



# Welcome to Newsletter No.216

Containing the usual mix of meeting reports and interesting contributions from our members.

[www.railwells.com](http://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

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## 2026 - 2027 Programme

All talks take place in Wells Town Hall, on the second Tuesday of the month.

Meet from 7.00 pm onwards for a 7.30 start.

For more details, contact Andrew Tucker 01749 830695.

## 2026

- |             |   |                                                                                                             |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8-9 August  | - | Railwells Model Railway Exhibition - 10.30 – 5.00 Sat, 10.00 – 4.00 Sun                                     |
| 8 September | - | Preserving, Maintaining and Operating Three Western Class Locomotives<br><i>Paul Finch and Peter Bamber</i> |
| 13 October  | - | The Golden Age of Steam – <i>David Parker (Film Director)</i>                                               |
| 10 November | - | Railways to the South: Why some were and some weren't? - <i>Steph Gillett</i>                               |
| 8 December  | - | AGM and Quiz, <i>set by last year's winner, Andy Ball</i>                                                   |

## 2027

- |            |   |                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 January | - | Members' Talks<br>Ex-LNER 3-cylinder 0-6-0s – <i>John Boxall</i><br>Railway Slides from the late David Fisher's collection – <i>Richard Blunden</i> |
| 9 February | - | The Watercress Line Through Time – <i>followed by</i><br>Track Layout and Railway Systems Interface – <i>Matthew Savastano</i>                      |
| 9 March    | - | The Rail Accident Investigation Branch – <i>Richard Harrington</i>                                                                                  |
| 13 April   | - | Travels with my Camera –<br>a Fifty Year Odyssey of Railway Photography – <i>Steve Flint</i>                                                        |
| 11 May     | - | Broad Gauge Journey – Part 2 – <i>Brian Arman</i>                                                                                                   |

John Baxter from the Somerset and Dorset Railway Heritage Trust at Midsomer Norton gave a presentation titled “Every Picture Tells a Story”, an exploration of photographs old and new and the stories behind the pictures.

His journey started at the age of around 6 or 7 years with an image of Huntingdon station on the East Coast Main Line where on his first trainspotting outing, he saw A4 Pacifics; world speed record holder Mallard, and Union of South Africa. The sound of their whistles shrieking along the whole length of the platform caused him to wrap his arms around one of the canopy stanchions. John then showed a photograph twenty years on restaging the event. Further photographs were the subject of interesting tales, only a few of which are summarised below.

Having relocated to the South West, when working for Wiltshire County Council he was instructed to burn the contents of five large skips containing copies of the maps from the 1840’s and 50’s sent to the landowners over whose land the railways were to be built. However, he was able to gain permission to save around 200 of the ink drawn and coloured maps for preservation and distribution to interested parties.

John showed a photograph of the last remaining signal at Midsomer Norton after the closure of the S&DJR in 1966 which was subsequently stolen. Local policeman Bob Bunyar was deputed to investigate but was unable to find it or the culprits. A couple of years ago a lady in Sussex contacted the Trust on behalf of her late husband offering the signal back. The offer was refused as a replacement had been installed.

Images of the original now demolished original signal box at Midsomer Norton and its replica now in place led a visiting retired S&D engine driver to comment on how well preserved it was, not realising that it was actually an accurate replica. Although the signal box and greenhouse were demolished the station building and goods shed were saved at the very last minute when the demolition gang were halted because the site had been bought by the local secondary school as an outdoor pursuit centre. The boys rebuilt some of the demolished signal box brickwork, every brick of which had been found dumped in the space between the platforms, but sadly their brick laying skills were lacking and the brickwork had to be demolished again and then rebuilt by a skilled bricklayer who cleaned all the adhering mortar from the bricks before commencing reconstruction.

An image of Class 9F 2-10-0 92220 Evening Star was also used to settle a discussion on whether C1 9Fs ever pulled three coach trains on the S&D, something the S&D will be able to recreate when their own C1 9F 92207 is finally restored to working order.

A photograph of the Great Western Railway and Midland Railway cast iron “do not trespass on the line and the attendant penalties” notice in the MSN museum which had no direct relevance to the S&D was explained. It had been acquired by the man in the electrical shop adjacent to the GWR and S&DJR level crossings in Radstock from the S&D demolition train. It transpired that the same wagons had previously been used at Sharpness docks and the sign had been left in the bottom of a wagon.

## Every Picture Tells a Story – *continued*

An image showed the siding at Holt Junction on which the Royal Train was stabled overnight when the then young Prince Charles was visiting the West Country. About four miles away lived a certain Camilla Shand. A blonde lady used to arrive.....

Images of Farleigh Down sidings between Box and Bathampton illustrated wagons on the secret electric narrow-gauge railway used to supply a large underground ammunition dump below the Down being loaded from standard gauge wagons. If a German bomb had penetrated the Down, the eastern side of Bath would have been demolished!

An image of Mangotsfield Junction station was shown with the explanation that Arnold Ridley, of Dad's Army fame, used it as the inspiration for his play the Ghost Train, having been there in fog so thick that he could hear the trains passing through but not see them.

A photograph of the closed Wellow station, then owned by the artist Peter Blake, included in it an image of the World Heavyweight Champion boxer Sonny Liston. This was a wax effigy from Madam Tussauds which Blake used when designing the cover of the Beatles album “Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.

A final image of a DMU pulling a single milk tanker probably to Salisbury for onward conveyance to London had been used to settle a discussion as to whether this was a working that ever happened.

The presentation was extremely well received with enthusiastic applause from the Fraternity audience.

*(Resume by Andy Ball).*

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## Broad Gauge Journey Revisited – *by Brian Arman*

**Tuesday 12 May**

Fraternity Member Canon Revd. Brian Arman made his 26<sup>th</sup> presentation to the Fraternity at its May meeting. This year he took us on an illustrated journey through both miles and time along the GWR main line from Paddington towards Bristol with a diversion to Gloucester.

The GWR was first proposed by merchants in Bristol, at that time the principal port for transatlantic trade. The Parliamentary Bill was tabled in 1835. The Railway was engineered as a high-speed railway by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and was constructed from both Bristol and London, to a standard which by the 1880's allowed trains to cover the 53 miles from Paddington to Didcot in 47 minutes compared with 38 minutes today. The Bristol end of the line proving the most difficult and expensive with the section to Bath requiring the excavation of seven tunnels.

The first slide shown was of IKB's steam ship the Great Eastern leaving Deptford. It was probably the last photograph taken of him as he died in September 1859

The original plan was for the railway to terminate at Euston but in the event, it went to the first station at Paddington which had separate arrival and departure sides with a roadway between them, a road being built to reach the City of London.

## **Broad Gauge Journey Revisited – *continued***

Paddington station opened in 1839 with 7'  $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge tracks. The first train departed for Taplow as the famous shallow arched bridge at Maidenhead had not yet been completed. The initial images shown were copies of lithographs and drawings illustrating the original Paddington station. The first actual photograph shown was taken in 1852-3 depicting a typical broad gauge six-wheel carriage.

The first locomotives were small and lightweight with 10' diameter driving wheels but proved to be badly underpowered. The appointment of the 20-year-old Daniel Gooch as Locomotive Superintendent, who came from a very experienced engineering family, saw the introduction of new locomotives whose design had been influenced by George Stephenson. A lithograph illustrated "Ganymede" of the Firefly class which were regarded as the most successful engines in the world with sixty-two being built.

The original Paddington station was demolished in 1852 and replaced with a new one on the site of the current one and as we travelled down the line from Paddington, we moved in both miles and time. The copious images projected showed the development of both the infrastructure and the rolling stock of the Great Western Railway. Pictures illustrated the Broad-Gauge baulk road trackwork which featured longitudinal wooden support for the rails with widely spaced transverse spacers, the mixed gauge track tracks which accommodated both broad and standard gauges. In 1889 a decision was made to abandon the Broad Gauge and to adopt standard 4'  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge which all the other British mainline railways used. The last broad-gauge train to run was the Cornishman on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1892.

The locomotives illustrated included a 2-2-2 Vulcan tender engine built in 1837 at the Vulcan Foundry in Newton-le-Willows and later rebuilt as a Back Tank engine, the very successful Firefly class passenger engines and small 0-6-0 tender goods engines. The express passenger engines having 8' diameter wheels which allowed the speed while minimising the wear on the moving components. The oldest photograph shown was from 1848 illustrating The Javelin and Polar Star engines which were coke burners with Haycock fireboxes.

The early engines did have problems with the occurrence of several boiler explosions. The Salter Safety Valves on "Perseus" at Westbourne Park shed were screwed down which allowed the boiler pressure to increase to an excessive level. Previously two Firefly boilers had exploded, for which Gooch was reprimanded by the Board of Trade, caused by eggshell thin boiler plating where grooving had occurred.

An interesting diversion was an image of Fowlers Ghost, a broad-gauge steam engine specifically designed to create no smoke for operation in the tunnels of the Metropolitan Line. As a 2-4-0 tender engine it was designed to run conventionally when in open air but when underground the heat required to boil the water in the boiler was to come from a large number of firebricks in a combustion chamber between the fire box and the boiler; exhaust steam being condensed and returned to the boiler. Unsurprisingly it was proved to be a failure on its first outing, a case of wishful thinking overtaking practicality. C Hamilton Ellis reporting that it produced little smoke but little steam as well.

As is usual with Brian's presentations the talk was lavishly illustrated and full of historical information of the which the above is only a brief summary. The enthusiastic applause at its conclusion showed that the audience looked forward with anticipation to the conclusion of the story next year.

*(Resume by Andy Ball).*

## Visit to the Hawking Building and the Swindon and Cricklade Railway - 10 July

- by Andrew Tucker

Having enjoyed an early lunch en-route, 10 members and 3 guests rendezvoused at the Welcome Building just inside the entrance to the former RAF Wroughton. The 545 acre site is now the Science and Innovation Park and we were there to visit the Hawking Building. We met our guide, Alison Faraday and, after the initial introduction, we set off to follow in convoy behind her car the 1½ miles to our destination. On the way we passed several of the original aircraft hangars and one of the country's largest solar farms and before crossing the runway which is no longer in use for aircraft.

The Hawking Building has been purpose-built to store approximately 350,000 items that are part of the collections from the Science Museum Group including the National Railway Museum. The building was completed about four years ago and is impressively large outside and even more so inside. The temperature and humidity-controlled environment was very welcome on this very hot day.



After donning the customary hi-viz Alison led us in to the main 'grid'. This is the area for storing large exhibits and is marked out in a numbered grid for identification. Each item also has a label attached with brief details but there are no details – it is principally a store, not a display area. Fortunately, Alison had information with her and she was able to provide more information. Items in the first aisles were mainly road vehicles from the earliest days of road through to the latest innovations. The aim is to conserve items in the condition that they are received and not to restore them. One project in hand at the moment is to remove or make safe asbestos from the collection. There is industrial racking at the sides and far end of the grid for all sorts of smaller items such as bicycles, motor bikes (including an early steam driven model), ship models in glass cases, rockets and bombs, signal box lever frames, etc., etc. Alison said that she can never be sure what is going to be there because exhibits circulate between storage and display in the museums around the country. Making our way back through a separate space down one side of the grid we saw cabinets full of miscellaneous small items.

## Visit to the Hawking Building and the Swindon and Cricklade Rly - *continued*



*Inside the Hawking Building.*

After thanking Alison for taking us on a fascinating tour we headed back to our cars to drive approximately 7 miles north to the Swindon and Cricklade Railway.

The S&CR is Wiltshire's only standard-gauge heritage line. The Society was formed in 1978 to rebuild a section of the former Midland and South Western Junction Railway. The original route connected Cheltenham to Andover and was an important transport artery during both world wars. The line was closed completely in 1963 and demolished so that the volunteers had to start rebuilding from scratch. A light Railway order was granted in 1984. Blunsdon is the headquarters and the main focus for passengers. Waiting for us there was Nigel Willoughby who has been our contact for making the arrangements. The line is not usually open on a Friday but a school group paid a visit in the morning so they very kindly stayed open for us. We boarded the diesel multiple unit which was ticking over in the platform and headed south to Mouldson Hill, a stop at the country park of the same name. After the driver changed ends, we returned north passing through the stations at Blunsdon and Hayes Knoll and on to the present end of the line near to South Meadow Lane farm crossing. There are plans to extend a further 1¼ miles on from here to Cricklade (the current round trip is just under 5 miles). Returning to Hayes Knoll we were treated to a film in the railway's Cinema Coach. It was The Elizabethan non-stop from Kings Cross to Edinburgh by British Transport Films. Adjacent to the cinema is the main shed with a well-equipped workshop. One of the current projects is restoring one of the AC Cars railbuses that worked on the branches from Kemble to Tetbury and Cirencester. In addition to some diesel shunters and some nicely restored carriages they also have a collection of quite modern on-track plant.

## Visit to the Hawking Building and the Swindon and Cricklade Rly - *continued*



*DMU with headboard.*



*The end of the line at Cricklade.*

Making the short journey back to Blunsdon we were very pleased to find that the café was still open at 17.30 for some much-needed refreshment before the drive back to Wells.

*Photos by Andrew Tucker.*

## **Railwells 2026**

**Saturday 8 August, 10.30 to 5.00 and Sunday 9 August, 10.00 to 4.00.**

**Railwells 2026 including Scalefour Southwest and Special EM and 2mm sections.**

Scalefour Society 50th Anniversary

S Scale Society 80th Anniversary

Somerset & Dorset Railway 60 Years from closure.

Full details are available on the railwells.com website and the program will be available to download a week before the show.

**Remember, Fraternity members have free entry to the exhibition.**

As always, the organiser, Chris Challis relies on volunteer assistance throughout the show, and also setting up beforehand on the Friday afternoon and evening. If you can be of assistance, please contact Chris on 01308 897539.

### **Layouts**

**P4 Cheddar** S&DJR – Simon Challis

This layout depicts the S&D as it would have been 100 years ago

**P4 Flintcombe** S&DJR – Dorset Gang of 4

A might have been station built in Dorset set in the 1930s

**P4 Ventnor Town**

With the stock that would have been running on 6 June 1962

**P4 Allt-y-Graban Road** – Bernie Baker

Mineral line goes to the bottom end of the Central Wales line

O gauge **The Bridge** – Kevin Cartwright

Showing what can be built in O Gauge, first part of a larger layout

S Scale Arcadia – **Richard Barton**

Layout portrays a fictitious branch of Colonel Stephens' Kent & East Sussex Railway, between Robertsbridge and Tenterden

S Scale **Ewell** – Brendan Walsh

This layout is based on the railways of Essex and Suffolk

1:50 Scale 18.2mm Gauge **Port de Crozon** – Gordon and Maggie Gravett

Reseau Breton Railway in France

## **Layouts - *continued***

Broad Gauge GWR Marlborough – Andy Cundick  
Marlborough Station from 1865 to 1875

OO gauge The North Circular Mountain Railway – Geoff Trenholme  
A small layout that can be built by anyone that says I have no room

OO gauge Roundabout – Geoff Trenholme  
A very small layout

N gauge Fine Scale Churnbury – David Mace

N gauge Evercreech Junction – Shepton Mallet & District MRS  
The junction built for the Bath extension as it would have been in 1950s and 60s

*Layout list updated 12.05.2026*

## **Traders asked to attend Railwells 2026**

Bill Hudson Transport Books

Scalefour Society Stores

Dart Castings with Monty's figures and MJT

Taff Vale Models

Branchlines

Wells Railway Fraternity Book Sales, in aid of The Railway Children Charity

Attwood Aggregates attwood.aggregates@yahoo.com phone 07740381999

Roxey Mouldings

CM3 Models Selling all the tools and bits you need

Railway Children's Charity book sales

Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust

Aspire Gifts and Models

Blacksmith Models

Model Stock (ABS) A new name for ABS 4mm kits

EBMA Hobby & Craft

**Refreshments** - The Wookey Hub, Food all day

*Updated 01.05.2026*

## Demonstrations booked to attend Railwells 2026

Modelling EM and Soldering  
Steve Flint

How to Solder  
Roger Sawyer

Track Construction and Working in S7  
The Scale 7 group

2mm Association Roadshow  
Paula Martin

Modelling in 2mm scale  
Jerry Clifford

Kit and Scratch-built Wagons in 4mm  
John Chambers

Starting in P4  
Gavin Clarke

Modelling in Gauge 1  
Simon Castens

Modelling the Broad Gauge  
Ashley Phillips

*Updated 16.06.2026*

***Please note that all details of exhibitors and traders are tentative and should be confirmed prior to the date.***

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## And Finally:

Did you know that the Standedge Tunnel, 3 miles 57 chains long, through the Pennines on the route from Manchester to Huddersfield, has two unique claims to fame?

Firstly, at its peak it consisted of three separate bores. The first, a single-track tunnel, was opened by the LNWR in 1848, followed by a second single-track tunnel in 1871. To further increase capacity, a third tunnel, wide enough to accommodate double track, was opened in 1890. The double track tunnel is the one which is still in use today.

Its second claim to fame is that it is the only tunnel in the world in which water troughs were installed, the reason being that it was the only appreciable length of level track on the route.

Incidentally, running alongside it at a slightly lower level is a canal tunnel, built in 1811 as part of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.