

### 8E Railway Association – December 2016 meeting in Northwich

The December meeting of the 8E Railway Association was the AGM, followed by a selection of short films. The only changes to the Committee were the election of Brian Burgess as Membership Secretary and of John Penn as a committee member focusing on publicity.

Paul Tench produced a fascinating film show. This began with an early diesel railcar -a bus on four wheels. "Manchester to Chester in four minutes" was probably shot from a Pacer, the current version of the four wheel railcar and still running on the Mid-Cheshire line.

The next film cleverly juxtaposed the coronation of George VI in 1937 with the construction at Crewe and subsequent operation of the Princess Coronation class locomotives.

The transition from steam to diesel and electric power, including the Kent coast electrification scheme, was absorbing. Scenes of redundant, rusting hulks at a scrap yard in Barry were interesting because many have been rescued and restored.

The rescue of trains from snow drifts in 1947 and 1987 demonstrated completely different equipment and techniques.

The show ended with different takes on the classic film "Night Mail". One was made of Lego, another a re-enactment on the Great Central Railway and the last a live rock accompaniment to the original. A brilliant finale!

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The talk Phil Braithwaite delivered to members of the 8E Railway Association was most definitely one of two halves and kept the audience enthralled throughout.

He began with black and white photographs taken in the 1950s and 60s. These oozed atmosphere, reflecting the life and grime of British Railways steam at that time. This was particularly evident in a sequence of pictures taken at Warrington Dallam shed, with smoke filled skies and piles of ash and clinker everywhere. And whenever he ventured to Crewe it rained! There were fascinating views inside round-houses, of turntables, of activity at Winwick Quay and Junction and from other exotic locations such as Normanton, Leeds, Shrewsbury and Oxley.

Phil lived in South Africa in the 1980s and 90s and this provided a complete contrast: now we had photographs in colour under blue skies. The principal gauge there is 3' 6", but the locomotives and stock were huge. The sheds were light and airy and the coaling stage at Germiston could feed six locomotives simultaneously! Engines were allocated to individual drivers, who took pride in keeping them immaculate. We also saw pictures of the narrow gauge (2') lines, including a Garratt locomotive, which is now on the Welsh Highland Railway. A small world!

### 8E Railway Association – October 2016 meeting in Northwich

"HS2: Engine for Growth" is a subject to arouse local interest and did so in the capable hands of Suzanne Mathieson, a Senior Programme Development Manager at Network Rail, with specific responsibility to the 'Crewe Hub' scheme. She explained with great clarity the inception of HS2 and the detailed practical problems involved, particularly around Crewe.

The completion of the upgrade of the West Coast Main Line in 2008 provided additional capacity enabling Virgin to provide a more intensive service. However, it was already recognised that the projected growth in traffic would fill the line to capacity by 2025. Options were considered to address this problem and a new line seen as the best solution. An independent company, HS2 Ltd, was created and produced a business case. Currently the phases are: 1 (London to Birmingham, completion 2026 and the subject of a Hybrid Bill before Parliament); 2A (Birmingham to Crewe, 2027); and 2B (Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds, 2033).

Crewe presents a specific challenge. HS2 will bring more businesses, housing requirements and road traffic. The existing station is difficult to operate, mainly due to conflicting moves and lack of capacity, or to expand. A variety of options has been considered, but no decision taken.

### 8E Railway Association – April 2016 meeting in Northwich

This month's talk to the 8E Railway Association meeting was quite unexpected. Unfortunately, the booked speaker was indisposed. At very short notice Wayne Jones was able to put together a new presentation. He had bought recently a collection of slides focusing on the Southern Region of British Railways, an area close to his heart.

Much of the presentation centred around Eastleigh in the 1950s and 60s. This was the site of the main locomotive and carriage workshops, with a large engine shed serving Southampton and the surrounding area. As you might expect there were pictures of locomotives in forlorn states awaiting entry to the works and subsequently emerging in pristine condition, most classes being represented. Of great interest were scenes within the works, including the foundry, and the erecting, boiler and wheel shops. The lack of protective clothing was noticeable, not even gloves for those handling molten metal!

The route from Waterloo to Weymouth was also covered, with many views of Southampton Central and the docks. At the time the photographs were taken the electrification of the line, using the third rail system, had reached the port, but was not yet in operation. With snippets of local information, plus contemporary road vehicles, this was another absorbing talk.

### 8E Railway Association – March 2016 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.

Most of the pictures were from the British Railways era. There were interesting views of the Stanier Pacifics in a variety of liveries. Apple green, as used by the LNER looked awful on them and was, fortunately, soon consigned to history. Some of the locations were unknown or incorrect and the audience did their best to provide appropriate information. There were some scenes labelled Winsford. It seems likely that these were North of the station, showing the bridge before it was rebuilt for the electrification of the line and predating the industrial and housing estates.

Apart from the locomotives and locations there was much else of interest, with immaculate permanent way and not a tree in sight; signals and telegraph poles; coaches of varied and sometimes ancient designs; and quite a variety of wagons.

### 8E Railway Association – February 2016 meeting in Northwich

Due to the indisposition of the booked speaker the February meeting of the 8E Railway Association turned out to be completely different from our expectations. Bill Andrew, Chairman of the Crewe Heritage Trust, gave us his "Reflections on a railway career". This produced a fascinating collection of amusing and informative anecdotes.

He was born near Rawtenstall in 1935 and moved to Bacup to live with his grand-parents in 1940. This was a railway family and his life-long passion for railways began with frequent trips to the engine shed with his uncle.

He joined British Railways in 1950. He started as a cleaner and still has his copy of the 1950 rule book. All railwaymen had to learn this by heart. Compared with the current one it is tiny! He became a passed cleaner and learnt the art of firing locomotives.

After two years of National Service he managed to get a move to Crewe, with more opportunities and different types of engine. He moved up through the grades, driving steam, diesel and electric locomotives, becoming a traction inspector in 1986. With privatisation he moved on, finishing as a driver of steam engines with West Coast Railways, including "Hogwarts Castle" for the Harry Potter films. Fame!

### 8E Railway Association – January 2016 meeting in Northwich

Traditionally the January meeting of 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 2015.

The early part of the year was dominated by scenes around Shap and on the Settle and Carlisle line. The first featured "Duchess of Sutherland" in BR green. There was extensive footage on and from the footplate of "Leander", giving a glimpse of the complexities of driving a steam locomotive. The sight of "Galatea" being pursued (at a safe distance of course!) by "Britannia" up Shap presented a scene not seen since the end of BR steam in 1968.

Another novelty was the visit of "Scots Guardsman" to Holyhead. This was the first run along the North Wales coast by this class of locomotive for fifty years. The opening of the Borders Railway from Edinburgh to Tweedbank and the excursions hauled by "Union of South Africa" provided another novelty.

There were lots of other gems in the show. It is difficult to select another, but the blur of the driving wheels of "Rood Ashton Hall" as it raced down the Severn Valley was thrilling.

The quality of filming was excellent throughout and the live commentary engaging. Our thanks go to Dave and Karl for another splendid effort.