

# Ecclesbourne Express

Newsletter of the Ecclesbourne Valley
Railway Association

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The Wirksworth to Duffield Line

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**Next Edition will be published in July 2014** – Contributions welcome by email or post to Richard Buckby, see above, by **Friday 20th June 2014**.

Front Cover – Iris Pulled! 19th March 2014- Martin Miller

Back Cover - 33 in action during the Home Fleet Gala - 22nd March 2014



### **NEWS UPDATE - Mike Craft**

Earlier this year, we were contacted by David Redfern, whose aunt, who had recently died, had lived adjacent to the EVR at Shottle. Following a meeting at Wirksworth and trip round the coaches and steam engines he explained that there would be a sizeable donation from his aunt's estate. His wish was that some of the money would be used to restore the Mk1 coaches

and some for the restoration of Cathryn. We are extremely grateful to him for this important contribution to our funds.

Work is continuing on both the Mk1 coaches but whilst we have cured the leaks through the vents in the SK we have discovered a problem in the SO, whereby condensation occurs on the underside of the metal roof. It has been decided to insulate the underside of the roof before replacing the ceiling panels. The removal of the varnish from the woodwork in both the SK and the SO has revealed beautiful grained panels.

It is hoped at the end of the season to start re-upholstering the third class in the CK, the SK and the SO.

### SALES MATTERS - Pat Craft.

Once again we must thank all those who donate books and other items for us to sell and in particular the thirty people who have signed the new Gift Aid forms for their donations. The system is up and running and although there is still a backlog of items to record and label, results so far are proving that the work has been worthwhile.

We have welcomed a new volunteer in the shop, but sadly one volunteer has had to drop out due to an accident and another is waiting for a new hip, so if you think you could help us in this way please get in touch. We have a full calendar this year with weekends, Tuesdays and Thursdays as well as Bank Holidays so we will be stretched

Although the shop was closed in January and early February, when there were no trains running, the revamp and restock has been worthwhile as takings have increased.

We will be holding another three day sale over May Day Bank Holiday (May 3rd, 4th and 5th) in the training room at Wirksworth, selling pottery, kitchenware, CDs, books, pictures, crafts etc. If anyone is willing to donate any items we would be grateful to have them at least a week before, so that we can price them and group them. Last year we took £350 over the three days so we hope to do as well or better this year.

#### **GREEN SHOOTS - Martin Miller**

The emphasis for 2014 is to "focus on footfall" aimed at increasing the load factor on all our scheduled passenger train as our costs are largely fixed and each additional passenger contributes to the bottom line. So far the results are most encouraging as the winter was spent targeting coach and group parties which has paid handsome dividends with many forward bookings.

An alliance with Trent Barton has also been most fruitful with the launch of the "Zig Zag Choo Choo" joint bus and rail ticket for adults, children and small groups. Trent Barton has really embraced this concept with two buses acting as mobile adverts for our enterprise. Equally East Midlands Trains continues to support us with through ticketing to Wirksworth from any of their stations.

The growing success of our midweek trains has been built on this year with the peak summer season seeing us offer services on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This is quite a big ask of our volunteer crews to which I am sure they will respond. There is also a knock on effect on the support staff and an impact on the infrastructure and vehicle maintenance teams. However, if we can get all this right we will enter the winter lean times in a much improved financial position.

The Pullman Buffet Car and associated coaches has also started the season in good shape with the small improvements to the serving area starting to pay off. Increasing group and coach bookings for the season often have a catering option which will affect the results for this part of the business.

There has been a most useful resurgence of our MyTestTrack business that has included derailment investigation courses arranged for Network Rail with the first of three being delivered in March. We have also welcomed back the Rail Accident & Investigation Branch for their first training day of the year.

Growth of our web shop range of products including footplate experiences is making an ever increasing contribution to our results. The overall benefit is that the shop is open 24/7 and allows for immediate gratification of the customers wants.

Our facilitation of the Sport Relief Train Pull by a team from Network Rail Derby resulted in splendid results for Sport Relief and much welcome publicity for us which was immediately felt on the following weekend.

All this positive activity gives a good feeling that we will achieve great things this year and underwrites our decision to concentrate investment on the track modifications at Wirksworth that will be the precursor of major improvements to the Maintenance Facility in 2015.

My thanks go, as ever, to the working volunteers and the continued financial support of our shareholders. Also thanks are due to the increasing band of contributors to the Capital Projects Fund and Share Save participants.

### **PERMANENT WAY REPORT - Tony Watt.**

Permanent way work seems to have themes: last year we were joiners, building wooden platform extensions (at both Duffield and Wirksworth) and re-cladding the footbridge F1. In the first weeks of this year we were drainage engineers, improving the drainage of waste from the buffet car, and then working to reduce flooding at Gorsey Bank.

Our theme now is pointwork. In February we concentrated our efforts at Duffield, rebuilding the northern crossover to improve its specification. Timbers were replaced, and two switch blades exchanged. Now we have turned our attention to the Wirksworth yard.

The arrangement for locomotives to run round stock in platform 2 is time consuming and inconvenient, with crossovers at the extremes of the site. The plan is to move the northern crossover (P11 and P12) from north of Cemetery Lane bridge to just north of the dust dock. At present, P11 is a left hand turnout in road 1 to road 2, and P12 is a left hand turnout in road 2 to road 1. Both will be moved south and re-handed, so that P11 will be in road 2 as a right hand turnout to road 1, and P12 will be in road 1 as a right hand turnout to road 2.

This project commenced with the dismantling of the Tram Road alongside the western side of the Maintenance Facility. When the shed is extended it will occupy the site of the former Tram Road, with a new third road laid inside. The sleepers, rail and ballast recovered from the Tram Road have been used to plain line the crossover, whose components have been stored for modification and reuse in the coming months.

Much of this work has involved the use of the Komatsu, and, given the size and weight of 60 foot rails and 20 foot timbers, it is an essential tool, for which we are very grateful. However, we are not spared all the hard work. There's a plenty of shovelling and heaving to come, and the switches and rails will be reformed using the 'Jim Crow' by manpower alone. There's a whole lot o' bendin' to do!

### **DMU REPORT - Leigh Gration**

There has been plenty to do just recently with the announcement that two of the vehicles in our care were being loaned to the Bluebell Railway. Primarily a steam line, the Bluebell were doing some significant track-work during the winter months and thought a DMU would be a great way to continue operating a service without run round loops and with reduced facilities. It is the first time a DMU has run on Bluebell metals so it certainly grabbed the attention of the public. Many enthusiasts visited simply to ride on the DMU as it may not be repeated and others went just to enjoy the unique view out of the front windows, never before experienced there. On its last run before returning to us at the end of March, it was reported as being 'full and standing' with passengers.

Class 101 E51505 and Class 108 E50599 were the two vehicles chosen for the loan. You may recall that 51505 underwent a year-long refurbishment programme in 2011 where our volunteers replaced the entire ceiling, restored the original Tungsten

lighting, reinstated the first class area which involved a new carpet and seating, and the standard class area received reupholstered seats too. 50599, on the other hand, is the first-built Class 108 vehicle and has recently received upgraded seats itself.

Also of significance is Gloucester 'bubble car' 55012. This vehicle arrived with us in October for a contract repair where the engines and electrical system received attention. Initially, this was only a short loan for the duration of the repairs but it was decided that the vehicle should stay at Wirksworth to operate services for the foreseeable future. Single cars are very useful for us and the news is very welcome. Joining fellow Class 122 55006, 55012 means that we are the only railway that can operate two Gloucester 'bubble cars' together which should be quite a spectacle come Multiple Memories in the summer.

Continuing in the Maintenance Facility is the refurbishment of recently-arrived Metro-Cammell Class 101 E50253. We have recently re-panelled the walls in the guards van and replaced rotten ceiling panels. The van is now having a complete repaint. At the front, work is taking place on the cab area to stop the water ingress which has been plaguing this vehicle for years. The drivers cab will receive a brand new cab desk as the water ingress has rotted the old one.

2013 has been a fantastic year for the DMU Group. It has really seen the team come together and we now have a fantastic range of skills which is ever increasing. We have seen the proud launch into traffic of Class 119 W51073 and have proved that we can run a successful and very busy DMU event. I really feel that the DMU Group can only go from strength to strength and we are all already looking forward to a fantastic Multiple Memories event on the 9th and 10th of August 2014.

### GEORGE WILLIAM PETTIT – INFORMATION SOUGHT Julia Hall (Nee Pettit)

On a recent visit to Ecclesbourne Valley Railway with our grandsons, we would like to thank you most sincerely for all the information you told us of the Wirksworth to Duffield line, our grandsons were most interested.



My grandfather used to work at Wirksworth Station, the only information I have is that, George William Pettit born near Pontefract. North Yorkshire came to Derbyshire and worked as a Goods Yard Guard in around 1910. He married my Ethel arandmother Annie Smedley of Spout Barn Farm. She was teacher а at Hazelwood School. Μv grandparents moved into 52 Station House, Wirksworth at approximately 1920. We don't have any more information as to Grandfathers job between

1910 and 1948 when he died, having always been an employee of the Railway. My grandparents are buried in Wirksworth Cemetery, opposite Station House. Any information you may have or if any of your readers have any information, I would love to hear from them.

I attach a photograph of my grandfather and a photo of his Railway Timepiece.

Thank you once again for your most interesting information.

We passed on Julia's message to Howard Sprenger and Glynn Waite and they were able to provide some more information, but if any readers can provide any more details of George's involvement with the railways, we will be pleased to hear from you.

### **Mystery Picture**

lan Cotter recently passed on a picture, courtesy of Colour Rail, taken in 1962 on the occasion of a visiting charter train.

The picture was passed on to Howard Sprenger for his comments.....

'What an interesting picture. 29th September 1962 was the occasion of the "Derbyshire Branch Lines Tour" organised by the RCTS. This started at Nottingham Victoria and after travelling over the ex-GNR lines in the area, the tour took in the Melbourne, Wirksworth and Ripley branches before returning to Nottingham Midland. I



don't have a photo of this tour in the book - indeed, I'm not sure I've seen a picture of it at Wirksworth before.

As to what's going on - that's a different matter. I don't know why the SM (John Hall) would have been presented with the spade,

and if he was, why it would have taken place at this time? As we know, the spade is kept in the Town Hall, where it's always been as far as I know. Surely more likely is that Mr Hall borrowed the spade to show the tour participants. It would be interesting to know who the other gentleman is - someone in the RCTS would undoubtedly recognise him. Also interesting is the smart turnout of John Hall with a very smart cap, bearing in mind that the branch was essentially goods only at this time.'

If you can supply more information, please do let us know.



Uppingham and 8F at the top of the incline, date unknown - Martin Miller collection.

Muck shifter Mick prepares the new track bed for road two below Cemetery Lane.





LMS Open Third Progress.

The Wanderer pt.2 returns from it's Odyssey.



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#### HS2 v EVR - Vince Morris.

At Christmas I went to a party where there were a lot of Bright Young Things (BYT). They may be identified by the mobile phones welded to their hands and the fact that, although they go on holiday several times a year, they have never stayed at the English seaside. Several (I joke not) thought that John O'Groats was in Ireland... none knew what county Swindon (a place I chose at random) was in. But BYT are our, and our pensions, future, so we must listen to them: it is their world they are making and, although I may mock, these kids are bright and have some interesting ideas.

Even without my influence the conversation got around to HS2 and whether it should be built. After much debate, well structured and thought out discussion, the conclusion was that it should not. But not for the reasons I expected. The argument went: by 2030 we shall not need any trains. We will not need to go anywhere, we will have places come to us on our 'phones'. If we want to meet friends we shall call up their avatars to join us at the virtual place. By this stage the avatars will be programmed to think and act like their real counterparts so we will not need real people to be there. If we want to know about a place we shall call up a hologram of the local dignitaries and ask them about the area, and get them to give us a guided tour: I suggested, to blank looks, that Brunel could tell them about Swindon.

But what about having, and making, real things, I asked. 3D printers was the chorused reply. Food? Make the ingredients and print the food. But, I asked, how will we know that we exist? How will we know if we are enjoying ourselves? That got the BYT thinking - well, we will "do" things. Such as? Well, we could actually visit some places, in real time and space, and experience them. Like heritage railways, I suggested. Yes, replied the BYT, maybe that is the sort of thing we should be investing in.

Sorry HS2, EVR gets the money.

Despite your suspicions to the contrary, the above is true!

Many thanks to those of you who have renewed your subscriptions: if your fee is still outstanding you will find a second (and final) reminder in this mailing. Please return it as soon as possible to ensure a future for our Bright Young Things.

### **EARLIER DAYS, PART ONE. - Malcolm Gwyn**

I came to Derby as an engineering apprentice at International Combustion in the 1960's and would invariably cycle towards Wirksworth each Sunday. The town was grim and grey with limestone dust.

Frank Nixon's book on the "Industrial Archaeology of Derbyshire" provided an introduction to the features of the landscape and Christmas breaks provided an opportunity to scramble through fences unchallenged by railway staff. The Wirksworth mineral sidings and High Peak line were natural attractions.

The "incline" ascending to what is now Ravenstor station was obvious, but on the other hand, the slithery slopes of the dead-end cutting under Cemetery Road bridge and the double route out of the station yard remained perplexing. Years later, Howard Sprenger's book on "The Wirksworth Branch" revealed that this stub of line was the start of a proposed direct route to Manchester via Rowsley.

In his description of the line he notes:

"this would have required a 1503 yard tunnel under Bolehill, followed by a 280 yard viaduct near Cromford along the west bank of the River Derwent before heading under the Heights of Abraham through a 500 yard tunnel followed by yet another tunnel and viaduct before Rowsley."

This absurdly demanding route would then have joined the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock and Midlands Junction Railway (abbreviated to MBM and MJR) at Rowsley.

The alternative route from Wirksworth to Whaley Bridge was with equal optimism via the Ravenstor incline, a limestone tramway coming down the hill from the Coalhills Quarry. The line is not easy to follow with dense undergrowth of ash saplings and a hazardous precipice where Coalhills Quarry cut the route of the line. There is no footpath and the track is precarious. It is now easier to clamber over a rickety field fence and join the High Peak line fifty yards ahead, then retrace one's route on the flank of the quarry. An intriguing detail is that there is no obvious connection with the High Peak even though the arc of the line and the beds of the sleepers are still evident. There is even less evidence how the train or trucks would be drawn up the incline. The 1880 maps show no sign of an engine house.

Half a mile to the left is the Middleton Top visitor centre. The two fine 1825 beam engines now run in unison on compressed air, generally the first weekend of each month, Easter to October.

At that time the boilers had seen better days and the largely wood-fired Lancashire boilers at Middleton Top were perforated. Steam was accordingly drawn from the crown of a standard loco at 5psi to feed the engines. In my early rambles I was amused to see a padlock and chain woven through the firebox doors to prevent anyone taking it for a joyride.

Four foot long, cast iron fish bellied rails have been reset between stone sleepers just outside the Middleton engine house and provide features of interest. Each weighs about 85 pounds but the cast iron rails were prone to fracture and were replaced by wrought iron sections. The stone sleepers were not ideal either and spread under the lateral thrust of a laden train taking the sharp bends such as the notorious Gotham curve, which took the line through 80 degrees between Friden and Minninglow.

The Middleton Engine House wheel pit is surprisingly deep, approximately 24 ft, and accommodates the idler wheel, flywheel and main winding drum. The pinion on the crank axle can be slipped sideways to disengage the drive. The cable is then routed around a driving pulley of the same size. Each of the two engines is rated at 20 HP with 25 in diameter cylinders, 5 ft stroke. Each cylinder has an external condenser and a steam working pressure of 5 psi. On the wall inside the engine house is a circular disc with pointer marked B (for standby), G and S (for Go and Stop respectively), a similar disc signal is by the workshop by the Cromford Canal.

Health and Safety legislation now is such that the engine men can only be present for a couple of days a week due to the possible accumulation of radon gas in the pit. It is a wonder that generations of engine men have lived to tell their tale without keeling over from possible noxious vapours released from the limestone. **To be continued.** 

### DRIVING IN THE SNOW FROM WOLSZTYN, PART ONE Bob Gibbens.

2012 was particularly good for driving in the snow with lots of the white stuff. Out of bed at 0415 and a quick wash to wake up. Dressing required more time than usual because of the amount of clothes I had to put on. You cannot afford to go out in a Polish winter with any bare skin showing! The first layer is thermals including long johns to cover your body as much as possible. Then normal day clothes: a shirt, trousers, jumper etc. Time to put the top layer on, overalls, coat, gloves, scarf, hat and strong footwear. It was a bit of a rush to do all this in 30 minutes but it had to be done as the clock ticks round to 0445.

Time to go to the station. Outside the temperature was about minus 18 degrees C. The snow, was crisp and crunchy under foot, the sky black with the stars shining brightly even against the streetlights. The streets were deserted at this time but in the 8 or 9 minutes it took to walk to the station a couple of people passed us on their bikes.

The station staff did not start work till 0600 so there was only one light on the corner of the station building shining on the side entrance. Through the entrance and across the tracks on the wooden crossing. The black outline of the train, steam swirling up between the carriages, could just be picked out. The lights in the train were not on yet as the guard had not arrived.

A couple of cleaner ladies were trying to get a coach door open, but the steam had not quite thawed the lock yet. They eventually get in and climb inside the partially thawed

coach. I reach up and knock on the loco door, climb up the steps, open the door and got in the cab, quickly shutting the door behind me. The crew, who booked on at 03 00, are sitting dozing by the flickering fire light. They stir at our arrival, we shake hands and establish everybody is good.

Marek looks at his watch and points to the shovel. For one of us it is time to start work. I usually drive the first half of the journey but friend Walter doesn't fire because of back problems. I open the fire hole door and look around the fire box, I notice two holes in the shallow fire bed so I fill them in with a couple of shovels full. The fire immediately bursts into life. I then fire six shovels full down each side of the box and six across the back.

It is essential that the coal goes well into the back corners of the firebox. Polish locos have wide fireboxes, so this operation requires the shovel blade to go completely through the fire hole door then turn the shovel left or right then pull the shovel back towards the corner of the fire box This action takes practise. By the end of the week there is no hair on the back of your hand! If the corners of the firebox are not filled with coal the loco will not steam. So this trick has to be learnt quickly. Usually when it is a student (this is what the Poles call their participants) first time at firing the Polish Crews have a bit of a laugh at the students expense and don't tell them about the back corner technique till almost at the end of the journey. The Poles then put 3or 4 shovels full in each corner and watch the pressure gauge move up! The student has been wondering for most of the journey why the pressure gauge won't move, no matter how hard they have tried.

Finally I complete the firing round with a couple of shovels full down the middle and let two shovels full dribble off the end of the shovel around the firebox door. 24 shovels full in all, shut the door and crack the blower. After this exercise at five o' clock in the morning I had warmed up sufficiently to take my coat off and hang it in the tender locker.

Tomak, who is driving the outward leg of the journey, gets up and offers me the driver's seat. I settle myself in and familiarise myself with the controls once again. At 0510 a shrill whistle is heard Odjazd (go) Tomak repeats Odjazd. I open the regulator and watch the steam chest pressure gauge rise, steam blows out in front of the loco and we gently move off into the darkness. Over the level crossing past the loco shed, which has all the doors shut tight, fires burning by the water column and ash pit. A few yards past the level crossing I shut the cylinder cocks and the steam stops blowing out so I can begin to see out of the front window. It is too cold to have the side window or the door open so I peer through this small oily front window and by the lights on the front I can just make out the two rails in the snow in front of us.

Tomak stands behind me watching me and the road ahead, but he is chatting to Marek most of the time. The coal I put on the fire has now burnt through, Marek opens the fire hole door for the next round of coal. The glare from the fire is so bright I cannot see anything out of the window.

Tomak tells me to shut the regulator and brake a little, moments later the shape of a station building appears out of the darkness. There are no lights on this station so I search for the platform marker by the loco headlights and bring the train to a stop in the platform. Toki is the first station from Wolsztyn. I wonder how Tomak knows where he is

when the countryside is a white out it, still dark and he appeared to be chatting to Marek?' **To be continued.** 

### **EVR TIMETABLE: February - May 2014**

Day Rover Fares are: Adults £12, Concessions £11; Children £6; Families (2+3) £29. Special Event Fares may be higher.

Summer Timetable: Trains depart Wirksworth for Duffield, Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday at 10.15, 12.15, 14.15 & 16.15 to connect with the East Midlands Trains Matlock Branch Service and return at 11.15, 13.15, 15.15 & 17.15. The services are operated using Heritage Diesel Railcars. Trains to Ravenstor at 11.53; 13.53 & 15.53, return 12.02; 14.02 & 16.02. The Duffield service will also operate on Thursdays: May 29 and from 3 July until 25 September and Wednesdays 30 July to 3 September.

#### SPECIAL EVENTS.

May 3-5: Bank Holiday - Rocks and Rails Weekend, Steam on Ravenstor Service.

EVRA Shop Sale in Training Room - including bric a brac - lots of bargains!

May 24-26: Wirksworth Carnival and Bank Holiday, Steam on Ravenstor Service.

May 24 Cheese and wine Land Cruise.

June 21-22 Diesel Locomotive Weekend.

July 5-6 Classic Bus Weekend, Steam on Ravenstor Service.

July 19-20 Classic Transport Weekend, Steam on Ravenstor Service.

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