

Established 1968

WELLS

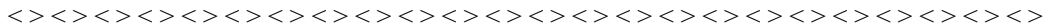
RAILWAY

FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.185 - March 2016

www.railwells.com

Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter.  
Your contributions for future editions are welcome;  
please contact the editor, Steve Page  
Tel: 01761 433418, or email page564@btinternet.com



CITY OF WELLS RENAMING CEREMONY

## **OBITUARY - DEREK GEORGE LAMPARD (1932-2015)**

We were saddened to learn of the death on 16th November of Derek Lampard, who had been a leading member of the Fraternity for many years, including a period as Chairman from 1994 to 1999. Derek was born in Southampton and, after graduating, pursued a career in aircraft engineering. He eventually joined the Westland Aircraft Co. at Yeovil and worked for that company for 27 years. He and his wife Doreen settled in Somerton where they were to spend the rest of their lives.

Derek was a man of many interests - in fact a friend once said that he was interested in everything ! He was, of course a keen railway enthusiast, his main passion being, unsurprisingly, the London & South Western Railway, while he delighted in the more technical aspects of locomotive design and practice. He was also a keen railway modeller as well as being an active member of the Royal Aeronautical Society, a supporter of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Liberal Democrat Party as well as having a deep and passionate interest in music. He was extremely proud of his three children and their achievements.

In recent years, Derek encountered various health problems and it was a matter of great regret to him that he was no longer able to attend Fraternity meetings as regularly as he would have wished.

Derek's funeral took place at St Michael & All Angels' Church, Somerton, on 1st December and the Fraternity was well represented at the service. He is buried alongside Doreen, his wife of 52 years, in a beautiful 'green' burial site at Westcombe, a mile or so west of Somerton.

Derek is greatly missed by all those Fraternity members who were privileged to have known him.

## **OBITUARY - TOM FRANCIS (1924-2016)**

On the 9th February, we lost another loyal member of the Fraternity. Thomas George Morris-Francis, to give him his full name, was adopted at a young age and was brought up in Dulwich where he received his education. During the Second World War he served in the Royal Air Force and, in civilian life had an interesting job delivering cars for the Peugeot company to prestigious customers, including his having to drive one new car from France to India !

A lifelong bachelor, Tom moved to Street some 35 years ago and lived there for the rest of his days. He was a keen railway modeller and, during his time in the London area, he was an early member of the now defunct Norwood Model Railway Club. Amongst his other interests, he was an avid philatelist.

In recent years, Tom's sight and general health began to deteriorate and, a short time before his death, he moved to a nearby residential care home in Street. Tom was a regular attender at Fraternity meetings and, despite his somewhat reserved nature, he was always an interesting person to talk to. His funeral was held at Yeovil Crematorium on 18th February and the Fraternity was represented at the service. Those of us who knew Tom will miss him greatly.

# THE REDEDICATION OF 34092 CITY OF WELLS

25 NOVEMBER 2015

**by Andrew Tucker**

Following 25 years out of service for overhaul, West Country no. 34092 was running again in August 2014 and we have been waiting to hear when it will be rededicated as CITY OF WELLS. At the end of October we were told that the ceremony would be on 25 November at Bury on the East Lancashire Railway. The date is significant as the original naming of the loco was at Priory Road station in Wells on 25 November 1949.

Because of the short notice the current Mayor of Wells was not able to attend so Councillor Colin Price, chairman of Wells Railway Fraternity, had the honour of unveiling the nameplate. A small group of members travelled up to Lancashire and we took Brenda Fisher with us. Brenda is the widow of David Fisher the artist who produced the painting of 34092 to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Fraternity in 2008.

Following the speeches and the unveiling Colin presented, on behalf of the City Council, a terracotta plaque of the City Arms of Wells to Richard Greenwood one of the owners of the locomotive (the loco carries the coat of arms on a shield below both nameplates). Brenda also gave limited edition prints of David's painting to the four members of the 34092 Partnership who were present.

The locomotive then coupled on to the East Lancashire Railway's dining train and we were invited aboard together with approximately eighty other guests. As the train ran from Bury Bolton Street station to Ramsbottom lunch was served. At Ramsbottom the loco ran round and hauled the train tender first back through Bury to Heywood. For the final stage of the trip from Heywood back to our starting point CITY OF WELLS carried the Fraternity's headboard on the smokebox door.

## LOCOMOTIVE 34092 CITY OF WELLS HISTORY

**by Chris Challis**

On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1949, Southern Region West Country class locomotive Number 34092 was brought to the Somerset & Dorset Priory Road Station to be named "Wells" by the then Mayor and Bishop. The people of Wells felt the name Wells was plain and undignified and suggested the title City of Wells much better. This was carried out without ceremony some months later.

City of Wells 34092 worked on BR for 15 years, much of this time pulling the Golden Arrow boat train from Victoria to Folkestone. The loco was withdrawn from service in 1964, when it was sent to Woodhams scrap yard at Barry Island, South Wales.

In 1971 enthusiasts from the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway rescued it. The loco was returned to working order, after which it pulled charter trains on the main line for the next seven years. A major overhaul was then needed. This has taken 25 years to complete. City of Wells is now resplendent in BR green livery with the early lion and wheel logo on the tender.

# MEMBERS MEMORIES OF THE SOMERSET & DORSET

12 January

For the first half of our January meeting we were fortunate to have a good response to the request for “Members Memories of the S&D”. Tables arranged along the front of the Old Courtroom were well filled with all sorts of railwayana relating to the line. Six members also gave short presentations:

**John Reakes** – John showed us a good selection of his colour slides mainly taken in the early 1960s along the line from Bath and over the Mendips to Shepton Mallet and on to Evercreech Junction.

**Jeff Cottle** – Jeff talked about his memories of growing up in Radstock within sight and sound of the S&D. His description of the workings of the two adjacent level crossings in the town was a reminder that road traffic chaos did happen even in the age of steam.

**Chris Challis** – although we think of Chris as a Sheptonian he actually moved to the town as a boy in 1950. Using photos to illustrate the journey Chris described his arrival in the town via Templecombe and the S&D and subsequent visits to the station – the S&D at Charlton Road being preferred to the GWR High Street station which was closer.

**Steve Page** – Steve had a number of items on display. He also told us about his only sighting of a train on the S&D before closure. During a family holiday in the Wells area they often crossed the bridge at Masbury but never saw a train. One evening towards the end of the week they waited at the top of the station approach road and eventually a train appeared and quickly passed on its way. A photo was taken but the loco number was blurred so Steve asked for help from the audience to identify it from any trainspotting records they might have.

*(Post-Script – the image of a page from a notebook recording observations during the week in question, seen on the “Flickr” website, confirms the loco as BR Standard Class 4, 2-6-0 No.76014)*

**Andrew Tucker** – Andrew explained that in addition to taking photos he also tape recorded trains during the final days of steam. He played some sound clips from a trip from Bath Green Park to Evercreech in 1964. Andrew also displayed a paving brick recovered from the platforms at Evercreech New station.

**Brian Neill** – Brian had on display a manufacturers plate from one of the Sentinel locomotives based at Radstock and he told us more about it.

**Simon Kennedy** and **Terry Fowler** also displayed photographs and railway paperwork.

The second half of our meeting took the form of a presentation by **Roy Kethro**, entitled “**In Control**” in which he related stories of his time as a Maintenance Controller, firstly under British Rail, then latterly with First Great Western.

Roy recalled in an amusing manner various problems which had occurred with the fleet of High Speed Trains (HSTs) and his attempts to get things moving again, which on one occasion involved talking the driver through a series of fault-finding procedures.

On a serious note, Roy also reminded us that the unexpected can and does occur from time to time when he explained what happened when the Ufton Nervet Level Crossing tragedy occurred, causing the whole tone of the shift to switch from jovial to deadly serious.

# MEMORIES OF THE S&D – SOUNDS OF ‘64

by **Andrew Tucker**

I was brought up in Chippenham within sight and sound of the Great Western Railway (by then of course the Western Region of British Railways). As a young teenager I spent a lot of my time at the station along with like-minded friends. Almost all of them had cameras but I was the only one to also have a tape recorder. It was a small portable reel to reel Philips machine which made mono recordings at 1.88 inches per second. This was a very slow speed so overall the sound quality was never going to be great.

As well as visiting the station most evenings we also travelled further afield at weekends and I would often take the tape recorder with me. Swindon was a favourite destination particularly for a Sunday morning tour of the works. I can also recall going to Bristol, Gloucester, Westbury and Yeovil. During the half term holiday in February 1964 a friend, Edward Harris, and I decided to take a trip down the Somerset & Dorset line to Bournemouth.

We took the train to Bath Spa and walked across to Green Park station. Unfortunately we found that we could not afford to make the whole journey – possibly the booking clerk would not accept us as half fares (we were coming up to 15 years old at the time). We therefore purchased two day returns to Evercreech Junction.

This was the first time that I had been inside Green Park station and there was certainly something ‘different’ about it. A lofty terminus, where the sound of footsteps on the floorboarding to the concourse echoed off the elegantly arched overall roof. This roof seemed to cover a lot of tracks but there were just two platforms. We of course left from the S&D platform on a local train heading for Templecombe.

The tape recorder was ready and the microphone held up to the open window and wrapped with a hankie to reduce the wind noise. Unfortunately any notes I may have made at the time have not survived so there are only occasional brief comments on the recordings giving loco numbers or the locations along the line. It was clearly a lightweight train as there is no heavy working recorded, although it does sound like some spirited running in places between the frequent stops. Alighting from the train we spent an hour or so at Evercreech Junction before setting off on the return journey.

On the tape I refer to a standard class 5 no. 73050 departing Evercreech Junction although whether this was heading north or south is not clear. The departure from Evercreech New on a gradient of 1 in 50 (northbound) is also noted. On the way back we broke our journey at Radstock before catching the next train on into Bath. From Radstock I know the identity of the loco we were travelling behind as on the recording I say ‘this is 44422 leaving Wellow’ (this particular 4F has been preserved and normally resides at Peak Rail).

For our ‘Members Memories of the S&D’ at the January meeting Martin Zouch kindly connected up my music centre to the Old Courtroom’s sound system so that everyone could hear a few excerpts of the recordings made back in 1964. The S&D closed in March 1966 but by some remarkable twists of fate just under 10 years later, at Christmas 1975, Jacky and I moved into a bungalow adjacent to the site of the former Evercreech New station. The trains had long gone but some sounds live on in my collection of tapes.

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## THE REGIONAL RAILWAYS STORY

by **Alex Green**

**9 February**

Our speaker on the 9th February was Alex Green and his subject was ‘The Regional Railways Story’. Like his brother Chris Green (who spoke to us in 2014), Alex had pursued a railway career, rising to become the Director of Operations with Regional Railways NorthWest before retiring at the onset of privatisation in 1994.

Alex began his presentation by stating, by way of background, that the railways’ share of passenger traffic had fallen from 17% of journeys in 1952 to 6% some 30 years later. The Beeching era had led to the closure of many lines and of some 4,000 stations but a major change began in 1982 with the abolition of the traditional regions and the setting up of five business sectors (InterCity, Network SouthEast, Provincial, Freight and Parcels) and attempts to concentrate on the profit-making activities on BR.

Alex then moved to the new Scotrail organisation as a junior manager and there he witnessed many developments, including the adoption of the RETB (radio-controlled electronic tokenless block) system which he felt proved to be a

life-saver as far as many of the more remote lines in Scotland were concerned.

In 1986 Alex transferred to another of the Provincial Railways group, Midland Lines (Centro) and three years later to Provincial Railways NorthWest. In 1990 the Provincial Railways were again reorganised into five Regional Railway undertakings and, during the last years before privatisation, there was a period of expansion. New rolling stock was introduced and a start was made in reopening closed lines and stations. Alex considered that this was due to the initiative of three BR Chairmen, Bob Reid (I), John Welsby and Bob Reid (II). He also referred to the work of Sidney Newby during his time as Managing Director of Provincial Railways.

At the time of setting up the five Regional Railways (Central, NorthEast, NorthWest, ScotRail and South Wales/West), they covered 53% of the nation's route miles and accounted for 48% of passenger train miles.

Alex illustrated many of the new DMU and EMU classes introduced during the Provincial/Regional Railways era and pointed out that the Class 158 DMU represented the first air-conditioned trains for secondary services. Over the years 1982 - 1994 , some 1,400 new vehicles were built, seven lines were reopened and 157 stations were reopened or newly built.

In the final part of his talk, Alex looked at some of the developments which had taken place in the two decades since privatisation and pointed out that the level of rail passenger usage in Britain was now the highest ever, exceeding the previous peak during the 1920s.

A vote of thanks to Alex for a fascinating account of an aspect of recent railway history and the politics behind it was given by Jim Allwood.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

Please welcome the following who have recently joined:

**Malcolm Barton** (Witham Friary)    **Andrew Linham** (Radstock)

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## REMEMBERING THE RAILWAY AT EVERCREECH

### Somerset & Dorset Railway Closure 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration

by Andrew Tucker

5 March

An exhibition staged in Evercreech's village hall on the 5<sup>th</sup> March to commemorate a very sad day in the village's history proved to be an outstanding success. Almost 500 people of all ages packed the village hall throughout the day, to remember and to learn about one of the most distinctive and best loved railways in England: The Somerset and Dorset Railway.

The railway, which pursued a mountainous course over the Mendips from Bath Green Park station – now Sainsbury's – via the collieries of Radstock and Midsomer Norton to a summit of over 800 feet near Masbury, and a steep descent through Shepton Mallet to Evercreech Junction, was justly famous. Whilst its southern stretches through to Bournemouth were very scenic, it was the "Bath Extension" from Evercreech that provided the spectacle of steam locomotives furiously attacking steep gradients with heavy trains that brought the "S&D" such fame and affection.

Many of the older generation recalled locomotives showering their trains and the landscape with red hot coals and shaking the earth with the thunder of their exhausts. Younger visitors were fascinated by the beautifully recreated models of Evercreech New and Burnham-on-Sea stations, films, photographs, memorabilia, paintings of the S&D and the activities of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust. A considerable number of retired S&D staff visited the exhibition, as well as descendants of long departed drivers, firemen, station and signalling staff.

In addition, visitors were able to travel by vintage bus to visit Cole Station; beautifully conserved, it is now a private residence. Additional parking was provided at the Bath & West Showground, where the steam hauled miniature railway was also in operation.

"The whole day was a great success with many more visitors than I expected" said delighted organiser Andrew Tucker. "I think quite a number of younger villagers were surprised that Evercreech Junction and Evercreech New stations were so well known by people from far and wide, and that the S&D was held in such esteem by people who knew it".

Some of the photographs on display showed the crowds of people who thronged the S&D fifty years ago making their final journeys along the branch from Evercreech Junction to Highbridge and then the spectacular last train, the enthusiasts special, up over the Mendips from Bath.

### 2016 PROGRAMME

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

|          |                                     |             |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| 12 April | Rail Resurgence in the West Country | Nigel Bray  |
| 10 May   | Swindon Works: Part II              | Brian Arman |

A preview of next season's programme will be on the noticeboard at our May meeting.

### RAILWELLS

Our annual model railway exhibition is now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year!  
Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 August in Wells Town Hall. More details in the next Newsletter.

## **S & D – THE END OF THE LINE**

**by Bob Bunyar and Mike Beale**

**8 March**

At the meeting held at Wells Town Hall on 8th March, the Fraternity continued its commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the closure of the Somerset & Dorset Railway with a double-feature given by Bob Bunyar and Mike Beale of the S&D Railway Trust.

Bob started by summarising the history of the last years of the line, beginning with the closure of the Wells, Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea branches between 1951 and 1954. Long-distance trains, including 'The Pines Express' were diverted to other routes in 1962 and all freight traffic was withdrawn two years later. Then British Railways announced its intention to close the whole line, from Bath to Broadstone and from Evercreech Junction to Highbridge, from the 3rd January 1966 but problems with the provision of replacement bus services resulted in a two-month deferment, with the final special trains running over the weekend of 5th/6th March. Bob then illustrated with slides the whole route during its last few years.

The second half of the evening took the form of a computer-based presentation by Mike Beale. This covered in some detail the last trains to run over the line and went on to illustrate subsequent developments, starting with the establishment of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust (then known as the Somerset & Dorset Circle) in 1966. An abortive attempt to establish a base at Radstock in the early 1970s was followed by the Trust being able to centre its activities at Washford on the West Somerset Railway in 1975.

Other preservation schemes followed, based at Midsomer Norton and Shillingstone whilst a length of the trackbed has been used by the narrow gauge line of the Gartell Railway near Henstridge. The conversion of lengths of the line into footpaths and cycle tracks has also taken place, including the North Dorset Trailway, Colliers Way (at Radstock) and the Two Tunnels Project at Bath.

The Somerset & Dorset continues to attract much interest, partly due to its character, its interesting history and because it was operated by steam locomotives to the very end.

A vote of thanks to Bob and Mike for a truly nostalgic evening was given by Chris Challis.

### **AND FINALLY:**

#### **ANOTHER NAUGHTY BOY – Friday 21 July 1876**

William Morgan of Easton, a lad of 10 years was charged with maliciously placing stones on the rails of the Bristol & Exeter Railway.

It appears that the 4pm train from Yatton was approaching through Easton when the driver observed some stones on the rails and immediately slackened speed but was unable to stop the train before it went over them. The stones were five or six inches in diameter. The guard rail knocked off some and the engine crushed the others. The train consisted of the engine and four passenger carriages. The prisoner was seen in the neighbourhood of the stones by witnesses. Information was given to the police and upon being charged the prisoner admitted to the actions.

He was sent to 14 days gaol, 12 strikes with a birch rod and five years at a reformatory.

(Kindly supplied by Colin Price)