FORTHCOMING MEETINGS to be held at Wote Street Club, Basingstoke Centre normally at 8pm.

Wednesday May 12th  THE JOYS & SORROWS OF A RAILWAY PHOTOGRAPHER

Wednesday May 26th  THE CROSSCOUNTRY RAIL FRANCHISE - Richard Gibson, Head of Communications, will describe the history, the commitments, delivery progress and future plans for this, Arriva owned (now DB), country wide, eight year franchise.

Wednesday June 9th  CABLE’S RAILWAY YEAR 2009 - Member, David Cable, will be showing us what he has photographed in the last twelve months. His 2009 travels will cover Hong Kong, Australia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and various UK locations. No doubt locomotive liveries will again feature.

Wednesday June 23rd  OPERATING THE FREIGHTLINER FLEET- Tom Jones, Senior Rail Strategist for the Freightliner Group, will cover the logistical planning, operational and technical performance issues and practical constraints associated with running a large nationwide based locomotive fleet.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who could give a railway-based presentation.

This Newsletter is produced by the B&DRS and is issued free of charge and for the interest of its members and of the Society’s friends.
EDITORIAL
At the start of the April 14th meeting we held a Special Meeting to elect a new Secretary. I am pleased to say that Alison Bown was elected unopposed and we congratulate her on her appointment.

Richard Green returned again on 28th April, but this time as an attendee. He was able to witness at first hand the continuing high attendances at recent meetings. This was the third meeting in a row where attendances have exceeded 50. Thank you to the relevant committee members for organising and coping so well with these increased numbers.

The Railway Ramblers is also experiencing an upsurge in interest. The April walk along the former Basingstoke to Alton line had 28 members and guests and was a great success. Our Graham Lambert was the Walk Organiser and at least 6 BDRS members walked all or part of the 7 or so miles still accessible with permission from the landowners. Yet again the weather was brilliant!

The Society’s Overseas Trip to Slovenia (and Croatia) also ran very smoothly and, despite being ill beforehand, I was able to relax as all our preplanning paid off - with the exception of two, UK style, bustitutions along scenic routes. Our schedules were not threatened however, as both buses ran early and made the necessary connections. Even the flight and hotel bookings with easyJet proved good. Roll on 2011 and pastures new or maybe a revisit?

The Permanent Way Institution’s latest magazine has a fascinating article about timetable planning. The author, an expert in this subject, has identified many of the problems with our national system and then demonstrates solutions based on the Swiss Taktfahrplan. This is a rhythmic timetable that provides a regular interval timetable every hour, it encourages integration and a marketing appeal through regular times. He has used the Swiss model to develop a new timetable for the East Coast Mainline that minimises connectional waiting times not only for north and south flows but for connecting flows from and to east/west destinations. It has even been shown to work with our privatised, competing operators! Could this happen in the UK? Change of Transport Minister?

David Brace

OBITUARY: CHRIS CULLINGHAM
I am sorry to report the sudden death of Chris Cullingham following an operation. Chris provided the Society with invaluable support during the development of our web site in 2009. He was largely responsible for the technical design and layout and worked with our sub-committee until the first launch. The Society was represented at the funeral by Wally Stamper and John Hollands and we will be making a donation to an appropriate charity.

David Brace

SOCIETY SUMMER COACH TRIP SUNDAY 4TH JULY
This summer’s coach outing is to The Bredgar & Wormshill Railway - a 2’ gauge private railway near Hollingbourne (M20) and The Spa Valley Railway near Tunbridge Wells. Please see last month’s Newsletter for details.

If interested, please fill in a reservation form and provide me with a £10 non-refundable deposit.

John Clark

OTHER SOCIETY MEETINGS
Meon Valley Locomotive Society
June 8th   “AGM + Memories of Steam in China 1990”   John Barrowdale
July 13th  “Chairman’s Night”

Oxfordshire Railway Society
May 12th   “Fifty Years of Change on Irish Railways”   Gerald Siviour
The Railway Club of the New Forest

May 21st  “The Gezira Light Railway”  Alan Wild
June 25th  “Mid Hants Railway - The Watercress Line”  Dave Yaldren

RCTS - Surrey Branch
May 25th  “AGM + Lanzhou to Lhasa + Southern Miscellany”  Andy Davies & Richard Golding

Mid-Hants RPS Portsmouth Regional Group
May 18th  “Steaming Through Sussex”  Bill Gage
June 15th  “Pier Railways & Tramways in Britain”  Nick Kelly

Reading Transport Group
May 19th  “Eastleigh Works”  Barry Eagles

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

MEETING ON APRIL 14TH
THE BLUEBELL RAILWAY BY TONY DRAKE

Having been on the BDRS coach trip to the Bluebell railway in August 2009, your reviewer thought there was little else to learn. How wrong can you be! Tony Drake has been a long term volunteer and is currently a fireman on the Bluebell. He did an excellent presentation to a capacity audience with a combination of the Bluebell Railway's material plus his own extensive pictures, many using opportunities from the footplate to capture pictures that most of us would be unable to take.

Tony took us through the history of the line pre-preservation showing each of the stations and many trains at different locations. He then took us through preservation from the start in 1960 up to a point less than a week before the talk! He showed us just about every locomotive and every piece of rolling stock, many with more than one picture and in all seasons.

He enlivened the evening with many anecdotes from his own experience working on the line and finished by telling us about the major plans for the future. Two projects dominate: the northern extension to East Grinstead and the western branch to Ardingly from Horsted Keynes. We knew less about the latter project and he explained how it might become a means for linking up with the national network, particularly for 3rd rail preserved electric motive power.

Thanks to Tony for a comprehensive and entertaining evening.

MEETING ON APRIL 28TH
MEMORIES OF AN EX-BR FIREMAN BY KEN HORAN

Again another evening to remember as Yorkshireman Ken Horan entertained us with his exploits on and off the footplate in the mid and late 1960s. His Northern humour had us laughing for much of the evening and he encouraged audience participation.

He exploited his 9 years on the footplate to the full and was able to obtain photographs of steam at locations and times that us mere mortals could only dream about. Despite long and unsociable hours, Ken would always volunteer for additional firing duties and on his non-work days chased steam throughout the northeast and northwest, eventually coming down south to the SR and the WR. He even had a chance to fire an A4 in the latter days of steam when they were put on the 3 hour Glasgow to Aberdeen expresses.

During the evening, we covered most of the last strongholds of steam and, even when he only took one or two pictures at a depot, his skill/luck resulted in some very evocative and artistic pictures. Persuading some of his fellow firemen “to put on a bit of smoke” resulted in some spectacular shots! His railway career was curtailed by injury and he eventually joined the ambulance service. His extensive collection of slides has enabled him to find a new career in retirement as a raconteur and he travels widely (even down south to Basingstoke!) from his native Sheffield. This was a thoroughly entertaining evening and I, for one, didn't want it to finish. Most of you were of the same opinion.

David Brace
THE FOOTPLATE CAREER OF MICK LOWE (SPANNING 50 YEARS) NO. 2

Well here we go again back to work, the railway being much the same as any other job, in as much you work together to make the most of what is often hard and dirty work. Work on the footplate is no different, with hard days being forgotten and lighter days being remembered. We were always on the look out for an easy way of earning a ‘crust’. I said in the earlier part of my story that my first driving turn on the main line was on a Hall class loco to Oxford with the 00.30 freight ex Bristol. This was not quite true; in fact it was my second. Actually, I was in our loco mess room as a fireman, with my driver, when the Foreman came in and said, Mr. Lowe, I understand you have now signed up, (route cards), and can perform driving duties, so I am giving you your first driving turn. I am making you up to driver for the day. Great, I thought, this must be a conducting job, but no, his next words were a blow to my dream of a main line ‘blast’. He said that in number 3 road there was a stopped Charlie (Q1), which had come off with all the bearings running hot. So, I had to renew all trimmings, plug, plug and tail and mop, all of which had to be made by hand, and a really dirty messy job, but at least a step up the ladder, plus I was being paid at driver’s rate for the day.

On another occasion, when as a fireman with my regular driver, (Charlie Hayward), we had a turn (19.30) in the evening, where we prepared a King Arthur Class loco and went light to Salisbury Depot. We turned, watered and always worked up with 49 wagons + brake van to Feltham yard and back ‘light’ to Basingstoke. We found, after a couple of nights, when preparing the loco, we could do with a tub or two (10cwt) of extra coal, but the coalman had gone off duty – so no joy. I left a message with the loco foreman to request more coal than we had been given on previous days. Booking on the next night we found we had the ‘extra’ coal we had asked for! The coalman and shed engineman had stacked coal on the seats, in the cab corners, over the top of the boiler, on top of the reverser and also stacked neatly on the floor like a brick wall – with a note, IS THIS ENOUGH COAL FOR YOU? We had to laugh at the light-hearted footplate type of humour that was always present in those days.

Another trip with Charlie was when we worked the 17.09 ex Waterloo to Basingstoke, one of our better turns as regards to work content. This turn was always a King Arthur class engine with a load of 10 coaches. First stop was Woking with this train, and by the time you got to Oatlands, with a slight drop down through Weybridge, you were going at quite a speed, (no Speedos on the King Arthur class). If there was any loose play between engine and tender the motion would gradually shake the coal about, thus filling the cab with coal dust, so you had to use the prep. pipe a lot, (this only worked when the right hand injector was on). As we ran through Weybridge – a loud bang – loads of steam – and no prep pipe, so the steam valve shut. Looking down we could see the injector body fractured away from the pipe work. We shut the water valve and decided we will have a look when we reach Woking. In the meantime we had to use the driver’s side injector, but of course this does not allow the use of the prep pipe. Looking at it at Woking, Charlie, who was never a one to give up on an engine unless it was really necessary, said, “carry on lad with one injector and let’s hope it doesn’t pack up altogether”. Thankfully all went well. We arrived back in Basingstoke as black as rooks, as it was not possible to keep the dust down. Another day ‘dusted ‘off!!!

Animals on the line are always a potential hazard, I have had several incidents, and three were in the same area of Leamington Spa and Fosse Road. The first time, a few sheep ran across in front of me, causing me to brake when working the CrossCountry service 47 Class, with 7 coaches. No fatalities here, (so no roast lamb for the weekend!!!) The second incident was a couple of week’s later half a mile nearer the same place. I ploughed through a flock of sheep, this time killing several. The shock of even hitting animals is not very pleasant, as it’s a really sickening thud with lots of bits of sheep everywhere!! Fortunately, no damage to the loco as often a brake pipe can be severed and then assistance from another loco would be required. The third incident was in the same area again. I was able to stop, as it was a straight stretch of track, and I could see a flock of sheep approaching me. I informed the area signalman of the incidents. The fact that they were not wearing high visibility jackets, (the sheep that is), was a definite crime to be on the track without wearing one!!!! “Ewe never know what you are likely to meet!”

That’s all for now - more next time.

Mick Lowe.
COAST TO COAST (U.K. RAILTOURS – 6TH March, 2010)
A bleary-eyed party, consisting of Richard, Wally, Paul, (a non-Member, but we are working on it!), and myself, gathered well before the crack of dawn for another Fish and Chip study ‘Up North’!
Starts to rail tours don’t come much earlier in the morning than the 04:54 off Basingstoke! This was necessary to reach Euston for the 07:10 departure to visit both the east and the west coasts of ‘Olde England’ all on the same day.

A rather familiar rake of red and cream coaches waited at Euston, topped and tailed respectively by class 67’s, 67003 and 67002 “Special Delivery”. An on-time departure of 07:10 saw us quickly heading for our first pickup at Watford Junction, but things began to go amiss as we were brought to a stand just short of the station. As we moved off again we realised that this was just another of the many signalling delays that bedevil this rebuilt route, as we passed men in orange suits standing by several open lineside cabinets. Departure from Watford Junction was 25 minutes down as we made our way to Bletchley for the next pickup.

Taking the single line loop here, we now gained the Bedford line at Fenny Stratford. Having lost our path somewhat, an effort was soon being made to regain time. Bedford St. Johns and Bedford, where we were held briefly, were passed and now on the Midland mainline, we quickly got down to some serious running. Wellingborough, Kettering and Market Harborough were passed in rapid succession, slowing somewhat to negotiate Leicester. Taking the Nottingham line at Trent Jn., we soon passed through Nottingham and Newark Castle. Crossing the ECML at 90° on the level, and at a good crack too, was a first for me. Time was now being clawed back and soon we had our first glimpse of the impressively set Lincoln Cathedral, sitting high on its hill overlooking the city.

The renewed track and signalling here is very much in evidence as we passed through the city, heading for Wrawby Jn and its legendary signal gantries. A 2 minute crew change at Barnetby did not allow us to leave the train and every window was clogged with photographers wanting to get their pictures of the fast disappearing sets of fine signal gantries! Soon we were slowing for the entry to Grimsby and a fairly slow perambulation followed over several level crossings before we finally reached the buffer stops at Cleethorpes. Here we were greeted on the platform with a Scottish Piper, in full rig, playing us into town. We were not sure quite where he fitted into the Lincolnshire landscape though.

For the writer, being here again was pure nostalgia, having spent many 2 week summer holidays from the age of eleven to fourteen in the town. I was farmed out with my Aunt and Uncle and enjoyed many hair-raising adventures by bike with the boy next door. Sadly, it didn’t quite seem to be how I remembered it all those years ago! After a quick walk to inspect the still extant old Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire, (Mucky, Slow & Late), railway station nearby, (now a hostelry), we headed for the promenade and braved the icy wind off the North Sea. Heading back to the station, we were lured into the Mermaid Fish & Chip emporium by the fabulous smell. Here we fortified ourselves with trays of freshly cooked chips, and all that goes with it, before boarding our nearby train once again for the next leg of our journey. Departure was to time and, with 67002, “Special Delivery” now in charge, we passed through Barnetby once again, this time at a good canter, to gain the Scunthorpe line and pass the massive sprawl that is, or was, Appleby-Frodingham Steelworks.

Arrival at Cleethorpes (well many Scots worked at Scunthorpe steel works!)
Through Thorne Jn. and Hatfield & Stainforth, we took the ‘goods only’ route, to avoid Doncaster, and soon passed over the ECML to Adwick Jn, where, after a short delay, we gained the Doncaster - Leeds electrified mainline. A brisk run brought us to Hare Park Jn, where we turned off the main to enter Wakefield Kirkgate. After another crew change we soon reached Healey Mills yards, which are now a mere shadow of their former self. Here we passed by the rusting hulks of several Class 56’s, all of them seemingly waiting for the cutter’s torches by the look of them. We soon began the long, steady climb towards the Pennines, passing through Sowerby Bridge, Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd, to gain the dizzy heights of Copy Pit Summit, at 1749 ft. This was another first on this route for me and the narrow, winding valleys to the summit were very spectacular. Once over the top, it was ‘all downhill’, as they say, through Rose Grove, to Blackburn for a further crew change.

With a little time in hand, we set off towards Preston, regaining the WCML for the short run along it through Preston. At Fylde Jn. we took the curve towards Blackpool and, after some brisk running, we passed through Poulton-le-Fylde, with its new crossovers, which will, hopefully, re-open the route to Fleetwood one day.

As we rolled to a halt in Blackpool North dusk was beginning to descend. After a brisk walk, to get the knee joints going again, we came down to Talbot Square, the promenade and the Irish Sea. Disappointingly, the trams were still not running, due to extensive track relaying work. Pictures of a well fenced-in Works Car and its trailer, with the Tower as a backdrop, were taken for the record. Now time to head back to the station and, no doubt in the interest of research, some of our party managed further consumption of fish and chips. Presumably this was being done for comparison purposes with the east coast variety!

Suitably fortified, we left Blackpool on time at 18:55, with 67003 on the front once more, for the long drag back down the WCML to Euston. Our first brief stop, again a crew change, was at Crewe, followed by our first passenger stop at Bletchley. We arrived in Watford Junction, for the second passenger stop, ahead of schedule, but had to wait for time here before the final part of the journey to Euston, where we arrived pretty much on time. The Euston to Euston mileage was 592 miles and 27 chains. With the Basingstoke legs added, we had travelled nearly 700 miles in the day, arriving back home again at 01:00. It had been a very long day and a long journey, but a thoroughly enjoyable trip.

Peter Tran.

SLOVENIAN SOJOURN

After a period of uncertainty engendered by the volcanic dust cloud, this year's European venture went ahead as scheduled. Thirteen BDRS members assembled on Basingstoke station in time for the 10.57 train to Waterloo. From here we crossed London by underground to connect with the Stansted Express at Tottenham Hale. This delivered us to the airport in ample time for our 15.35 flight.

Flying from Stansted was a new experience for many in the party. After the turmoil of the previous week, all was calm and efficient. We enjoyed the added bonus of a transfer to the satellite terminal in the people-mover. Being a no-thrills airline, easyJet provides no complimentary in-flight refreshments, but a range of options is always available for purchase. I chose the BLT sandwich, not really expecting beetroot, lychee and tangerine. The drinks were more orthodox.

We had pre-booked a private transfer from the airport into Ljubljana and two minibuses were awaiting us, the drivers sporting "Brace" placards at arrivals in the customary way. We were soon checking-in at our luxury (honest!) hotel, ideally situated between the railway station and the historic part of the city. We took our evening meal in a private room of the hotel group's executive restaurant. This will be memorable not only for its haute cuisine but also for its correspondingly haute cost. A good day was brought to a conclusion with a stroll around the quiet and well restored city centre, and a first look at the station.

On the Friday, suitably fortified by a magnificent breakfast buffet, the schedule was for a varied circuit to the west. The first leg was 64 km north-westwards to Jesenice, undertaken in a Desiro
EMU or, for the late risers, aboard the Villach-bound EuroCity, formed of a Taurus loco and two coaches. Jesenice provided plenty of activity for the camera. Onwards from here we travelled 89 km south-westwards by DMU on a strikingly scenic route to Nova Gorica, although the ladies left us after 10 km to spend the day at Lake Bled. At Nova Gorica we encountered the first of several plinthed steam locomotives, always attractive subjects. One member of the group went exploring here and wishes it to be recorded that he walked across the border into Italy, thus converting his weekend into a three-country experience.

The next leg was a further 40 km by DMU to Sežana, which was followed by a short EMU ride to Divača. Here we admired a plinthed 0-10-0 but learned that onward travel was to be by bus, in consequence of engineering works. This was a somewhat daunting prospect as we were now 104 km from Ljubljana, but fortunately the bus took us only 24 km to Pivka where we transferred to our intended train, which then ran about 15 min behind schedule. It was an interesting day with perfect weather, covering 306 km in total. Our evening meal was our traditional Chinese banquet. This was very enjoyable but it was noticeable that our unhurried visit provided the restaurant's only custom.

Saturday started with a walk to the city's recently opened funicular, which took us up to the imposing castle, from where we had extensive views over the city. After our descent, we walked back across town to the railway museum. There was much of interest here although the indoor exhibits were closely spaced and not well illuminated, so were very difficult to photograph. Then it was back to the station for a trip to Maribor, Slovenia's second city, situated 156 km to the northeast. Travel was in a Class 310 Pendolino 3-car unit, branded as InterCity Slovenia. This creaked a little as it tilted, the air-conditioning was only just adequate and, being May Day, the buffet car was closed. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable, uncrowded journey - although the need for a tilting train, given the modest line speed, is highly questionable. At Maribor we encountered a plinthed 0-6-0T just outside the station. Most of the party returned to Ljubljana in the ICS, as planned, with a splinter group choosing an earlier stopping service and taking time out at the junction station of Zidani Most. For our evening meal we chose a riverside restaurant offering typical Slovene fare, which included soup served in a hollowed-out loaf.

On Sunday we journeyed to Zagreb in Croatia, a distance of 142 km, the limited number of trains on the route requiring a fairly early start. During the extended stop at Dobova, the border station, we were able to photograph the loco change (electrification changes here from 3000 V DC to 25 kV AC) before being ushered back on board for a fairly cursory passport check. We sampled the city's extensive tram system, which is free within the central area, to access the ancient funicular. We made the short ascent to the upper town, then walked down through attractive narrow cobbled streets via a coffee bar and the cathedral to the main square. Security checks were rather more thorough on the return, including a quick check for stowaways under the seats. Provisional plans for stopovers in Dobova and Sevnica were abandoned, as observation on the outbound journey suggested that there would be little to be seen. Most of the group left the train for another spell at Zidani Most, where there is an attractively plinthed 0-8-0T, its green livery now rather faded. The ladies returned directly to Ljubljana where they spent time in the park watching trains (so they say) and taking refreshment. Our final evening meal, at another establishment specialising in Slovene cuisine, was limited to two courses. It was followed by a late funicular ascent to the castle for an ice cream dessert.

Our return flight on the Monday was not until the evening, giving us the benefit of a full day before needing to make our way to the airport. With our luggage left in the hotel's safe keeping, the plan
was to travel 153 km south-west by InterCity to Koper, the country's only seaport. Only when the ticket inspector arrived did we learn that onwards from Divača, 104 km out, transport would be provided by bus. We were advised that this was the situation every Sunday and Monday for an extended period, to permit engineering works. After considering the possible alternatives, of which there were few, the majority decided to proceed by bus to Koper. No doubt a certain inclemency at this juncture had something to do with the decision. Two members left the train at Pivka to travel on a branch-line service to Ilirska Bistrica, where they report obtaining a decent lunch.

The substitute bus service was well organised, with arrival at Koper 10 min ahead of schedule. The weather by now had much improved. We had time to walk or taxi into town and get the flavour of the place, the city – unsurprisingly – being very Italian in ambience. The return bus was equally well organised, any anxiety about making the essential connection at Divača being quickly dispelled. In fact, the bus had to make a ten minute stop en route to maintain the timetable. Onwards from Divača our train was held for about twelve minutes awaiting access to the temporary single line working that had caused the problem on Friday. With some slack in our schedule, we were back in Ljubljana in time for a final spell of photography on the station.

With luggage reclaimed, our minibus transfer from hotel to airport was provided by the same drivers as outbound. Check-in was fast and efficient, but our flight was delayed by 45 min – not too bad at this end of the day. Return from Stansted to Old Basing was by minibus, the use of rail at this late hour, with the possibility of further delay, being thought unwise.

This proved to be a great trip, one traveller even suggesting the best yet. Slovenia is very scenic, the mountain, river and forest views somewhat reminiscent of low-altitude Switzerland. The cities were clean, tidy and safe, the people friendly and helpful. Costs, with exceptions, were low. The railway system, while having obvious imperfections, proved to be generally prompt and reliable.

In conclusion, a few statistics. With travellers exercising a degree of independence, this section has to refer to my own experience of events. We travelled a total of 1208 km on 872 km of the country's 1228 km of railway. This is not an enormous distance but time was intentionally set aside for photography and culture. We made 18 main line (including substitute bus) movements plus a further seven on trams and funiculars. We enjoyed travel with four classes of electric loco from three countries, three types of EMU and one DMU. Again, not that impressive a list, but the country has only four classes (including sub-classes) of electric loco and the same number of EMU types. Diesel locos are not used routinely on passenger services and older types of DMU are employed mainly on commuter services, which were not operating during much of our visit.

Travel, with only minor exceptions, was with an InterRail Pass. This was priced at €69 although we paid only £59, which represents an exceptionally good deal. We completed journeys to the value of €85.02, or £78.00 at the going rate of £1 = €1.09. The Pass therefore saved us £19.00. The convenience factor is impossible to evaluate, of course.

Thanks to David, once again, for masterminding the whole operation and holding it all together. An impression of the trip will be presented on the big screen in March. Thoughts are already turning to next year's destination. Whatever is decided, why not give it a go? Good company, varied travel, splendid scenery, excellent gastronomy, patient tour leaders – what more could you ask?

Richard Green
(Photos by David Brace)