



Ecclesbourne Express

*Newsletter of the Ecclesbourne Valley
Railway Association*

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The Wirksworth to Duffield Line

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association

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(Charity No. 1106810)

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Next Edition will be published in October 2014 – Contributions welcome by email or post to Richard Buckby, see above, by Friday 19th September 2014.

Front Cover – “Henry Ellison” waits in the new Shottle Platform before returning to Wirksworth with the successful test train, 17.7.2014.

Back Cover – Progress on the bodywork of the LMS Brake Third.



NEWS UPDATE - Mike Craft

Steady progress is being made with the restoration of the Mark 1 SK and SO coaches. Unfortunately, the metal on the bottom half on both sides of the SO was not suitable for painting and therefore it was decided to replace it, which has entailed removing the internal panels of the coach on each side.

Following insulation of the roof of the SO, new ceiling panels are being fitted and both the SO and the SK are being rewired. All the panelling in the SK is being stripped and the luggage racks are being renovated.

Please make a note in your diary - this year's Model Railway Exhibition is on the 18th and 19th October. Around 18 layouts have already booked in with most of the traders returning, although Staffordshire Ginny will not be attending due to a bereavement.

To comply with the Heritage Lottery Fund conditions EVRA has been forced to run steam on the incline 21 days this year with one of the Barclay steam engines, carrying passengers in a trailer coach. It will cost approximately £3,500 with no income. EVRA Trustees cannot justify this expense next year and if one of these engines is not to be used regularly for transporting passengers in 2015, consideration has to be given to hiring one of them out to another heritage railway.

We apologise for the lateness of this Express but unfortunately Edward Wint our accountant has recently been in hospital. He is out now and we are grateful to him and his staff for taking care of our accounts.

You will find the notice for the AGM with this Ecclesbourne Express; it is to be held on 8th November at 2pm in the Red Lion at Wirksworth. The Trustees have been in contact with the Charity Commission regarding various matters relating to the EVRA committee and Trustees. Following advice from the Commission, it has been decided that anyone who is proposing someone as a Trustee must vouch that the person is suitable to become a Trustee and that they could fulfil a role within the Trustees to further EVRA's aims.

SALES MATTERS Pat Craft

Thanks are due to all those who donated items over the past year for the Bric a brac sale over May Day weekend. Over the three days we sold over £425 of goods ranging from a sewing machine and a bicycle to small items at 10p. (This is £75 more than 2013!) We were blessed with fine weather and I am grateful to those who gave up their bank holiday weekend to help with displaying all the items each morning, dealing with customers, with new items as they came in and packing it away at the end of each day. Since then I have sold another £100 worth of items and there are still some to go. We sold much of the stock we had – which helped with storage but already items are coming in for next year!

Once again we must thank those who have signed the Gift Aid forms for their donations. 66 people have now signed forms.

We have welcomed three new volunteers in the shop, but we need more to help us over the summer when we are open 5 days a week (weekends, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays as well as Bank Holidays). My thanks to all the volunteers who man the shop and deal with a myriad of questions as well as selling items!

In the next week I shall be completely changing the main second-hand book stocks, bringing books out of store to refresh the shop for summer.

MILLER MUSINGS - Martin Miller.

As I am already some three months into my final year as General Manager of WyvernRail plc I feel it is time to consider the future of the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway and provoke some reaction I hope.

Since the first permission was gained to enter the premises of the branch line in November 2000 in advance of concluding any agreement to purchase a great deal of water has flowed down the Ecclesbourne and very many splendid achievements realised. During many of the early years EVRA supported the creation of reopening a working railway between Duffield, Wirksworth and Ravenstor. This was manifest in funding, or obtaining funding, for Platform 1 at Wirksworth and the platform at Ravenstor. EVRA adopted Ildridgehay platform and provided period station name boards for all our locations.

Funding was also found for the Museum fit out and the platform at which it is located together with the exhibition of lamps within a brake-van. The talking tunnel and children's play area were all EVRA projects which add to the overall offer by our Railway to visitors. The restoration of two industrial steam engines and the establishment of a water supply together with the acquisition of three loco hauled coaches should be credited to EVRA.

Meanwhile, our trading so far this year is proving to be most satisfactory which is feeding through to the bottom line. My ambition, which will be a close run thing, is to avoid borrowing this winter and sustain our activities through earned income.

My thanks go to the working volunteers and shareholders who have been most supportive of the demands placed upon them in what will be our busiest year ever.

Plans – Cunning or Otherwise - Neil Ferguson Lee

We have a challenge at our railway: we've sort of finished – or so some might think. Ours is one of a tiny handful of private railways, the Keighley & Worth Valley being another, where we have succeeded in reopening the complete extent of the line. For us there is no 'Extension to Narnia' project, dangling tantalisingly just out of reach, with the promise of great things when we extend just another five, ten, fifteen or twenty miles to paradise. So while to the casual observer it might be a case of 'Job done' for us, the truth, as we all know, is quite the opposite.

We can't get longer but we can get wider in terms of our offering. Some of this is already clear to see: by the time you read this article, Shottle station should be open – for good this time – with a passing loop well under way and a plan to build a platform on the 'down' side. This kind of project, one of many providing small but significant improvements to our railway, can form part of a broader cohesive plan that in the coming decade will help move our line from the Vauxhall Conference league to the Premiership. But how can we maintain both the momentum that has kept us at the forefront of railway re-openings and find the funds to achieve these without jeopardising the financial wellbeing of our business?

We need to ensure that our plans are coordinated and transparent. If we are guilty of one weakness, it has been how we coordinate the plans of our many teams who work together to make the railway what it is today. We have the Capital Projects Fund with a ten-point plan and this forms the basis for our strategy. However, from my discussions with many of our diverse teams, it is not clear to them how we shall achieve our goals or how the constituent parts interlock. This is where we can achieve real gains in how we operate: to break the plan down into 'bite-sized chunks' and make sure that our plan shows how these 'chunks' are linked together and how each one unlocks another. Once we have this clarity, it makes it easier for us to seek funding and, importantly, sell our vision for the future.

The detail of this plan needs to be quite deep and, importantly, incorporate the activities of all groups. For example: we shall shortly open Shottle and soon after we hope to have a passing loop. We also have an embryonic project to form a dining train but, here's the rub, the location of the signals at Shottle mean that we may need to extend the platform slightly to accommodate the full length of the train. Meanwhile, if we want to operate a dining train, then we need to ensure that we have a means of transferring prepared food to that train in a safe and hygienic manner. At the other end of the process, we need better facilities for our rolling stock and be able to keep them spotlessly clean and have them warm and comfortable before the day's service. Look at this negatively and it seems to be an intractable set of problems where it all gets complicated but break the elements down into a series of discrete jobs and then we have a plan that we can coordinate and use to allow all our stakeholders: volunteers, EVRA members and shareholders to understand the vision and help us sell our vision.

Having a plan doesn't mean that we lose the flexibility that allows us to react to opportunities or challenges that appear from left-field. However, by having a clear vision, open and understood by all, allows us a clear view of what we need to do and understand what it takes for us to stay on top and continue to grow and excel.

Permanent Way Report - Tony Watt

The re-siting of the pointwork, described in the previous issue, has not been completed, but progressed to a stage at which we could leave it and move onto other, more pressing work. The switch blades are in place and clamped to allow traffic along both roads 1 & 2, but the curved closures require more work (and some bending!) The rodding, rollers and cranks have to be located and fitted, This is work which can be done conveniently in August, when our access to the line is restricted by service trains

In the meantime we have turned our attention to the signalling for Shottle, assembling the two starter signals, which involved some ingenious fabrication of a supporting post and liberal applications of paint. The up starter has been erected at the southern end of the platform, and the down starter will be erected (as this Express goes to press) at the northern end of the down loop, opposite the northern end of the platform. Both signals will be operated from a lever on their respective ground frames, both in the cress of the up (eastern) line.

Another aspect of the Shottle project in which we have been involved is the platform, where we have reinforced the team as they lay and roll filling stone in their sprint to the finishing line of asphaltting the surface. We have also made use of space and equipment at Shottle to cast concrete 'benches'. These support and locate the cranks, which direct and transmit the forces of the point rodding from lever to switch.

Before decamping to Shottle, we devoted another day to some drainage work north of Gorsey Bank. A torrential downpour in May washed silt and vegetation down the Gilpin Brook, blocking the newly dug entrance to our culvert (DJW25b). The resulting flood covered the track, flowing down to Gorsey Bank and across to one of our neighbours, causing flooding at both sites. We cleared the upstream blockage by hand, and then re-dug the ditch from the culvert exit using the Komatsu. We are now confident that our culvert and ditch can cope with all but the most cataclysmic storms.

In the process of clearing the Gilpin Brook I decided to investigate what changes the construction of the branch had brought about: what route had the brook taken before the culvert was built, etc.? During my initial research I stumbled on the Midland Railway Society Study Centre, and their wonderful archives, at the Silk Mill, in Derby. Of particular interest were the plans drawn before and after construction of the line. These are 2 chains (44 yards) per inch, or 1584 to 1: a scale which dwarfs anything normally available from Ordnance Survey. There is so much valuable and interesting information there that I shall be making many more visits to the archives, but that will have to wait for another edition.

Membership Update - Vince Morris

If all has gone well according to plan you should have noticed a slight change in the address label on this copy of the Ecclesbourne Express. This is the visual indication of a vast improvement in the membership database. With some 800 members to cater for, the database I had been using was creaking at the seams, trying to handle everything from producing regular statements to sorting out who didn't want raffle tickets. Thanks to my colleague John Epton, who has a streamlined system for handling the membership of the Thames & Medway Canal Association (yes, he lives in Kent), EVRA now has a bespoke database which handles far more than before with a far simpler input requirement. John was a "Bright Young Thing" when we first met over 40 years ago, so now I suppose he is a "Bright Oldish Thing".

Some members have asked why we have both a "Year" and a "Valid Until" entry on the membership cards. Membership runs for one calendar year, from January to December: this is shown in the "Year" box. However, since we enclose a pro-forma renewal request with the January edition of the Express and send out cards with the April edition (unless an SAE is enclosed), many members do not have a new card until

April. Thus we make the card "Valid Until" April of the next year. Of course sometimes the renewal request is overlooked, so we send out second reminders with the April Express for those who have not responded. (It was a fear that, in the run-up to Christmas, people may forget the renewal request that prompted us to send the pro-forma in January.)

If you join as a new member during the year, membership runs until to the end of the same month in the following year. We send you a personalised reminder to renew on the first anniversary of your joining, altering the fees payable to allow you to renew to the end of the current year or the end of the next year. To save postage costs these letters are sent out with the Express which is current at the time that your renewal is due, so the April newsletter will include requests up to July. There are two exceptions to this: if you joined between January and March you receive a pro-forma renewal request, since your card is valid until April. If you joined between October and December your membership is valid for the remainder of the year and the following year: this is a period when there is little train operation (apart from Santa Specials), and eliminates the need to chase small amounts of money. Again a reminder is sent if you do not respond. Although there is no requirement to renew before your anniversary date, it is very helpful if you reply as soon after receiving the renewal request as possible, and include an SAE.

If you have not renewed after two requests (i.e. 6 months) you are removed from the membership list and if you subsequently re-join you will be given a new membership number. Of course if you have opted to receive your Express by e-mail, this is all done electronically.

Finally, many of you are kind enough to send donations with your renewals. These are always appreciated, but leave me with a (pleasant) dilemma. Should I reply to the donor, and thus spend some of the money for postage, or should I not reply and appear indifferent to your generosity? To solve the problem I shall, from now on, acknowledge in writing all donations of £25 or above individually, unless told otherwise. Any donation below that I shall gratefully receive and you will know that it is all being spent on a good cause (the railway!!).

Summer Season Looms - Leigh Gratton

There is so much going on in the world of our DMU's. We have recently said goodbye to Class 122 'bubble-car' 55012 which was on an extended stay following contract repairs at the back end of last year. The vehicle saw some good use at the start of this season, as our pair of them were able to handle many of the lower season duties economically. The vehicle has returned to its 'native' Weardale Railway who have had a reorganisation and are seeking to return heritage passenger operations to their line.

Progress on Class 101 50253 is steadily coming along too. A re-paint has begun and the construction of a replica two-character head-code box for the front is well underway. At the time of writing, the cab is nearing completion and, whilst waiting for a delivery of new linoleum, the team have been concentrating on sprucing up the passenger saloon. The front compartment has seen the ceiling repainted, the walls received a thorough clean down and the seat frames repainted. A serious clean of the linoleum in this compartment should recover it to an acceptable standard. (Cont.p11.)



Inside Auntie Wainwright's - Pat's May Day Bank Holiday Sale for EVRA Funds.

First signal at Shottle courtesy of Milton Keynes Model Railway Society - *Martin Miller*.





Shottle - waiting for the Tarmac - 15.7.2014.

Shottle Platform Tarmaced - 16.7.2014. - Anthony Watt.



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Perhaps one of the most exciting goings-on at the moment is the re-paint of our unique Derby Lightweight 'Iris'. Often considered to be one of the finest preserved railcars in the country, the paintwork had become very dull and had crazed. The decision was taken to repaint the vehicle in the same original livery but using a special Two Pack paint. It was felt that the aluminium body presented an ideal base for this very expensive but extremely hard-wearing paint as rust is impossible. The re-paint may well be completed by the time you read this, so come along and enjoy it at our Multiple Memories event in August.

The event on Friday 8th, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th August features an exciting DMU event. Friday 8th is reserved for our first ever DMU Photo Charter day which can be pre-booked online, followed by all of our railcars running in a variety of formations. See the provisional timetable on the website at www.e-v-r.com/multiplememories. One not to be missed!

There are interesting times ahead. Recent events have seen congratulations in order for several of our younger DMU Group members who were involved in the restoration of the Class 119 last year. Some of these members have sought careers in the rail industry and, due to the experience gained at the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, they have gained themselves reputable roles with companies such as RVEL, Nemesis Rail and Bombardier. Whilst these guys have not left us entirely, their presence is mostly now at weekends. This leaves somewhat of a hole in the group's existence midweek at a time when the railway is seeking to seriously step up its midweek operations, so if you feel that you are able to come along and lend a helping hand with basic maintenance tasks then please attend one of the railway's Volunteer Induction sessions. No experience required, just a willingness to learn!

For the love of steam – Callum Goodwin.

I decided to write this article for two reasons: One is that I feel there should be a voice for younger people working with steam, and two: I wanted to talk about my experiences being a new volunteer with the Dream Steam Team.

I'm not sure when I first became interested in steam, but I do think there are a number of contributory factors. It may have been my first wooden Brio train set or my mother's penchant for buying me Thomas the Tank Engine videos! I used to sit for hours watching the many adventures of this mischievous little tank engine. In retrospect the Rev. W. Awdry was certainly biased towards steam as he wrote the stories during the modernisation of British railways.

I spent my younger life with an irrational hatred for diesels! (Though now I like them too) you can imagine then my early experiences reflect my lifelong passion. This

became an obsession when I realised that I could buy a working railway set in miniature. I begged my parents for my first set; to which the answer was always: "You'll have to see what Santa brings you" of course when it came to that long anticipated day I peeled back the wrapping furiously to reveal my first train set! Inside was a little oval track with a small side-tank engine and three goods wagons.

So the rest; as is the cliché is history. Over the years I read dozens of books and began to want to re-live that golden age of steam. As I became older I explored the local railway, albeit the remains of it. This was the old Great Northern Derby Friar Gate line through Stanley, West Hallam and Ilkeston which continued into Nottingham. With so much to explore on my door step how could I resist?

I became fascinated with the lost age of steam and with my enthusiastic friend regularly visited the Great Central Railway. This continued until one day he came to me and told me about his volunteer work at the railway. Well as you can imagine I was enthused! The chance to work with real life steam locos? Maybe one day the chance to drive and fire them? I was convinced. I signed up at the railway to volunteer as a cleaner. I enjoyed the work but it became clear that it would take many years before I was allowed near a shovel; Well by that I mean a shovel on the footplate rather than one for cleaning out ash pits. This was a bitter pill to swallow only made worse by the fact I had a mounting pile of revision for the plethora of upcoming exams.

The volunteering was put on hold. For a few years afterward I nearly forgot about steam and the railways altogether. This carried on until I got back in touch with my old friend who suggested we go to the Great Central railways' winter steam gala. What a day that was, the grand finale being Oliver Cromwell storming through Quorn at dusk with the traveling post office, sparks flying from the chimney and all!

It all came rushing back, I had to work with steam again. I discussed it with my friend who told me about this new place he'd been to in Wirksworth, and apparently they were desperate for firemen. I visited as soon as I could and was provided with much information and advice. So that's how I came to be at The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway. I completed my compulsory courses as quickly as I could. I then visited the steam shed to meet the steam team.

As I neared the shed I could see the first wisps of smoke leaving the chimneys of the two little tank engines. This combined with the intoxicating smell of burning coal proved enough to bring a smile to my face. I arrived at the shed to the slight hiss of the engines as they were brought around from their winter slumber. Seeing the members of the team attending to the loco, I approached and explained my intentions to a warm welcome. The welcome was combined with the occasional "it will be nice to have some young blood on the team!" The team showed me around the locos and explained what

they were doing. The engines were now up to pressure with the safety valves to be checked. The valves began to lift and were duly adjusted.

Then came time for the off. This was accompanied by an invite onto the footplate and a shovel handed to me. Could it be that after many hours of cleaning at the Great Central, I was going to take to the shovel on the first day at Wirksworth? Well, yes and to be honest I didn't have a clue what I was doing. This didn't matter as the watchful eyes of the steam team ensured I fired safely with much advice. Of course they did also explain how to fill the boiler with water and made sure I did it at the right times! The little tank engine did all that was asked of it, and for a beginner, was a joy to fire. The miniscule firebox was easily within the limits of a novice such as me. We performed test runs up and down the incline, with much tutoring the job became somewhat easier but there was still much to learn!

Time flew until it was the end of the day. The engines were taken back on shed. Next I was taught how to dispose of the engines at the end of the day. The task was complete with a successful days testing. We wandered back up the yard, my face black with coal dust. Passing some other volunteers one exclaimed "Look It's the steam boys!" this made me chuckle, there was no denying the unmistakable filthy face of the trainee fireman. The day was finished with a good strong cup of tea in the mess room and an enthusiastic conversation about training me as soon as possible. This was too good to be true, but true it was.

Now I near the end of my training with the prospect of being a qualified fireman I look back on my decision to join The Ecclesbourne Valley railway as an excellent one. I have had a great deal of help and advice from the steam team who are a friendly bunch of chaps. They have enough stories to write a novel and satisfy the most eager steam enthusiast. More recently I have also joined the engineering side to help restore Kathryn, our next and largest steam locomotive; one of the most satisfying tasks by far. I eagerly anticipate the day she receives the first shovels of coal and breathes her first charge of steam; it will be a proud moment for us all indeed!

EARLIER DAYS, PART TWO. - Malcolm Gwyn. **(Continued from last edition)**

If the descent of the Middleton Incline is followed, a steel plaque will be noted on the inner arch of a bridge near Middleton. With some imagination this item of trail architecture represents a monkey being lowered on a line over the parapet of a bridge. Nearby was the "deep hole" a test site for electricity pylons and also a testing situation for a trained monkey which was reputed to be able to find and then deliver to its owner small coins lobbed over the bridge parapet, then one day the line to its collar went slack and that was the end of the monkey.

The location of this “deep hole”, sometimes called the “Monkey Hole”, is equally elusive, close to Middleton Road, I’m told, and possibly adjacent to a former high bridge and track to the marble stone quarry and Middle Peak Sidings. A lane parallel to the present Wirksworth to Middleton and starting opposite the “Rising Sun” continued to the top of the Dale in Wirksworth. This high level track has now been quarried away, taking the spectacular bridge with it.

If the line is followed to the foot of the Middleton incline you find a 9 ft diameter straining wheel mounted on a robust carriage which can be adjusted to tension the cable routed from the engine house. The 24 ft long wheel pit has been recently restored, just as well because at an earlier date the bronze bushes had been nicked leaving the principal steel pulley at a drunken angle.

A further half mile down the track is the Sheep Pasture engine house and incline, once housing another pair of beam engines, these were replaced by a 100HP electric motor and fluid coupling capable of hauling 10 ton wagons up the slope, (60 tons unbalanced downhill). On the writer’s first sighting of the engine house the substantial motor had been crowbarred through the main door. On the writer’s second visit the motor had gone completely! Can’t trust anyone, even in those days. The replacement of the beam engine with the motor drive was unsuccessful and two seasons of the sugar beet campaign were lost. The limestone or sugar stone was a key product and deliveries had to be made by road.

Runaways on the inclines were not uncommon, the catch-pit near the foot of the Sheep Pastures arrested more than one truck, I saw the remnants of the last truck to descend out of control in 1964. This caused a volcano like eruption as the truck and catch-pit splintered. It is said that three trucks have come to a sudden end, their descent checked by the sleeper lined pit and backed by a 12 foot thick cushion of gorse.

Spring loaded points were set by a points-man ahead of the pit. A treadle beneath the trucks sounded a gong and should the speed become excessive, (120mph was one assessment in John Marshall’s book,) the points-man would release the points to deflect the truck into the catch-pit and then jump the wall and run for his life across the fields. Probably just as well because one runaway mentioned in Rimmer’s book was carrying gunpowder in iron canisters in March 1888, one of which exploded scattering the casing and truck into the fields around.

One essential function of the C and HP railway was to convey water to the upland farms, on first sight I could not understand the function of the rectangular tanks lined up at Cromford Wharf, each with an access hatch. The EVR are now proud possessors of one of these, a six wheeler which was probably restricted to the shallower curves. They were converted from a loco tender, possibly of Ramsbottom design.

EVR TIMETABLE: August – September 2014

Day Rover Fares will be: 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 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 from 3 July until 25 September and Wednesdays 30 July to 3 September.

SPECIAL EVENTS.

Sat 9th and Sun 10th August 2014: Multiple Memories Weekend. Including Fish and Chip Special on the Saturday evening.

Sat 23rd, Sun 24th and Mon 25th August 2014: Summer Bank Holiday Open Days.

Both the Ravenstor and Duffield lines will be in operation with more frequent trains on the Ravenstor line, steam operated, **Sponsored By EVRA.**

Sat 6th and Sun 7th September 2014: Wirksworth Festival Open Days. Steam on Incline.

Sat 20th and Sun 21st September 2014: Family Fun Weekend. Steam on Incline.

Sat 18th and Sun 19th October: Wirksworth Model Railway Show. Including Tunes and Chips Land Cruise on Saturday Evening. Steam on Incline.

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