

### 8E Railway Association – December 2015 meeting in Northwich

As always the December meeting of the 8E Railway Association took the form of the AGM, followed this year by members slides. The only change to the Committee was the election of Paul Tench as Treasurer, following the decision of Keith Roberts to stand down after many years in the post.

After the interval Peter Dixon gave a fascinating presentation of main-line steam in the 1980's and 90s. Many of the engines shown are no longer running, having been supplanted by more recent restorations.

Then it was the turn of Paul Tench to take us on a tour of places depicted on a series of stamps issued some years ago. He and a friend visited them all, covering over 2000 miles, mainly by train. From A to Z, some of the visual clues proved more difficult to guess than others, partly due to the quality of the images. X, for example, was Station X at Bletchley, but it was good fun.

Brian Burgess rounded off the evening with some slides taken around Stoke in the 1960s and of various scrap yards. He had also found some colour slides from the 1930s. Quite a different world!

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For Phil Braithwaite's third presentation to members of the 8E Railway Association he returned to the theme of "British Steam in the 1960s". That he can revisit this era and captivate his audience without repetition illustrates his enthusiasm for capturing what was clearly the demise of British Railways steam.

The earliest images were taken on monochrome film and such pictures always exude character, be it an apocryphal sky full of smoke and steam or a scene of grime and decay. The detail was stunning. However, with more money, better cameras and the increasing availability, speed and reliability colour film became the medium of choice.

The selection of images reflected the accessibility of sites by foot, bicycle and public transport. There were locations around his home town of Warrington and his employment in Trafford Park, together with trips and holidays to all parts of the country. The shed at Northwich was of local interest, as were the water troughs at Moore. Apart from the locomotives the infrastructure has changed out of recognition. Telegraph poles, jointed track, platelayers and other small huts, semaphore signals are increasingly difficult to find. And the lack of trees beside the track made photography much easier than today. Another fascinating evening!

### 8E Railway Association – October 2015 meeting in Northwich

Since their inception almost two hundred years ago railways have had to develop means of controlling trains, primarily to prevent accidents and principally through signalling systems. It was not long before the signallers and their equipment were housed in cabins. Indeed the subject for this month's meeting of the 8E Railway Association was "Signal boxes around Manchester". In practice the area covered was extensive, including virtually everything within a forty mile radius. Over the past twenty years our speaker, Malcolm Dickin of the Signalling Record Society, had visited them all.

Many of these signal boxes have since closed, the ultimate aim being to control the network through a few Regional Operating Centres. The signal boxes until the Grouping in 1923 tended to be of a classic design, with a brick base containing the mechanisms, surmounted by an operating floor with copious windows, the whole structure being covered by a hipped roof. However, there were so many variations that there were barely two alike. With the increasing use of electronics and the reducing need to see what was happening more modern facilities could be housed anywhere. For example, Manchester Piccadilly is currently controlled from within an office block adjacent to the station. This was an interesting talk, with barely a signal in sight!

### 8E Railway Association – September 2015 meeting in Northwich

'The Archaeology of Early Steam Locomotives' sounds a potentially forbidding title for a talk. However, Michael Bailey kept the audience at this month's meeting of the 8E Railway Association enthralled. He started his presentation by looking at Underwater Archaeology. Britain built large numbers of locomotives for export. However, numerous early steam locomotives were lost at sea whilst on their way from the UK builders, particularly to the U.S.A. and Canada. Closer to home he dealt in detail with one of the batches of locomotives lost off the coast of Islay on the west coast of Scotland. He talked about how the RAF Sub Aqua team were involved in diving on these wrecks and showed pictures of some of the items recovered, including sections of boilers and fireboxes and even the builders plates.

He then progressed to discussing locomotives in museums. He had been involved in researching and photographing these to provide material to enhance the various displays in the respective museums. Again this took him to the U.S.A. and Canada and also to several locations in Europe. In all these cases the locomotives concerned were built during the 19th century and provided a fascinating look at how early locomotives developed.

### 8E Railway Association – April 2015 meeting in Northwich

This month's talk to the 8E Railway Association meeting was given by John Hilton, who came as a late replacement for an indisposed Chris Banks. We were treated to a quite unexpected view of British Railways in the 1950s and 60s. He joined BR as a "Rest Day Relief Signal Box Lad". He started in East Manchester around Miles Platting, before moving to Stockport and then to Acton Bridge. He tried his hand at platform duties at Northwich and Cuddington, but preferred the life and work in the signal box. From Plumley West he experienced most of the boxes to Delamare, finally returning to Acton Bridge.

Many of the pictures shown were taken in 1960 from the signal box at Acton Bridge and from nearby vantage points. There were interesting workings, which have passed into history: passenger trains from Acton Bridge to Warrington; goods trains starting from Middlewich and Winsford. Even more interesting was the changing infrastructure. The line from Crewe to Liverpool was being electrified. The oil-fired platform lamps were soon accompanied by concrete posts for electric lighting, tubular masts to support the catenary, cross members, droppers and other necessary bits to make it all work.

With forays to other parts and excellent photography, this was a fascinating evening.

### 8E Railway Association – March 2015 meeting in Northwich

This month's talk to the 8E Railway Association meeting was given by David Young. He has amassed a large collection of slides from the Colour-Rail archive. This is the largest commercial source of railway photographs. Unfortunately, David showed so many pictures of locomotives that it was not always possible to absorb the content! Despite that reservation, there was much to enjoy.

There were some excellent pictures from the 1930s and the 1940s, even during the war. These showed the changes to the company liveries up to the nationalisation of the railways in 1948. Particularly impressive was the maroon used on the Stanier pacifics. The subsequent British Railways version never seemed to sparkle, even when freshly painted. The British Railways blue livery on express engines did not show up well, but the later Brunswick green is well remembered.

We saw locomotives large and small, old and new from all over the country. The antiquity of the works shunters was impressive, as was an aerial view of Lostock Hall shed on the last day of steam in 1968.

There was much else of interest, with immaculate permanent way and not a tree in sight; gas lamps; water troughs; signals and telegraph poles; coaches of varied designs; cattle trucks and many more features.

### 8E Railway Association – February 2015 meeting in Northwich

Paul Shackcloth returned this month to give the second of his talks on “Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Locomotives at Work” to the 8E Railway Association meeting. It proved to be just as absorbing as its predecessor.

This time he started at Wakefield and continued east to Goole, before returning via York and Leeds to Preston, the Fylde and Liverpool. In addition to the standard fare we saw last time there were splendid views of Aspinall's "Highflyer" express passenger locomotives and of his dock tanks. The latter, known as "Pugs", were tiny and ideal for shunting in the docks. With no bunker, where did they keep the coal?

The L&Y was not afraid of experimenting with new ideas. They produced steam railmotors - essentially a locomotive and coach as a single unit. They tried a heat retention system to act as a water pre-heater, and compounding to reuse steam at a lower pressure. To gather performance data they installed indicator shelters on the running plate adjacent to the smokebox. A man would be inside recording the relevant information. A hot, claustrophobic job!

The infrastructure was just as interesting, with impressive station gardens; immaculate permanent way, with not a tree in sight!; gas lamps; water troughs; spectacular viaducts; signals and telegraph poles.

### 8E Railway Association – January 2015 meeting in Northwich

Traditionally the January meeting the 8E Railway Association is a presentation by Karl Jauncey and Dave Richards from PSOV with their review of steam on the main line in 2014.

The early part of the year was dominated by scenes around Shap and on the Settle and Carlisle. The first featured an LNER B1 double-heading with an LMS Black "5", a most unusual pairing. More traditional fair were a Jubilee in LMS red livery and "Scots Guardsman" and "Duchess of Hamilton" in BR green.

The sight of an LNER A4 "Sir Nigel Gresley" at the head of the first excursion to traverse the re-opened railway at Dawlish and being paced at speed, presumably from the adjacent M5 motorway, was remarkable.

The Great Britain VII rail tour was covered comprehensively, round the Cumbrian coast, up to Edinburgh, Stranraer, Inverness and Fort William, before returning south through York to London. The sheer grandeur of the scenery on the more remote Scottish sections was breath-taking.

The quality of filming was excellent throughout and the live commentary engaging. This time there were many more scenes on and from the locomotives, adding another dimension to the show. Our thanks go to Dave and Karl for another splendid effort.