

RAILWAY ENTHUSIASTS 2018

February 2018: A RAILWAY LIFE

Andrew gave us a talk about his sometimes-colourful career on the railway, mainly spent at Toton.

Starting in November 1970, Andrew was looking for the legendary "Job for Life", something that was still available back in those days, so applied for a clerical job with British Rail. This was as an ATI (Advanced Traffic Information) clerk, a new system that was being tried out to make sure that traffic could be individually identified. This was a little hit and miss, due to the vagaries of what passed for technology then. Training in touch-typing was seen as a necessity, so off he went with 3 other colleagues to Euston. Mistaken identity nearly got him into trouble but resulted in fortunately gaining a more advantageous post.

With yet another system being brought into play, Andrew made a move to Gloucester to steal a march on this new process. A couple of fun years, watching nuclear flasks being derailed, mysterious contents eating a wagon and flying wagons burying themselves in the ground followed, before he was propelled back to Toton.

The decline in traffic ended up with the demise of Hump Shunting before a couple of moves found him in Nottingham, on the site where Dunelm now sits. After some fortuitous moves and promotions, Andrew found himself, as privatisation took the freight railway into American hands, in an extremely busy and exacting role. He was trying to win freight back to rail from road, an uphill battle at the best of times.

As Development Manager (Central) Andrew was responsible for projects in the South-East, East Anglia and the East Midlands, before changes that for a brief time had him covering projects across most of the country! Things steadied down, very slightly as new territorial lines were drawn and eventually "Central" came to mean the East Midlands, West Midlands, all of Wales and the South West from Southampton westwards. Some projects still had him travelling the length and breadth of the country though!

Unfortunately, time ran out and there is still more to come at a later stage!

March 2018: RED FOR DANGER, part 1

Mike Johnson gave us a presentation on British railway crashes and disasters, detailing four of the most famous ones, their causes and the consequences in terms of government intervention and safety legislation.

[Click here for further details.](#)

April 2018: STEAM RAILWAY VIDEOS

The meeting was held at Gedling Road Methodist Church, where we chose from a selection of steam railway videos. The first was a review of the Swindon engines that worked the old Great Western region, from Pannier tanks to Kings, Castles and Manors, and all from the perspective of the enginemen and firemen that worked with them.

We then watched a collection of scenes from the life in preservation of Princess Margaret Rose, saved from being a stationary children's amusement at a Butlin's holiday camp to full restoration and based at Midland Railway, Butterley.

We also discussed future meetings which include a trip to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, and a return trip to Skegness, to experience it in the Summer season.

May 2018: ECCLESBOURNE VALLEY RAILWAY

Nine members gathered at Carlton Station to catch the 10:08 train for the 51 minute journey to Duffield. The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway station is adjacent to Duffield Station, and their train timetable is linked to that of the Derby to Matlock schedule, giving us plenty of time to buy tickets and

board the Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) which took along the 9 mile journey to Wirksworth, the main centre of the EVR.

On arriving we boarded a brake van attached to a saddle-tank steam engine called "Brian Harrison" which took us along a short stretch of track to Ravenstor Station, which gives access to the High Peak Trail. After a 5 minute pause, we returned to Wirksworth, and had refreshments before exploring our surroundings.



Some members went into Wirksworth, while the rest stayed at the station. Some of us went on a tour of the engine shed, where two 0-6-0 tank engines are being rebuilt, although the work carried out there is mainly carriage and wagon restoration. The rolling stock is not owned the railway but by individuals, which included a number of solicitors.

In 2017 the North Yorkshire Moors Railway suffered some vandalism, when a rake of L.N.E.R teak carriages, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, were substantially damaged; three are being restored by the NYMR, but one has been sent to the EVR, which is at present undergoing restoration.



We regrouped to catch the 14.10 train back to Duffield, then to Carlton. The weather was hot and everyone enjoyed themselves. As a matter of interest, the EVR is known as the Milk and Honey Line - according to their 2018 advertising leaflet, 800,000 gallons of milk per year left Wirksworth Station in the 1800s, and Beekeeping is undertaken adjacent to Wirksworth Station.



June 2018: SKEGNESS

Our June meeting took nine of us back to Skegness where we hoped for good weather - our previous trip there in December being somewhat chilly. A pleasant ride on the Lincolnshire Poacher Line took us past such landmarks as the Heckington Windmill and the Boston Stump and a partially blue sky and weak sunshine greeted us at Skeggy.

A walk to the seaside revealed that the tide was out (again) but that a few brave souls were making the best of the sunshine huddled behind their windbreaks on the beach. We found that this time the pier was open to visitors, so we took a leisurely stroll to the end of the pier before returning to the amusements and beach shops on the front.

Our further research confirmed that the fish and chips and Stationside pub were as good as we remembered them from the last visit and kept us occupied until it was time to take our return train home. All agreed it was a grand day out.



July 2018: RED FOR DANGER, part 2

Our July meeting was at the Richard Herrod where we were given the second part of Mike Johnson's presentation "Red for Danger". This started with descriptions of past and current signals and an explanation of the block signaling systems that were put in place as the result of past experience.

However, as we were to see from the film that followed, it was still possible in the age of steam for tragic accidents to occur because of driver error (signals passed at danger) adverse weather conditions or mistakes made by signalmen. Automatic train protection was pioneered during the steam age, but has since become much more sophisticated and effective.

We are taking our August meeting a little early, so that we can make a Saturday visit to our nearest preserved railway The Great Central Railway North at Ruddington.

August 2018: GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY

We took our August meeting in July to make advantage of the weekend opening of the Great Central Railway - North at Ruddington. The site, adjacent to Rushcliffe Country Park is host to several collections of road and rail vehicles in various states of repair as well as miniature railway tracks in various gauges where model makers come to run their engines.

The 10 miles of preserved standard gauge track runs to the east of Loughborough, where eventually a new bridge over the East Coast Mainline, now under construction, will link it with the 8¼ miles of the Great Central Railway - Loughborough. No steam haulage was available during our visit due to the tinder-dry condition of the trackside but we were lucky enough to travel the length of the line first-class in a set of Mark 3 carriages contemporary with the only surviving Prototype HST power car at the front of the train, which is lovingly maintained at the site.



SEPTEMBER 2018: HOW TO FIRE & DRIVE A STEAM LOCO

We met to watch a film which described in some detail what it takes to fire and drive a steam locomotive. The presenter, keen but inexperienced, was taken through the long progression of roles that was expected of a trainee driver, cleaning and maintenance, firing, and in time (and if jobs were available) driving a locomotive like the Great Western Castle class on offer.

The film was made in 1993 on the Great Central Railway at Loughborough and it was interesting to those of us familiar with the GCR to see how much has been achieved there in the last 25 years.



Castle Footplate

We also took time to discuss future meetings which include a trip to the Tyseley Works open day at Birmingham, and a visit to the Virgin Leisure building on London Road to see how much of the old Great Northern station still survives.

October 2018: TYSELEY LOCO WORKS

Our October meeting was moved forward to the last Saturday of September to coincide with an open day at Tyseley Locomotive Works, Birmingham, who were celebrating the 50th anniversary of their first public open day. Tyseley, opened in 1908 as the depot at the hub of the Great Western Railway's South Birmingham expansion was saved from demolition at the end of BR steam operation in 1968 by having become the home of two preserved engines, Clun Castle, and Kolhapur.

It has since developed to become a major engineering base for preserved steam and rolling stock, much of which was on show for the celebratory weekend. As befits the event, the nine of us travelled by rail, from Nottingham to Birmingham New Street and then a short walk to the lovingly preserved Great Western station at Moor Street for the short Run to Tyseley. Many engines were on display, several of them in steam and being moved around the site with plenty of action at the turntable. Short rides were also being given on a train pulled by the last steam engine to have worked on London Transport underground.

The workshops were open to visitors, showing work in progress and providing space for many preservation societies to show their wares and encourage donations. Around the perimeter of the site were classic cars, fairground organs, gallopers and steam traction engines and rollers. A great deal of work must have gone into organising this and turning a working engineering site into such a varied exhibition.



November 2018: LONDON ROAD LOW LEVEL STATION

This month we went on a tour of the Virgin Active Gym on London Road which was originally built as the terminus of the Great Northern railway in Nottingham. Designed by TC Hines and completed in 1857 this gave the Great Northern its own faster route to London via Grantham, completely independent of their great rivals, the Midland.

With the coming of the Great Central line and the building of a joint GCR / Great Northern station at Nottingham Victoria, passenger traffic was substantially reduced, the last passenger service running in 1944.

The station remained open as a mail depot for troops during the war before becoming a parcels depot until the 1970's. Thereafter the site was redundant.

One of our members, John Cruxon, had brought a document from the mid 1980's detailing the then current restoration works and plans by the City Council and British Rail to save this building for the future (click to view [Low Level Restoration](#)).

What we saw today, on an extensive tour by the operations manager Lucy Smith was a busy and successful fitness centre which retained much of its impressive architectural history, the large open spaces under the original roof filled with various gym areas and two swimming pools. Around the periphery the offices and rooms are retained and given new purpose. Lucy was obviously proud of her building and gave us a very interesting tour.

Nick Clark