

DECEMBER 2005

Report not available

NOVEMBER 2005

"The Peak Line in the Days of Steam and Diesel" was a topic sure to attract a large audience - and it did, the car park was full and nearly every seat in the hall was taken. However, the guest speaker was Brian Staniland from Sheffield on his first visit to Burton and, therefore, an unknown quantity. But there was not the slightest need to worry - Brian's presentation was excellent.

The many trays of slides were of a high quality, even the Agfa ones which he described as "going off a bit with age". Brian has an obvious skill in taking technically good pictures without being gimmicky, but he also has a flare for recording the ordinary (at the time of capturing it) which eventually becomes part of an important historical record. A good example was the slide of the signal gantry at the north end of Derby Station. Others were of infrastructure along the Cromford & High Peak Railway.

He also showed a few slides of no direct transport relevance which, in a way, demonstrated that for most people transport is simply a means to an end. However, "most people" were not in the audience and so the show started with views of locomotives associated with Peak Line taken at open days at Derby works long ago. Then, he moved to the main theme of his presentation, a trip down the Peak Line from Derby to Manchester - with deviations from Ambergate to Wingfield, to Crich Tramway Museum and on to the Cromford & High Peak.

His main technique was to show 'before and after' slides where stations or track had been changed as a result of closures or, nearly as bad, by 'modernisation'. Many of the 'before' slides were taken in 1968 in the very last days of passenger steam on that line. His confession that some of the shots of diesels were "taken to test his camera" was greeted with great enthusiasm by the audience. Even so, he admitted that by doing so he had, inadvertently, caught one or two rare visitors to the line. He really has the knack of doing the right thing at the right time.

Thanks once again, Brian, for coming to Burton and sharing your records and your experiences. Everyone present would have agreed with Mark's summation of it as "an enthralling evening".

OCTOBER 2005

David Cross made his second visit to BRS to present slides of a trip around London. He said that the notional boundary was the M25 with occasional outriders in and around Southampton and Portsmouth.

Most of the shots were taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s by David's late father, Derek, although David himself contributed some later ones. He made an interesting point about how developments in photography had eased the burden of the photographer. He said that from the slides, we could be forgiven for thinking that the sun shone more in his father's day than it does today; but the fact was that in those

days there were only two speeds of colour film and, if you wanted to shoot a moving train, you had to have sunlight to get a good result. How different from today with the digital cameras. Interestingly, in two of David's shots, it was raining!

The slide show started in the Southern Region albeit with examples of "foreign", i.e. Midland, incursions - probably to satisfy many members of the audience. We then saw slides from the Western, Midland and North Eastern Regions.

David apologised that it was not all-steam, but the inclusion of "some diesels and the odd electric", gave variety and presented a fairer record of that time of changes taking place on the railway.

It was a very good and well-delivered presentation. I am sure that everyone looks forward to seeing David back again at Burton in the near future.

SEPTEMBER 2005

At the "Natter Night" BRS member, John Purdie, presented two videos of steam locos. About twenty-five members attended.

The first video of just under an hour was a compilation of John's and a colleague's shots taken at various locations. The second was, I think, nearly all John's work using his newly acquired (semi-professional) Canon. Locations varied from Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire to Cheshire, Yorkshire, Cumbria and Scotland. Members of the audience sympathised with John for the persistent bad weather which seemed to dog the steam specials. But undeterred, the photographers were out next time, perhaps having to lug their equipment over fields to the chosen best spot, shoot and then dash back to the car to race off to the next location.

Thanks again to John.

SEPTEMBER 2005

The Society was very pleased to welcome guest speaker Richard Storer, the Euro Tunnel Infrastructure Manager, who had made the long journey up from Folkestone to be with us.

It was not all plain sailing as Richard had a battle with a projector that seemed to have a mind of its own and a delayed start home the following morning saw him caught up in motorway congestion. But on the evening, he overcame the delinquent projector to give an interesting and informative presentation on the Euro Tunnel.

He first spoke of previous plans and attempts to construct a tunnel between England and France before he moved on to the Euro Tunnel project. In a comprehensive talk, extremely well illustrated by slides, he covered the tunnel's planning, financing, building and operation. It was interesting to learn (among many other things) that the tunnel is currently operating at 50 per cent capacity; 3 500 people are employed in England and France; most of the employees in the two control centres are French; trains travel at up to 1000mph through the tunnel; and that the rails in the tunnel are replaced every eight years.

Richard was warmly applauded for his presentation. Many members expressed an interest in a mid-week trip through the tunnel and on to Paris as suggested by Mark Ratcliffe.

Members contributed £55 towards an appeal for funds by the Railway Vehicle Preservations for a covered carriage shed on the Mount Sorrel branch line. Richard generously added his presenter's fee to the contribution.

AUGUST 2005

The Society welcomed Bob Goodman from Lincoln Railway Society for his third visit. Previously, he had made presentations on 'Jubilees' and 'Royal Scots', but this time his topic took him much further away from Burton – the LNER's B17 Sandringham and Football Class locos. He made a special request for any sightings or records of steam engines in scrap-yards to be passed on to him.

The first half of Bob's presentation was a talk which covered the design, development, manufacture, operation, and demise of the class, interspersed with dry humour. He told about his introduction to B17s: as a lad, train spotting at Ponders End. Bob called the locos elegant and regretted the fact that not one of them had been preserved; although he said there was a rumour that one was hidden away in the depths of rural Northamptonshire! The last of the class of 73 engines (including 10 B17/6s or B2s) ceased running in 1959, before the preservation movement had really gained momentum, although nameplates had been saved from the furnace.

During the break, artist postcards by G. Cooper of the entire footballer B17s in their native areas were set out on the stage together with photographs and other memorabilia. After the break, Bob made a comprehensive slide presentation, including some black and white shots, of many of the class in a variety of locations. Slides of 'Nottingham Forest' and 'Leicester City' were given a less than enthusiastic reception from some of the audience! However, members showed their appreciation for a well-received presentation and Mark Ratcliffe thanked Bob on behalf of the Society.

JULY 2005 to JANUARY 2005

Reports not available