



Ecclesbourne Express

*Newsletter of the Ecclesbourne Valley
Railway Association*

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The Wirksworth to Duffield Line

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association
(Company No.5257082 Limited by Guarantee Charity No. 1106810)

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Winter Edition (Issue 93) will be published in January 2024 We welcome contributions by post/email to the editors please:

The DEADLINE DATE for inclusion will be: **8th DECEMBER 2023**

NB A REMINDER WILL BE SENT 7 DAYS PRIOR TO THE ABOVE DATE.

PLEASE REPLY TO: *editorsEE@talktalk.net*

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of the deadline date, especially as it's Christmas!!!!!!!

Front Cover: D9537 on holiday at the North Norfolk Railway. *photo © Chris Baily*

Back Cover: Toad Brake van first test run on Ravenstor incline 18th June. 2023 *photo © John Stokes*
L to R are: Oliver Hodgkinson, Ben Field, Joe Hallford-Marsden & James Hartley

Letter from the editors

It is Autumn already! We almost missed Summer which was all too brief this year.

EVRA would like to welcome Simon Scott as the new MD of WyvernRail PLC. We wish him all the best in his new position and look forward to working with him.

The Christmas trains are selling well so if you are planning on joining us for the bigger and better show than ever this year, it is time to book your seats, see page 13 for details.

At long last we are able to re-introduce working on the Ravenstor incline having re-assessed all our crews on the Barclays as it has been out of action on the incline for almost a year. We have procured a brake van with fitted vacuum brakes which is now a requirement of the EVR safety system. The newcomer is featured on p20 in the form of a GWR "Toad" van. It also means that we can offer Driver Experiences again and the participant's family can ride in the van once more. See the **EVR** website for booking forms: e-v-r.com

The diesel fleet keeps rolling along with minor attention and Eric (D9537) has returned from the North Norfolk railway which adds another loco to the stable.

One of the Standard 2 class locos that reside at the GCR will be joining us in November and is expected to do some of the Santa Trains for EVR giving a chance for some necessary TLC to be applied to 80080.

Cathryn has now been out-shopped at Peak Rail and is undergoing some testing, but from what we have seen she is looking well and sounding exactly as she should. The paint job looks excellent and she is resplendent in red and black livery, see p16

Since this is the last issue before Christmas, we would like to say **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year** to all, even if it's a bit early!

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As always, please check on the website: e-v-r.com for up-to-date information regarding services, times and facilities before travelling to Ecclesbourne Valley Railway.

Thank you

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OBITUARY

ROB DAVIES

Tim Oaks

As a railway volunteer, Rob Davies was my friend and colleague for over forty years.

He initially joined Peak Rail as a volunteer at Buxton, and was present on the first day of working on the Buxton Midland site in February 1982. He took part in permanent way and general construction activities, including several salvage expeditions and was a member of the mid week P.W. Team, he also qualified as a steam locomotive fireman and was a member of the 48624 Society and assisted in restoring goods rolling stock before transferring to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway in 2010, where he joined in the restoration of The Duke from the beginning.

He was a former postman, passionately interested in football and fond of foreign travel, particularly to Switzerland.

His death is a great loss to our team and our thoughts are with his widow, Sheila, and his family.

AGM 25th November 2023

The papers for the AGM are enclosed, including a map showing how to get to The Maltings which is a new venue for the AGM.

MINUTES SECRETARY (needed)

EVRA

The EVRA Board would like to record their thanks to Joe Carver who has been our minutes secretary for over five years, recording our discussions and decisions.

We are very grateful to him for all his work which he has done and in keeping us on the straight and narrow when we occasionally strayed from the subject.

As a result, we are now seeking a new minutes secretary - someone with computer skills plus shorthand if possible, who would be willing to attend monthly board meetings at Wirksworth and the AGM in the Autumn, typically in November.

If interested please contact Pat Craft on email: mikecraft7@btinternet.com

SALES MATTERS

Pat Craft

We have been overwhelmed with donations since I last wrote – so much so that the floor in the office has been largely covered for much of the last quarter! However, with regular help in sorting, pricing, Gift Aiding etc., we have somehow kept on top of it all and made more items available for sale. We have put out a number of working timetables and added to them as we found more in storage; they have gone well but were rested to make way for the half-price sale at the end of September.

We have also been able to add a few railway lamps after inspection; they came from a large donation in July. We do not paint or restore them – just an overall clean and a check for oil reservoir and wick, which we are sometimes able to replace from store items donated at the same time.

It is pleasing for all of us to hear the good comments about the Museum and shop, with praise for the latter including for the way it is laid out and the separation of books into defined sections. Its reputation is growing, often by word of mouth and this summer has seen a good number of visitors who have just come for the bookshop. On one day in mid-September two separate customers bought over £100 of books each, titles which they had been looking for some time. They vowed to come back. We always need volunteers to help us with the many aspects of keeping the shop running smoothly, so if you are interested please contact me and come for a visit. Email: mikecraft7@btinternet.com

PRIZE DRAW

A big thank you to all those who have returned the counterfoils and money and to the shop volunteers who have asked customers to help in this way too.

1st EAST MIDLANDS LARGE SCALE MODEL RAILWAY SHOW Mike Craft

This was held over the second weekend in July and attracted a good number of visitors, who seemed to enjoy it judging by the feedback forms, which we used for the first time. (We have taken comments on board for the 18th Exhibition at the end of September; for example the regular bus service up into town was a winner and is being repeated.) Whilst we were only using two halls in the centre of Wirksworth for ease of getting the large layouts in on the level, the layouts and specialist traders proved an attraction for people with both a general interest in this type of model railway and a specific need to get ideas and to purchase rolling stock, and other items. We will be considering whether to run another next year. We are grateful to Malc and Brett Grubey of Malcs Models of Ilkeston for their all their help with the show.

100 CLUB PRIZE DRAW Andrew Denham

1st Prize: £ 69.53 No 240 DS

2nd Prize: £ 41.72 No 164 AW

3rd Prize: £ 27.81 No 111 AC

Please note that legally, we are no longer allowed to give names so only initials appear here. All winners will be advised in the normal way

NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY

Mike Craft

As I explained in the last issue, we were close to re-opening the Narrow Gauge, after a great deal of work with help from many volunteers throughout the railway, 14 years on from its initial opening. We managed to do the risk assessment – not a short task (!) and opened it to the public in a shortened form in time for the Large Scale Model Railway weekend. It has run at the diesel gala in August but although planned for August Bank Holiday with guards signed up, unfortunately the driver was unable to attend. So my plea for more help still stands as there was no alternative driver for the three days. The shortened route was necessary because the platform at the Waterfall (the far end of the line) had deteriorated badly and work has been ongoing to build it again with fresh materials. We hope it will be finished by the time of the 18th Model Railway Exhibition and for Wizarding Day as one of the attractions in the yard.

WIRKSWORTH STATION APPROACH ROAD

Mike Craft

For some time now, the entrance to the Station has been subject to potholes and areas of rough ground and while attempts have been made to patch the road they have never lasted very long. The Trustees decided to investigate the cost of asphaltting the worst areas in large blocks. The state of the road was not a good first impression for visitors and was dangerous, causing falls; in addition, volunteers, staff and contractors who used it regularly were reporting damage to their vehicles. We were able to find several contractors who quoted and chose a local contractor on the basis of his quote. Imagine our surprise to learn that the supplier of the tarmac was willing to provide the tarmac and other materials to us as a donation. We are very grateful to Tony Stacey (and his fellow directors) of Stacey Processing at Ryder Point, for this important donation. The work was completed at the start of September and the approach looks really good!

ASHPIT

Mike Craft

As reported in the last Express, EVRA has been concentrating on the early steps towards achieving the Pit and Loco shed. The VCT container has been delivered. The contents of the adjacent rotten one have been transferred, and that container has been cut up and disposed of. The new fuel bund has been created in the space vacated and by the time you are reading this the fuel tanks will have been repositioned.

EVRA has obtained the necessary three quotes for the construction of the ash pit and has met professional fund raisers for their opinion on whether a grant application for the shed and the pit together was feasible. In the absence of a lease for the land from WRail and with serious H&S implications it was decided to deal with just the Pit at the current time. Drawings for the Engine Shed have been prepared and are being considered in the light of the advice from the fund raisers to meet the criteria adequately when the time comes.

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Mike Craft

The newly finished play area, together with the adjoining sensory garden, were officially opened by the Mayor of Wirksworth, Councillor Sean Barker on 19th September. On the same day the guests were introduced to the Toad brake van, now leased to the Association, for a ride up the incline. Thus Wirksworth's unofficial logo, the "T'owd Man" logo met the Toad.



COPY OF A PRESS RELEASE

Tom Tait

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association Celebrates Opening of Re- Furnished Children's Play Area

The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association is thrilled to announce the grand opening of the re-furnished Children's Play Area, a delightful addition to its family-friendly offerings. This exciting newly upgraded facility aims to provide a safe and engaging environment where children can explore, play, and create lasting memories.

Nestled within the picturesque Ecclesbourne Valley, the Children's Play Area is a testament to the Association's commitment to enhancing the railway experience for visitors of all ages. The play area is thoughtfully designed to stimulate children's imagination and encourage active play while complementing the natural beauty of the surrounding area.

Featuring a variety of play structures, including a sensory garden the Children's Play Area promises endless fun for children of all abilities. The play area is equipped with state-of-the-art safety measures, ensuring parents and guardians can relax and enjoy the railway experience while their little ones explore.

"The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association is delighted to unveil the upgraded Children's Play Area, which adds an exciting new dimension to our railway experience," said Mike Craft a representative of the Association. Neil Ferguson-Lee, Wyvern Rail plc

more follows... →

added, "We believe that providing a stimulating and safe environment for children is essential to creating cherished memories for families visiting our railway. We are confident that the play area will become a beloved destination for families from near and far."

In addition to the play area, visitors will have the opportunity to explore the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, a heritage railway line renowned for its breath taking views and nostalgic charm. The railway offers a range of experiences, including steam and heritage diesel train rides, special events, and themed excursions for all to enjoy.

The Association welcomed a number of guests to today's opening and were delighted that the Town's Mayor agreed to cut the ceremonial ribbon accompanied by children of a local primary School.

For more information about the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association and the Children's Play Area, please visit e-v-r-a.com or contact Mike Craft

Email: mikecraft7@btinternet.com

The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and operating the historic railway line in Derbyshire, UK. With a focus on providing a memorable and enjoyable experience for visitors, the Association offers a range of activities and events suitable for all ages.



Black Swan

Idridgehay

Food Served

Tuesday to Saturday

Midday to 8.30 pm

Sunday Midday to 4.00pm

Wirksworth Road, Idridgehay, Belper

DE56 2SG

01773 550694

email: blackswan.idridgehay@gmail.com

www.blackswanidridgehay.com



The Rising Sun

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Tel: 01629 258658 Mob: 07902 918410

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done well.**

Food Served:

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Weekends 12.00-8.00pm

Diesel Department Update: Chris Baily & Oliver Hodgkinson

Bit of an update on the class 14's :

Chris Baily

D9525 was successfully started following a power unit rebuild and has been taking ginger steps around Wirksworth yard and on the incline.



D9525 – On test. Photo © Chris Baily



D9525 Engine re-fit Photo © Chris Baily

D9537 – In service. (Chris Baily) D9537 (“Eric”) has been on holiday flying the EVR flag on the North Norfolk railway for the summer, it is due to return to EVR in October. (See front cover picture)

D9525 – On test. (Chris Baily) The power unit has had a full strip down following seizure (not at EVR) and received a new crankshaft, bearings, pistons, liners, cylinder heads, overhauled fuel pumps and injectors. No stone left unturned! Once completion of a C exam, other modifications and repairs, the loco will be launched at the 14s@60 event 25th to the 28th July next year. (See above left.)

More Updates

Oliver Hodgkinson

31601 – In service. The locomotive was recently put through a B2 Exam, this involved a good look underneath checking wheel profiles, traction motors etc. The locomotive has been seen recently hauling works trains to aid the collection and distribution of materials for the p-way work to continue.

33103 – Out of service. The locomotive is patiently sat waiting for major engine work to start, there is no timescale on this work but hoping it will be started in the near future.

D1842 – In service. D1842 has been with use for a couple years now and has proved to be a reliable loco! Not much to say other than it has been working well and has had attention to the brake system to improve brake timings, this involved changing various valves that have been on the engine for many years.

more follows →

73001 – In service. The loco has also seen completion of a B1 Exam this season, with the usual checks being carried out to keep the loco in top form, but most recently the loco had suffered with power issues. As the driver attempts to open the power handle to increase power, the loco wasn't responding. Initially the usual checks were carried out and all checked ok, attention was then turned to the Engine Governor. This controls engine speed and the generator output. Upon investigation it was found the engine speed piston which gets its control from the driver's power handle was sticking. The piston was dismantled, cleaned up and refitted, the loco was tested and the fault had been cured.

73210 Overhaul. Since the last update a start has been made on the body work, cutting out and replacing corroded steel. The gutter on the east side has been removed to repair the parts of the cant rail that need the same attention. Work continues in the electrical room, with paint being applied and the floor checker plating starting to be cleaned up. The long winded task of taking the floor up in No.1 cab has begun with every single screw being resistant to any form of movement!



73001 heads into the shed.



D-Day: Donna Drives a Diesel.



73210 Repairing the tin worm.

Tom – In service. Tom is currently pending a B exam. This involves oil changes and filter changes to keep the loco reliable and serviceable. The locomotive sadly had an engine failure back in 2020. Since returning to traffic, it was decided the locomotive will remain in the yard at Wirksworth to prevent another premature engine failure. After all, shunting is what Tom did prior to being used on works trains. Works trains now operate using a much safer method of running with a continuous brake formation. This method has been imposed on us by the ORR. Tom doesn't have the braking capabilities to effectively stop long rakes of wagons or pull them without causing mechanical strain due to it only being a small shunting locomotive. Why overwork such a small locomotive when you have a fleet of much more suitable engines that can complete the tasks without breaking into a sweat? It has now become an indispensable piece of equipment in the yard and the operating department would be stuck without it.

Charlie – In service. This loco has been with us for a couple of years now on hire from Andrew Briddon, with the railway only having a single shunting engine. Charlie helps by taking the load off Tom and giving us the flexibility to still operate when one shunting engine is down. Both Charlie and Tom are used on a weekly basis to keep the engineering/maintenance department moving. From shunting coaches to steam engines, they are both heavily relied upon.



Class 26 26007 passes through Shottle heading back to Wirksworth on a fine Summer's evening.

photo © Oliver Hodgkinson



D9537 at Holt on the North Norfolk Railway.

photo © Chris Baily

ECCLESBOURNE VALLEY RAILWAY

Tim Oaks

The former Slum Sidings ground frame, obtained from Derby some years ago has been refurbished and has been installed in October to permit passenger workings to depart from Platform 1 at Wirksworth as well as Platform 2 which is used by all passenger trains at present.

Work is just beginning on a major extension of the maintenance facility in order to provide a steam running shed; the first step is the construction of a new diesel oil bund so that the existing one can be cleared away from the construction site. Work is to begin on a 70ft ashpit shortly.



SETRA 1995



DENNIS Trident Alex 400 2006



AEC REGENT III 1952

(Sheffield)



DAF SB220 Optare Delta 1990

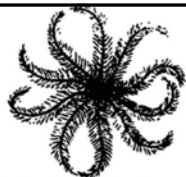
(PMT - Potteries Motor Traction)

all photos © John Stokes

The annual Bus Rally photos came in too late for the last edition of the magazine but here are photographs of some of buses that attended on the day. EDs



The Red Lion



THE FEATHER STAR

**THE FEATHER STAR
is now within the
RED LION Hotel, Wirksworth.**

Inside bar now open
Ample seating in our sun trap outside space
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UMAMI bar menu to eat in the Feather Star
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All aboard Santa's Enchanted Journey

a festive steam ride for all the family to enjoy!

Selected dates from 25th November - 24th December

Brand new for 2023! A festive journey from Wirksworth filled with festive cheer, magic and warmth. See Santa on board our steam train, be entertained by his elves and a gift for every child!



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01629 823076



DIESEL GALA WINS RAILWAY AN ACCOLADE

Leigh Gratton

The Summer Diesel Gala is always popular. This is partly because most railways tend to host diesel galas at the shoulders of the season rather than in the middle of holiday time but we find it benefits us to hold it in the summer to avoid clashes. Similarly, it provides a welcome break from operations for the steam department as a maintenance window.

This year's event featured visiting Class 26 26007 which debuted at the Twin Peaks Gala back in April. The locomotive certainly proved popular with the visitors and sounded particularly well when performing on the Ravenstor incline. Speaking of the incline, the event saw the introduction into service of the recently acquired Toad brake van on that service. This vehicle is in great condition and provides a much different experience to riding in a standard passenger coach. I personally sampled it in the rain and got soaked, but it was all part of the experience.

Also operating at the event were 73001 which is still on the railway from Crewe, D1842 which has proved ever-popular whilst it has been with us and stalwart 31601. Representing the DMU was W55034. The eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that another DMU car made a surprise appearance for one return trip on the Friday; this being Derby Lightweight trailer car M79612. This trip was a pre-arranged special birthday party for one of the chaps who has been restoring the vehicle and proved a useful test ahead of a public introduction in the future. We think this is the first time the vehicle has carried passengers in around fifty five years. This vehicle has a big birthday next year, when it turns seventy!

The Saturday evening saw a special staff social at Wirksworth, with a BBQ brilliantly executed by the catering department. Fortunately, it stayed dry and a jolly evening was had by staff from many departments across the railway. In true spirit of friendship, our colleagues from Peak Rail were invited just as we had been to theirs in April, with some twenty or so of their volunteers attending too.

Diesel Gala events are traditionally quieter on Sunday. We'd already done three full days, with the addition of a Thursday this year and therefore a welcome reduction in the timetable was introduced for Sunday. Indeed Thursday was certainly worth it, with passenger numbers actually topping Friday in a strange twist. Sunday was the day pre-arranged with travel and tourism body VisitEngland for them to carry out their 'mystery shopper' inspection. They let you know the date but do not reveal who they are until the end of the day. All attractions were available for the assessor on the day and it was commented that they particularly enjoyed the 'Driver for a Fiver' experience.



The railway scored highly in many areas of the assessment and we're proud to have been awarded Accredited status from VisitEngland as a result!

73001 seen at Hazlewood on the 26th Aug after dropping off the new, very blue Vegetation Control Team.(VCT) container.

Photo © John Stokes

Well, the last report explaining why the railway had reached the point where a blanket speed restriction had to be imposed certainly caused a reaction! The piece was written as I felt the membership of the railway needed to know how we had got to that point. Since then, we have continued to progress changing defective sleepers between Shottle and Hazelwood, working from our blue tool store container and some of the speed restrictions have been lifted. There are still around 60 sleepers left to change, but we are working through them. However, as the weather gets wetter and colder we will have to find a way of providing some sort of basic messing facility at site to dry out and warm up a bit during the day. We have a mess container at Barnsley Lane and, if we get the promised trailer for the MH5, then when that machine is fixed we can move the container to site.

Our work is always restricted by train services during the summer, but we try to do 'off track' work then. In the last period, a small team lead by Dave Newby has constructed a fine brick-built drainage catch pit beside the line near milepost 134. This will intercept water running off the fields on the up side of the line and should prevent the ballast from becoming fouled with soil run-off. There is plenty of drainage work still to do at various points along the line and, with the ORR becoming more interested in how railways deal with drainage following the Stonehaven derailment, we can expect to have to do more of this sort of work.

Other work done this period is fishplate lubrication. This is a fairly big job, involving unbolting the joint using a petrol powered impact wrench, prising the plates off then squirting oil behind, before bolting up again. It takes a team of staff equipped with a trolley or Land Rover full of tools to do this job. Recently, we have discovered a lubrication product that Network Rail use that can be applied without needing to dismantle the joint, greatly easing the job. The drawback is the price – £430 for enough to deal with less than ½ mile of track!

We are starting to plan our winter work which will take place after the running season. We have quite a bit to do, having not completed our somewhat ambitious programme for last winter. Top of the list will be to re-ballast and relay the track under bridge 20 ('pig farm'). I am sure the train crews will welcome the removal of the 5mph TSR here! We are always on the lookout for new members of the team, so anyone fed up with slowing for the 5mph speed is welcome to join us and help remove it! We meet Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Contact me on grahamwclarkuk@gmail.com for details.



Neville Froggatt shows the Catch Pit

Photo © David Newby

UPDATE ON CATHRYN

Andrew Denham

As we reported recently, our Hudswell Clarke, ex NCB loco “Cathryn” has moved to Peak Rail for final finishing, testing and proving since the owner of a similar loco offered us his skills and services to get her back on the rails.

She has now been re-painted into the closest colours available to the original livery and she looks a fine specimen now.



Cathryn gets all steamed up.



Now we see why!

All the hard work done over the last 10 years or more by the dedicated members of the Dream Steam Team has finally come to fruition and Cathryn breathes once more after a slumber of 46 years. She was supplied new to the National Coal Board in 1955 although the design dated from 1915 for the Port of London Authority. She was no. 1884, and originally worked at Stanley Colliery near Wakefield until 1969. After some repairs she moved to St John’s Colliery, Wakefield and alternated between there and Park Hill Colliery until her retirement in 1977. This was one of several Hudswell Clarke locos that were converted to use gas producers, which enabled small, low grade slack and coal to be used effectively, whilst keeping emissions to a low level, and not choking the grate. There was a small reciprocating engine fitted to a feeder below the cab floor. This then dropped fuel into the firebox and created producer gas but the exhaust steam from the feeder engine cooled the fire and produced water gas, in much the same way that town gas was generated in the UK before natural gas became available.

There is an excellent explanation of the system and its reason for use (albeit the Hunslet version) here: https://www.brc-stockbook.co.uk/qn_29_09.htm

Sadly, the feeder was damaged and the feeder engine was missing when we acquired the custody of Cathryn, but the original design has been adhered to closely, apart from adding the necessary vacuum braking and steam heating that are required for passenger use.

She will visit us in the near future, but meantime she is at Peak Rail:

<https://www.peakrail.co.uk/>

photos © by S. Usher

BAGNALL AUSTERITY 2746 THE DUKE

Tim Oaks

Here are some recent pictures of the locomotive under restoration in the maintenance facility at Wirksworth, current work includes installation of the fire grate and vacuum system, The final repaint is also under way.



all photos © Tim Oaks

The Bagnall Locomotive Group have commissioned more 00 gauge wagons to help to support this project inspired by the film "Oh Mr Porter".
More details later



Mitchell's Artisan Butchery

Mitchell's Artisan Butchery is an independently owned butchers shop, located in Wirksworth, Derbyshire, UK. We only deal in locally sourced meats derived from good farming standards.

We believe in respecting our animals. This means that we only sell free range, local meats. We also pride ourselves in being able to use the entire carcass, and not wasting anything provided to us from our local farmers.

21 Market Place, Wirksworth
www.mitchellsartisanbutchery.co.uk 01629 820261



GB0EVR

Jon Tillin and Nigel Evans.

It's clearly very dangerous for crossing keepers to meet and talk! When Nigel and I did, we discovered another shared hobby: Amateur Radio. (Or "Ham Radio", as our tribe is often labelled).

Both of us are known to set up a portable radio station when we are at our level crossings; talking to other hams (and each other) when there is a lull in the train service. We discussed communications on the railway and then started thinking about how we might further safely enjoy our radios on the railway.

It just so happened that we spotted an opportunity to combine radio and railways because every September there is a national event known as 'Railways on the Air' (ROTA). There wouldn't be much time to organise it this year, but we thought we'd have a go.

ROTA takes place on the weekend closest to the 27th of September. This day celebrates the anniversary of the first steam-powered passenger train on that date in 1825. (The train ran from Darlington to Stockton.) Bishop Auckland Amateur Radio Club coordinates this event with many UK clubs and groups taking part. This meant that our deadline for 2023 would be the 23rd of September.

Nigel applied to Ofcom for a special station license, and we were granted the callsign GB0EVR. All licensed amateurs have their own callsign (regulated by Ofcom), but it was great to be able to use this special one to celebrate the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway. Special callsigns also attract hams who hear the station: it's something unique to put in the log-book.

This didn't give us a lot of time to sort things out. It's a tribute to Nigel that he managed to get a gazebo (kindly loaned by Sam Weaver), and some power at Duffield for the Saturday of our first and rather rushed Railways on the Air. Thanks also to the station staff at Duffield for their support with the event.

We set ourselves up with some portable radios, various antennas (each frequency range demands a specific configuration), and a microwave dish (not for cooking!) round the back of Duffield station. We had done our necessary safety assessments and implemented them, and so, on a morning that was sunny and kind to us we were good to go.

Stuart joined us, and that made three hamsters (like musketeers but without swords): Nigel M0NDE, Jon G8GJC and Stuart G4DZL.

We had a cracking day and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Lots of contacts were made using a variety of modes: some analogue and others digital. Three radios were used, one coupled to a laptop for digital work. There were some hiccups: the Amateur TV signal being received from the satellite QO-100 (somewhere above Qatar) worked but the receiver caused some interference with our other very close antennas, so we needed to sort that.

International agreements allow Hams quite a variety of bands in the radio spectrum. On Saturday we worked a High Frequency (HF) band 40m/7MHz with voice, Morse code and digital text; and a Very High Frequency (VHF) band 2m/144MHz with voice.

On the Sunday it was just Nigel using a digital mode known as Dstar and he made 22 voice contacts, 10 of which were in the USA.

Some members of the public came and talked to us and that made it even more enjoyable. We learnt a lot about what works well, and what to do differently next year.

We are aware that there are other radio amateurs and shortwave listeners amongst the EVR: if you might like to be involved next year, please do get in touch with one of us.

We now have a WhatsApp group for EVR radio amateurs and, because of that first conversation, one for level Crossing keepers. We use the level crossing keeper group to stay in touch and let each other know that trains are on the way or delayed etc.



The photos show the GB0EVR in action. The screen image (top right) from Jon's station shows a typical real-time display of world-wide amateur radio activity.



IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association AGM

25th November 2023 at 2 pm

Please note the New Venue: Maltings in Wirksworth

(see a map included with your AGM Papers)

Steam in the Valley: 31st December 2023 & 1st January 2024

See e-v-r.com for more details.

