities. In addition to the new station canopy improvements have recently been made to the siding and stock handling arrangements. Although there is some secure storage available in the HQ most

of the locomotives are owned by members and are taken off site. There is a society diesel loco SHEPTON and work is under way on a steam locomotive.

The signal box has an impressive lever frame with electro pneumatic working of points and signals with interlocking. The signalman is kept busy controlling operations around the station area and also the level crossing that is on a major route for visitors to the showground. This all requires manpower and a good number of the one hundred or so ESSMEE members were on hand to operate a quite intensive service of trains.

After having a cup of tea we made another trip around the line. It is dual gauge (7¼ inch and 5 inch). Roger had explained to us another of the developments south of the level crossing where two 5 inch gauge goods yards are being constructed to allow shunting and making up of goods trains that can then be dispatched to the other yard. This is linked to the main running line but will normally be operated independently. ESSMEE members also have other interests and while we were there several model traction engines were running around the roads in the showground.

Grateful thanks were given to Roger Davis at the end of a very interesting visit.

CROSSRAIL – by Bruce Nottrodt

(Tuesday 11 October)

Our second meeting at Wells Town Hall was held on the 11th October when we welcomed back Bruce Nottrodt who had previously spoken to us in 2008 about the acquisition of land for the Channel Tunnel Link. Upon completion of that enterprise, Bruce, a surveyor and valuer, became involved until about 3 years ago in similar work in connection with the ambitious London Crossrail project. This was first mooted over 30 years ago and involves building a new major railway tunnel to main line standards under Central London primarily to allow fast commuter trains to run from Maidenhead to Shenfield and thus relieve the growing pressure on the present underground and tube network. The new tunnel, which will run some 60-70 feet below street level over most of its length, will start to the west of Paddington and run eastwards to Stratford with a branch via Canary Wharf to Woolwich and Abbey Wood. Work finally started at the end of 2008 and currently new Crossrail stations are under construction at Paddington, Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon, Liverpool Street, Whitechapel and Canary Wharf. The last-named is remarkable in that it is actually being built in a dock. The stations will include major commercial development schemes and it is intended that these should fund much of the capital costs involved. Bruce outlined some of the problems encountered in acquiring land and legal rights for such a complex scheme, the new railway being criss-crossed by tube lines and all manner of public utilities. The driving of the large scale tunnels linking the new stations is not being allowed to commence until after the completion of the

Olympic Games but Crossrail should open in phases during 2018/19. The major depot for the maintenance of the new Crossrail electric trains will be at Old Oak Common, a site which for many years was occupied by the main London steam engine sheds and carriage sidings of the Great Western Railway. During British Rail days, the facility was modernised to cater for diesel locomotives and trains, but following privatisation, it became a major depot of the EWS freight railway company. Bruce's job was to supervise the handover of the site to Crossrail and he was disappointed to find scarcely any traces of its days as one of the GWR's premier engine sheds. He amused us with several anecdotes including one about a large railway breakdown crane which was inadvertently left behind when the rails connecting the depot to the main network were taken up.

Changing the subject completely, Bruce then told us about his new involvement as a volunteer with the narrow gauge Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Here his skills were being used in negotiations to re-purchase land and the promotion of a Transport Works Act Order to enable the rebuilding of the line to proceed as rapidly as possible. He was confident that in the long term this historic little railway would be reopened over most of its original length and it was gratifying that the project was receiving full support from the local authorities and the Exmoor National Park Authority, who see great tourist potential for it in this area of North Devon.

A vote of thanks was given by Andrew Tucker.

EASTLEIGH WORKS – by Colin Boocock (Tuesday 8 November)

At its meeting in Wells Town Hall on the 8th November, the Fraternity welcomed back Colin Boocock, who had travelled from Derby to speak on the history of Eastleigh Railway Works.

Colin began his illustrated presentation by explaining that the London & South Western Railway had originally established its main locomotive works at Nine Elms in south-west London as early as 1839.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, however, the site was no longer capable of further expansion and had become extremely cramped. The company therefore took the bold step of seeking a more convenient greenfield site on which to build a new works to maintain its growing locomotive and coaching stock fleet.

The site finally chosen was at Eastleigh, near the village of Bishopstoke between Southampton and Winchester, a location having the great advantage of being roughly at the centre of the L&SWR network.

The building of the new works began in 1908 and, on completion in 1910, were regarded as the most up-to-date and advanced in Britain. The transfer of the various departments from Nine Elms was a major operation, also involving the provision of housing and facilities for the large number of skilled workers moving from London.

In addition to the locomotive works, other workshops were added to cater for the maintenance and new construction of carriages and later, the growing fleet of electric trains. In 1923 Eastleigh Works became one of the principal works of the newly-established Southern Railway and on Nationalisation in 1948, of the Southern Region of British Railways.

Colin illustrated the history of both Nine Elms and Eastleigh Works with a selection of photographs of these sites and included examples of the many locomotives built there. Despite its restricted layout, it was remarkable that over 800 locomotives were built at Nine Elms in its time and it became noted for the excellence of its workmanship, a reputation which also successfully transferred to Eastleigh. Fewer than 400 locomotives were to be constructed at Eastleigh but these included famous examples such as the 'Lord Nelson' and 'Merchant Navy' classes.

During the Second World War the Works was heavily engaged in war production and was responsible for manufacturing heavy artillery guns and landing craft as well as parts for tanks and aircraft.

Colin began his long railway career as an apprentice at Eastleigh in 1955 and remained there for some years before promotion took him to other parts of the country. This made him the ideal person to tell us about the organisation of the works and the various types of work undertaken during the British Railways era. He illustrated this with a fascinating selection of pictures of activities in both the locomotive and carriage workshops - one recorded workmen casting a new cylinder block for a steam locomotive in the 1950s, a scene which would horrify a health and safety inspector of today.

Regular work on steam locomotives ended in 1966 and Eastleigh became increasingly engaged with diesel and electric rolling stock. The works, however, did overhaul several preserved steam locomotives including 'Lord Nelson' and surprisingly a Great Western Railway 2-8-0 destined for the National Railway Museum.

EASTLEIGH WORKS

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Colin outlined the ways in which the overhaul of locomotives and carriages was programmed resulting in greatly increased productivity. This efficiency was a major factor in Eastleigh's survival when the number of major railway works was drastically reduced from over 30 to a half a dozen in the 1960s.

Upon privatisation, the works initially passed to Wessex Train Care Ltd and then to the French company Alstom. The latter, on ceasing operations at Eastleigh, left the works a shell of their former self and their sale for redevelopment seemed certain.

Then, in 2006, the premises were acquired by a local businessman, Mr

Bruce Knights, who saw a gap in the railway industry and, having formed Knights Rail Services Ltd, offered facilities for rolling stock maintenance. Thus Eastleigh Works was able to celebrate its centenary in May 2009 in some style.

Recently, Siemens has established itself in part of the works for the maintenance of the large new electric train fleet built by that company for South West Trains and the future now looks much brighter.

A vote of thanks to Colin for an excellent insight into an important aspect of railway history was given by Mr Derek Lampard.

A VISIT TO THE TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT BOOKSHOP

(Friday 18 November)

Our visit was arranged for the evening of Friday 18 November after the bookshop had closed to the public. Ten members made their way to Larkhall in Bath and were made very welcome by the proprietor, Simon Castens. The supply of tea and biscuits while browsing was a novel experience!

Although quite compact, the shop is well stocked with a wide range of railway books and titles on other transport subjects together with some modelling supplies for 0 and 00.

Our small group seemed to fill most of the spare floor space and Simon was keen to record the unusually busy scene with his camera.

Having spent a convivial hour or two together, members made their purchases and came away saying that they mean to return again soon.

The shop is open from Tuesdays to Saturdays 10.00 – 17.30 (18.30 on Fridays). On-street parking can usually be found nearby and there is a frequent bus service from the city centre.

The Titfield Thunderbolt Bookshop, 3A Upper Lambridge Street, Bath, BA1 6RY
Tel: 01225 462332 www.titfield.co.uk

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following who have recently joined: Toni Fisher, Raymond Geoffrey-Kite (Wells), Mike Rathbone (Street), Graham White (Glastonbury).

RAILWELLS WEBSITE: www.railwells.com

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

2011/12 PROGRAMME

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

13 December	Annual General Meeting, followed by Members Short Talks	
10 January	Dinorwic Quarry and its Locomotives	Julian Birley
14 February	Steaming Through West Somerset	Peter Triggs
13 March	Traction in the Deltic Era (1961-1981)	Hugh Ballantyne
10 April	Docklands Light Railway – The run-up to the Olympics	Ralph Harding
8 May	Great Western Miscellany	Brian Arman

AND FINALLY:

Did you know that there are only two London Underground stations whose names contain all five vowels?



**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS !**