

Established 1968

WELLS

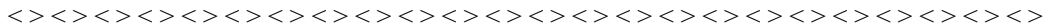
RAILWAY

FRATERNITY

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www.railwells.com

Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter.
Your contributions for future editions are welcome;
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Members and Guests of Wells Railway Fraternity at Merehead during our visit to Mendip Rail on Sunday 1 October

RAILWELLS – 40 EXHIBITIONS

by Chris Challis – 12 September

To mark the 40th anniversary of our Railwells model railway exhibition Chris Challis gave an illustrated talk on the history of the show. He explained that his initial involvement had been as a trader with the Challis Models and Hobbies stand and then for 35 years as exhibition manager.

To set the scene Chris showed us a set of photographs of this year's show starting with the queues at the door and then going around the Town Hall room by room. Just inside the entrance we had his wife Pat's *Mariazellerbahn* H0e Austrian narrow gauge layout. Now 38 years old it illustrates the sort of modelling standards that were being achieved at the time of the first Railwells. Other highlights this year were *Sidmouth* and *Seaton*, both P4 layouts in the Old Courtroom, *Hebble Vale* (EM), *Trerice* (P4) and *Happisburgh Goods* (0) in the main hall. Chris pointed out that this last layout was from The Model Railway Club and that there was a link with the early days of Railwells as one of the founders, Maurice Shaw, had at one time been chairman of The MRC. Another layout *St Petroc* (1) also had echoes of Maurice's interest in gauge 1. Something rather different in the Indictment Room was Mike Walshaws's *Scratchy Bottom*, a model based on the whimsical creations of Rowland Emmett. This again was an echo of the past as Chris recalled Emmett models made by Colin Binnie that appeared at Railwells some years ago. Various demonstrators and traders were also featured together with a shot of the 60+ people from the show enjoying the Saturday evening meal at the Britannia Inn. We were also reminded that the Mayor, Councillor John North, presented a cheque for £600.00 on our behalf to David Maidment of the Railway Children.

Going back to the very first Railwells in 1978 Chris showed us the poster for that exhibition included the familiar silhouette of a Lynton and Barnstaple loco. This image is still used as the Fraternity logo but it is not known why it was chosen in those early days. Back then the attendance was 1500 which is very good indeed for a one day exhibition. Reverend Awdry, the author of the Thomas the Tank Engine books, brought a layout in 1979 and in two subsequent years and this attracted young families. After a less successful show in 1983 Chris Challis and Neil Kinnison took on the management of Railwells. After a few years Chris continued the management on his own and the exhibition gradually became known for finescale modelling; *Winchester Chesil* and *Bodmin* were good examples in 1992. *Clutton* in P4 by Tim Venton had its first ever outing at Railwells and Chris disclosed that in 2018 the layout will be shown for the very last time at Railwells before it is retired.

The year 2000 was a watershed for railway modelling. To compete with other manufacturers such as Bachmann, Hornby closed their Margate factory and transferred production to the far east. The first steam locomotive to be produced in China for Hornby was the rebuilt Merchant Navy. The first production samples were flown into the UK and Chris managed to get one example to display at Railwells. Everyone who saw it agreed that it looked an excellent model and it also ran very well. The sort of modelling standards achieved by only a few scratch builders were now available to all. In fact the show that year could be said to cover over 100 years of modelling as someone brought in a paraffin fired 'dribbler' (so called because of the mess it would make when running on the floor).

RAILWELLS – 40 EXHIBITIONS - continued

Railwells regularly includes Scalefour South West and in recent years there have been several models exhibited that were built to enter the 18.83 Challenge. This called for layouts to be built in an area not more than 18.83 square feet. In 2016 Chris arranged for the exhibition to have a Somerset & Dorset Railway theme to mark the 50th anniversary of the closure of the S&D. Another unusual feature last year was that Charlie Taylor, of BBC Radio Somerset, broadcast his Saturday morning show from the Exhibition. A vote of thanks was given by Andrew Tucker.

Following Steve Flint's talk later in the evening Chris showed us an 8 minute video of the P4 layout *Aberhafren* recorded at Railwells some years ago. He described the scene to us and explained that when exhibited this extensive model needed to be accompanied by 10 operators!

RAILWAY MODELLING – 40 YEARS OF CHANGE

by Steve Flint – 12 September

Following the break Chris introduced Steve Flint who is the Editor of Railway Modeller magazine. Steve told us that he has been an enthusiast since the late 1960s. As a member of the Hull Model Railway Society he had been involved in building both 00 and EM gauge layouts. In the 1980s his interest in railway modelling had developed into a part time job taking photographs of models and writing articles for magazines. After taking a redundancy package from British Gas, Steve was able to start his own small photography and publicity business. He then became the 'northern contributor' for Railway Modeller and Continental Modeller and then took over as editor of Railway Modeller when the previous incumbent, John Brewer, retired.

Looking back at the history of the magazine Steve explained that the Railway Modeller was first published in 1949. After a slightly uncertain start the publishers, Ian Allan, sold the title to Peco who were, and remain, manufacturers of model railway equipment. This year has seen the 800th edition of the magazine and it is number one for sales in this field. To consider the changes in the hobby over the last forty years Steve said that he would be looking at three key areas: ready-to-run locos and stock, controls and kit/scratch building. To illustrate the points he had with him a box of 'props'.

In the mid-1970s Hornby were still the major player amongst the manufacturers of 00 gauge model railway equipment but their dominance had been challenged by the likes of Airfix and Mainline in this country and Lima from Italy. In N-gauge Graham Farish were the main producer. There was little in the way of ready to run stock in 0 gauge. Model railway clubs and exhibitions were proliferating and things looked good for the hobby until 1979 when the Thatcher government's deflationary policies affected a lot of manufacturers. In 1980 there was a management buy-out at Hornby and Mainline and Airfix both went out of business. Some of their tooling went to other companies such as Dapol and Bachmann Branchline emerged as a new force in the industry. As Chris mentioned, to compete Hornby moved their production to the Far East and their first new locomotive was the Merchant Navy. A step change in providing more accurate and finely detailed models that also ran very well. Steve handed round two Hornby models of the SR M7 0-4-4T. The current model was correctly proportioned and looked like a miniature version of the real locomotive. By contrast the 1970s version was more akin to a toy.

RAILWAY MODELLING – 40 YEARS OF CHANGE - continued

In the 1990s Graham Farish sold out to Bachmann and the Danish manufacturer, Heljan, started producing 00 gauge models of British prototypes. Smaller firms took the opportunity to employ computer-aided design and had their models produced in China. Ready to run 0-gauge models also started to appear.

Traditionally model railway controls provide a means of varying the voltage to the track so that the speed of the locomotive can be varied. Reversing the polarity of the DC supply changes the direction that the loco runs. Hammant and Morgan were a major player in this field in the 1970s and they became part of Hornby only to be lost during the changes to the company in 1980. A little later Hornby became a pioneering manufacturer of DCC (digital command control) although this was ahead of its time. Another DCC system introduced by ZTC in 1994 was more successful but the main stream manufacturers took about 10 years to adopt DCC and provide lights and sound effects.

For those wanting a model loco that was not produced ready to run in the 1970s then the choice would have been to scratchbuild or make one of the whitemetal kits from the likes of Wills or Nucastr. Etched brass and nickel silver kits then emerged as a better medium for more accurate models and recently 3D printing can be used for short runs. Plastic Injection mouldings remain the preferred medium for rolling stock kits. In times past scenery was created with dyed sawdust, lichen and 'bottle brush' trees. Now we have hi-tech solutions such as static grass applicators. Peco, the most popular track system, was for many years made to a hybrid 00/H0 standard but, with competition from others such as C&L, a new system has been introduced which is closer to the prototype.

A vote of thanks was given by Roy Kethro.

VISIT TO MENDIP RAIL

by Andrew Tucker – 1 October

Our group of 24 members and guests met under cloudy skies at the Somerset Earth Science Centre. This interesting building on the edge of a flooded clay pit at Stoke St Michael is an educational facility funded by the local quarry industry. Robin Jacobs of Mendip Rail greeted us and after a cuppa we donned our high-vis and hard hats before boarding the two mini-buses, driven by Dave and Martin, two senior managers from Whatley quarry. Both vehicles went in to Aggregate Industries Torr Works (Yeoman's Merehead quarry) and up to the viewing area at the north end. From the original ground level the immense size of the quarry was not immediately obvious until we picked out things like a normal sized lorry which looked very small. We were joined by Bob Smith, the acting manager, who told us production is currently five million tonnes per annum and 75% of this leaves the site by rail. Blasting is carried out most days and the innovative 'walking' crusher can process three thousand tonnes of stone per hour. Planning Permission has been granted for quarrying to continue to 2040 by which time the excavation will be twice its present depth (and only a few metres above sea level). There has to be constant pumping to control the inrush of ground water. When quarrying finishes it is likely that the quarry will become a water sports and recreation area.

VISIT TO MENDIP RAIL - continued

On leaving Torr Works we split into two groups; one minibus went across the other side of the A361 to Mendip Rail's Merehead depot. The second minibus carried on to Hanson's Whatley quarry where we called in to see MRL's compact servicing facility. On shed were 59102 *Village of Chantry* in Hanson's livery and 59203 in DB Schenker red. This latter locomotive is one of the former National Power class 59s. Being Sunday there were no rail movements in progress and we were able to cross the tracks and climb up into the cab of no. 120 *Kenneth John Witcombe*, the American switcher. This loco normally works all shunting movements within the quarry. If it is not available then a pair of ex-BR class 08 0-6-0s do the job.

Moving on into the quarry proper we saw the loading sidings and went in to the building that houses the primary crushers. These machines can accept blocks of stone up to the size of a large 'fridge and crush it down to 40mm – the jaws have to be replaced every month. Secondary crushers then reduce the stone to the size of aggregate required. Dave Searle explained that for the 10 and 20mm material being supplied for concrete manufacture at the new Hinckley Point power station, there is a particularly demanding specification for clean stone accurately graded and a separate handling facility has been built for this contract. At the moment supplies are delivered by road but it is intended that rail will be used as far as Avonmouth and then by barge to the site. MRL have both hopper and box wagons in their fleet but there can be problems with residue left in the box type contaminating the next load. Coming out of the quarry we stopped at the new lorry park where in addition to the road fleet, there were off-road dump trucks capable of carrying a hundred tonnes in one load.

Leaving Whatley we changed places with the other group and made our visit to MRL. The sidings at Merehead depot were full of wagons and Robin Jacobs took us on quite a long walk around the end of these lines of vehicles to reach the workshops. Outside there were five class 59s and Yeoman's U S switcher no. 44. Going into the building we found 59004 *Paul A Hammond* and 59202 *Allan Meadows Taylor* standing over the inspection pit. We were able to go into the cab of 59004 along with MRL fitter Tim Powell. He showed us the main controls and then took us through the narrow engine room passageway to the other cab. Tim explained how the standard General Motors design had been modified for use in the UK and that some features, such as the 2-stroke diesel engine, are unusual here. With the original batch of locos now over thirty years old the technology is now dated but still reliable. Going outside we were then lucky enough to have a short cab ride in 59001 *Yeoman Endeavour*.

On our return to the Earth Science Centre we were treated to some light refreshments which nicely rounded off our visit. Grateful thanks were given to Robin, Dave and Martin together with everyone else who helped make the visit so informative and enjoyable. Fortunately the weather stayed dry!

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Thank you to all those who have renewed their subscriptions for the 2017–2018 season. The Membership Secretary, Roy Kethro will be in attendance as usual at the next meeting on 14 November, and those who have yet to renew will have the opportunity to do so then.



Class 59 No.59001 “YEOMAN ENDEAVOR” at Merehead.

Another photo taken by Andrew Tucker during our visit to Mendip Rail.

RESTORING A SENTINEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

by Andy Chapman – 10 October

Our speaker on the 10th October was Andy Chapman and we were treated to an excellent presentation on **Restoring a Sentinel steam locomotive**. The locomotive in question was No.7109 'JOYCE', a popular resident at the Somerset & Dorset Heritage Trust's site at Midsomer Norton. *Joyce* was built in 1927 by the Sentinel Waggon Works - a company better known for the large number of steam road vehicles it produced at its Shrewsbury-based works up until the 1930s. During the 1920s the company applied its road vehicle technology in developing an unorthodox but highly efficient design of shunting locomotive as well as building a number of steam railcars. The shunter incorporated a vertical superheated water-tube boiler working at the surprisingly high pressure of 275 lbs/sq.in, with an advanced form of 'engine' adapted from a design used in one of the company's steam lorries; this used cams and variable valve timing instead of the usual valve gear whilst the wheels were driven via gears and chains. The result was a compact, powerful small steam shunting locomotive, ideally suited for one-man operation. This, together with a modest fuel consumption offered a most economic unit ideally suited for many industrial railway systems. Over the years, about 600 steam locomotives were built by Sentinel with several variations on the basic design and to a variety of gauges.

Most Sentinel shunters were 4-wheeled with a single 'engine' unit, although a more powerful 6-wheeled version was tried in the 1930s but was not particularly successful. No.7109 was, however, the prototype of a 200 hp double-engined version and was purchased by Croydon Gas Works, named *Joyce* after the chairman's daughter and worked there for 32 years - until 1960. After lying derelict for some years, it was acquired for preservation in 1968 and then had a succession of owners and homes (including Bressingham and Carnforth) before arriving at Midsomer Norton in 1998. It was then bought by a syndicate of S&DRHT members in 2004. Finally, in 2010 Andy and Nigel Dickinson acquired *Joyce* with the serious intention of restoring the locomotive to working condition. With his extensive engineering experience, Andy accepted the challenge with determination and, after a cosmetic repaint, the work of virtually rebuilding the locomotive began in earnest. As the boiler was based on road vehicle principles, Andy acknowledged the considerable help he had received from Mendip Steam Restoration of Stoke St Michael.

Andy then described in some detail the work in restoring the various components, most of which differed considerably from those of a conventional steam locomotive. We were intrigued by the design of the vertical boiler and the two transversely mounted steam 'engines' with their cam-operated variable valve timing - all illustrated with a series of excellent photographs.

Restoration was completed in 2016 and the fire was lit on the 18th February, the locomotive moving under its own power for the first time in over 55 years. The official launch of the restored shunter took place on the 9th July, when it was re-christened *Joyce* by Paul Atterbury of 'Antiques Road Show' fame. Finally, in November 2016 *Joyce* was authorised to haul passenger trains over the relaid track from Midsomer Norton towards Chilcompton. In that month also, Andy became its sole owner.

Only eight of the 200 hp double-engine design were built, the next two for the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway - for use at Radstock (where there was a severe height restriction in the sidings) - followed by two for the LNER for use on the Wisbech & Upwell Tramway. The final three were built for the 5'3" gauge Sao Paulo Railway in Brazil. *Joyce* is the only standard gauge survivor although there are others in Brazil.

RESTORING A SENTINEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE - continued

Andy gave a brief survey of developments at Midsomer Norton from the relaying of the first track in 2002/03 and also gave an illustrated comprehensive survey of surviving Sentinels in Britain and elsewhere. He concluded his presentation with a short film of *Joyce* hauling passenger trains at Midsomer Norton, including one in tandem with ex-LMS 0-6-0T No. 47506 - "the first double-header on the S&D for 50 years!".

A most enjoyable and informative evening ended with a vote of thanks to Andy, given by Brian Neill.

2017 - 2018 PROGRAMME

14 November	Hill Railways in Germany, Switzerland and India	Alex Green
12 December	AGM <i>followed by</i> Quiz – set by last year's winner:	John Uncles
2018		
<u>50th Anniversary Year</u>		
9 January	Members Films and Photos from the 1960s	Andrew Linham and John Reakes
13 February	Moving London Forward - Crossrail	Patrick Griffin
13 March	Anniversary Meeting – 50 years of WRF <i>followed by</i> Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Extension Plans	David Edwards
10 April	The Barry Scrapyard Story	Roger Hardingham
8 May	Modernisation to Privatisation, 1968 - 1997	John Chalcraft
12 June	Swindon Works – Part IV at STEAM Swindon <i>A day at the former Works – Coach leaves Wells Bus Station 8.30am</i>	Brian Arman

FROM THE CHAIRMAN - Colin Price

Members that have attended the two meetings this year will have noticed that we have moved our venue up into the Ballroom. This is at the request of the Town Hall Manager.

It was suggested at the beginning of last year's meetings that we ought to move as we were coming to the limit of the Old Court Room and that the coffee station might be a health and safety issue with regard to all the young dancers filling up the Town Hall. We addressed the issues and continued using that room.

This year we said we would move on a trial basis, the rent being the same. We did not realise that we would share with the dancing class at the back of the hall, although they finish at 7.00.

In the Court Room we set up as we saw fit, but now we are restricted to starting at 7.00. This gives us little time to make sure everything is in place and that ***any early arrivals will have to wait in the foyer and make their way up at 7.00.*** There is a lift on the left hand side for the less able.

I hope this, although not convenient, arrangement will work in the future and the coffee station and stall works at the back of the hall, bearing in mind that there is more circulating area. Please pass your views to either myself or one of the committee so we can assess the new arrangements.

AND FINALLY :

Did you know that the only place in Britain where you can see elephants through the window of a standard gauge railway carriage is on the Severn Valley Railway, as you pass the West Midland Safari Park, between Kidderminster and Bewdley.