

8E Railway Association - December meeting in Northwich

Living as we do in the North-West of England we are never far from the mountains. Ian Pilkington's presentation "Steam and Diesels in the Northern Fells" to the 8E Railway Association provided some remarkable vistas to remind us what a glorious area this is. The standard of photography was excellent, invariably with the railway as part of the landscape, and the commentary showed complete command of the subject.

The period covered was from 2010 to 2016 with all the routes in the area being covered: Carlisle to Carnforth via both Shap and the coast; Carlisle to Hellifield and Blackburn; Carlisle to Newcastle; and Carnforth to Hellifield. There were lots of snippets about locations, means of access, difficulties with new fencing and tree growth, and tree clearance providing new views. The Victorian railway did not always show the concern for archaeology we have today, with the Newcastle line passing through Hadrian's Wall and a stone circle on the Settle and Carlisle being wrecked.

The steam-hauled trains were mainly excursions, with a few loaded test trains, hauled by a wide range of classes. "Duchess of Sutherland" in LMS black was perhaps the most striking.

Most of the diesels were hauling freight trains, principally the gypsum trains from Drax power station, the timber trains to Chirk and the nuclear flask trains around the coast.

8E Railway Association - November meeting in Northwich

Members of the 8E Railway Association were treated to "Scotland in the 1960s" by John Cashen. 300 slides sounds too many, and perhaps it was, but, with a concise, informed commentary, there was always something to maintain our interest.

The talk was divided into four parts. From Carlisle both routes to Glasgow were covered, with impressive scenes around Beattock and Kilmarnock. Further west were Ayr, Ardrossan, Largs and Gourock, terminating with views around St. Enoch and Central stations in Glasgow. Moving further north from Buchanan Street

and Queen Street took us to Oban and Mallaig, and also to Stirling and Perth en route to Inverness and Aberdeen.

Inverness was the starting point for the third section. This took in the far North line to Wick and Thurso, and that to Kyle of Lochalsh, before turning south to Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. The last part returned us to Carlisle.

There was a large selection of locomotive types on show, both steam, from Pre-Grouping designs from the five main Scottish companies to the British Railways Standard classes, and diesel, most of the latter having also been consigned to history. Many of the industrial engines working the collieries, power stations and distilleries were ancient even then. The extensive Wemyss Private Railway still existed, serving coal mines in Fife.

8E Railway Association - October meeting in Northwich

The speaker at the October meeting of the 8E Railway Association was Dave Jones of DJ Models. He gave us a fascinating insight into the workings of the model railway industry from the point of view of design and production. The theme of his talk was "A fantastic journey into the unknown".

His introduction to model railways was through a Hornby trainset, with an oval of track stuck to an old door. With the help of his father he soon developed modelling skills and in 1982 won the inaugural "Prime Ministers' Cup" as the best under 18 modeller in the country.

In 2006 he met George Smith, then managing director of Dapol, and suggested they should develop a Class 66 locomotive in N gauge, since this type of engine could be seen all over the country. He joined the company and saw this and other projects to completion.

He left Dapol in 2013 to form an independent company since he felt that there was still scope for another step change in quality, reliability, detail and features on current locomotives and rolling stock. To demonstrate this he produced a model of the LNER J94, followed by a Class 71 electric through crowd-funding. He has

had a number of commissions and is currently developing a model of the Advanced Passenger Train.

8E Railway Association - May meeting in Northwich

The last talk of the season was a "Cuban Railway Adventure". Adrian Bodlander proved to be a knowledgeable and perceptive speaker, with a relaxed style of delivery, providing a fascinating glimpse into an unfamiliar world. He went to Cuba on an organised railway tour in 2011 and saw much more of the country than mass tourism usually permits.

It was about 50 years since the revolution which resulted in trade embargoes. Cuba then formed close ties with Russia and, more recently, with China. The Russians used a lot of sugar, but the Chinese did not, these changing associations having interesting effects on the island and its economy.

There were lots of large, old American cars, with teeth and wings, increased chrome and original engines being status symbols. There were also Lada cars, horse and cycle taxis, Chinese buses and lorries converted into buses. Because of the difficulty of obtaining spare parts there was a strong "make do and mend" philosophy.

The railways were not exempt from this, much of the rolling stock being ancient and it was often difficult to determine which lines were operating. There was an extensive system of sugar cane railways. Many had closed, the mills being demolished for their scrap metal by the Chinese, or the products being moved by road. However, visits were made to several, both operating and preserved. There was also an electrified suburban system from Havana, more than 100 years old and still working.

8E Railway Association - April meeting in Northwich

The 8E Railway Association was delighted to welcome back an old friend, Stephen Gay from Sheffield, to their meeting at the Gladstone Club. Stephen is an acknowledged expert on the now

abandoned Woodhead route from Manchester to Sheffield and on other Great Central Railway topics, but this time his illustrated lecture 'Railways in a Cornish Landscape' reflected upon scenes from much further afield.

Stephen's stunning photography took us on a quite delightful journey from Bude (an integral part of the so-called 'Withered Arm') and the Tamar Estuary close by Plymouth in the East, deep into the heart of the Duchy. He regaled us with tales of characters and communities well off the beaten track as well as viewing more obvious places such as Looe, Bodmin and Newquay, and with barely a train in sight! However with the diversity of the county's transport infrastructure past and present being so complex, locations onwards to Truro and Penzance were saved for a further visit.

Many thanks are due to Stephen for his immaculate geographical and historical research as well as for his effective and humorous story telling, which truly brought the enticing Cornish landscape to life. We look forward greatly to part two of the talk at a future date.

8E Railway Association - March meeting in Northwich

"Had bike - did travel!" was the intriguing title of Barry Shore's talk. He started trainspotting in 1952, but it was 1976 before he acquired a car. In this period most of his travels were by a succession of bikes, covering almost 30000 miles. Amongst these were a Rudge, which had no gears, and a Viking, used extensively. He also became interested in photography from an early age, starting with a Box Brownie and graduating to a series of Zeiss Ikon cameras, producing stunning images. Since he received no pocket money he relied on cash for birthdays and Christmas to fund the purchase of film.

The talk concentrated on his travels from 1961 to 1963. The first major expedition was to York, Hexham, Newcastle and Carlisle. Most photographs were monochrome, but occasionally he used the more expensive colour film. One such example was the station pilot at Newcastle, always a sparkling green J72.

1962 also featured York, followed by Doncaster, Lincoln and Grantham - over 700 miles! Much further afield the following year were explorations of Worcester, Bristol, Bath, Newport, Salisbury, Eastleigh and Fratton, with an A1X being the oldest steam locomotive still in service. However, the excitement of the new was tempered by increasing lines of steam engines waiting to be scrapped. Progress? Perhaps.

8E Railway Association - February meeting in Northwich

Paul Shackcloth returned this month to give another of his excellent talks, a "Railway Miscellany". The focus was on people (and other animals) and places. Occasionally the location or occasion were unknown and the audience was able to provide helpful suggestions.

The first picture was an archetypal one of a small tank engine in immaculate condition, with the driver and fireman standing in front. It dated from 1893 and was pin-sharp. The next also showed a crew, but this time standing in the corridor connection of an LNER corridor tender.

There were lots of scenes of passengers, with fashions changing from 1900s to 1960s, pictures of other photographers, assorted railwaymen and trainspotters. There was a wedding party on the platform at Wilmslow and a church service being delivered from an open wagon on the NSR.

Horses were used extensively on the railways, mainly for shunting and the distribution of goods. However, there were also horse drawn trams. There was an image of a mounted regiment being loaded onto a train at Okehampton during the First World War. We even saw the special wagons for prize cattle in use.

The Liverpool Overhead system, the Runcorn Transporter bridge, trams, level crossings, cranes, turntables, prams, accidents, cars and lorries of varying vintages and canals all featured. Fantastic!

8E Railway Association - January meeting in Northwich

For the first talk of the year John Cashen transported us to the West Country, defined in this case as west of the Somerset and Dorset route from Bath to Poole. Most of the pictures dated from the 1960s and 70s, the older ones being monochrome.

The talk began and ended in Bristol, at St. Philips Marsh with lots of steam locomotives and at Bath Road, full of diesels. Journeying south from Bath Green Park both Templecombe Upper and Dorchester South stations required complicated manoeuvres for trains to access the platforms. We then headed west along the Southern main line to Exeter Central, showing the transition from steam to diesel locomotives and passing through Axminster with its venerable Adams Radial tank engines.

From Exeter St. Davids the Western route borders the sea at Dawlish and revealed John's determination to travel behind all the "Western" class diesel hydraulics. We passed by Newton Abbott, Laira diesel depot, Liskeard and the branch to Looe, St. Austell with the Motorail service from London, to Penzance.

The "Withered Arm" was essentially the Southern lines west of Exeter, many of which have been closed. We saw pictures from the Callington branch, Wadebridge, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple Junction and Meldon Quarry at Okehampton, with not a DMU in sight!