



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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Next Edition will be published in July 2013 – Contributions welcome by email or post to Richard Buckby, see above, by **Monday 1st July 2013**.
Front Cover – “Henry Ellison” storms the incline, ready to enter traffic,
Back Cover – 5643 by night. (Photo Charter). *David Williams*.





NEWS UPDATE - Mike Craft

At the beginning of this year, the Association acquired three mark 1 coaches from Long Marston. They are CK15849, SK24918 and SO 3727. They cost £15,000, which thanks to the understanding of the vendors, will be paid for over the next 3 years. Since they arrived at Wirksworth a number of volunteers worked solidly to restore the CK for May's steam gala, when it formed part of the rake of coaches. Some work has still to be done to complete the restoration, but it has received favourable comments by those travelling in it. It has an interesting feature in that one of the windows in a third class compartment allows a stretcher to be passed into the compartment.

Once the CK is complete, the next task will be to restore the SK. If anyone is interested in helping with the restoration please contact me.

With the addition of the coaches we have launched an EVRA Loco and Coach Club, to raise money specifically for restoring and maintain the locos and coaches through a single donation or, like the Friends of Andrew Barclay group, a monthly donation by standing order. If you are willing to help us in this way, please contact me for a leaflet.

On May 1st, the GWR engine 5643 Collett arrived at Wirksworth, by a circuitous route and on May 4th, Colin Walton, chair of Derby and Derbyshire Railway Forum launched Henry Ellison into traffic after its restoration. At 10.20 am after the launch, the Collett, set off to Duffield carrying guests, the Dream Steam Team and Friends of the Andrew Barclays. At the same time Henry Ellison set off up the yard giving brake van rides and Ferrybridge No. 3 (Brian Harrison) set off up the incline. From reports received everyone enjoyed themselves, even though on the busy weekend that followed, most trains were full to capacity.

Following on from the last News Update, after a change in the bore of the delivery pipe, the tank worked well to supply the visiting steam engine in May, saving time which previously had been spent using the tanker wagons in the yard. Although it has cost a total of over £10,000, it has proved its worth.

The donations of items from Bletchley Park by the Milton Keynes Model Railway Society, who unfortunately had to vacate their premises by the end of November, were recently collected. Some of the items are now on display by the narrow gauge. We are extremely short of drivers on the narrow gauge because under the conditions of the grant we have to operate on a certain number of days each year and we are not fulfilling this. It is not rocket science as it only travels at 5mph – so if you would like to help contact Pete Chambers on 01332 291210.

The Miniature railway has operated during 5643's time with us, the fence, shelter and container have been painted and other maintenance has been carried out by new volunteers. It is hoped to have visiting rolling stock during the summer.

SALES MATTERS - Pat Craft.

The shop has been open on Saturdays when trains were running in January and February with heartening results. The Chapel en le Frith and Ilkeston Model Railway Exhibitions on the same weekend at the end of February were well worth attending as always but sadly one of the bad snowfalls this year meant the cancellation of the Belper show. The steam events in May have boosted the shop takings but we also took the opportunity of the May Day Bank Holiday Steam Gala to have the sale of bric a brac, prints etc. which had been accumulating since last September and over the three days we took £350 and were left with only four boxes out of the 20 or so we started with!

Thanks to all who have donated items for the shop and the sale and also to the volunteers for helping price the bric a brac and manning the shop and stall. We always welcome new volunteers in the shop and with the increase in running days could do with another one or two to spread the load.

THE HISS OF STEAM - Martin Miller

This issue rightly emphasises the superhuman efforts to prepare for the visit of GWR 0-6-2T 5643. This welter of work concentrated on the accommodation for passengers, water supply for the engine and the provision of adequate platform length at Duffield.

There was a tremendous joint effort by the LMSCA and EVRA teams requiring a great deal of work on the interior finish of two coaches, servicing and replacement of brake cylinder parts on three vehicles and a complete set of new brake blocks (16) for one vehicle. The Royal Saloon also received attention to its interior panelling which was in quite a state at the north end of the vehicle. Exterior painting of three vehicles was done in record time in less than ideal conditions with the last surplus paint on the windows being scraped off the day before the first service day.

Then there was a question of training and familiarisation for drivers, firemen and guards and the provision of all the people to make the services work. On the first weekend which included the launch of Henry Ellison into service we fielded three steam crews each day, operators for the miniature and narrow gauge railways, shop and Booking Hall staff at Wirksworth and Duffield, Stewards for the Royal Saloon and hastily created Steamers Bar, Pullman Buffet Car staff, station gatemen (and women), a very useful Gorseley Bank crossing keeper. In advance there was a great deal of behind the scenes work creating and placing advertising, promoting through social media, taking advance bookings and classroom briefings.

The result, as some of you will know, was that our Railway had its busiest weekend ever allowing us to pay quite a few bills after a very lean winter. As you all know "turnover is vanity, profit is sanity" so we will be carefully evaluating the effect of all this activity on the bottom line. Nonetheless, we certainly put our Railway on the map again with many new faces seen. We also now have a most attractive locomotive hauled set of coaches which do look in keeping as they journey along the valley.

Shareholders have responded to appeals for further funding to enable the platform extension at Duffield to be undertaken together with keeping the Shottle Building Team supplied with much sand and cement. We continue to appeal for funds to complete the Shottle platform project and install a fully operational passing loop. This latter project would allow an hourly service to operate on busy days to connect with East Midlands Trains at Duffield.



My heartfelt thanks go out to our whole team who demonstrated a supreme ability to pull together when presented with an extremely tight deadline. I know there were many aching backs and a great deal of tiredness from early starts and late finishes.

DMU TOPICS - Leigh Gratton

And so we are at the start of the 2013 operating season already! This winter seems to have gone very quickly as it doesn't seem five minutes since we were talking about November Saturdays. The winter has been a very useful opportunity to progress well with our Class 119 restoration even though it has been quite a difficult drag. The weather seems to have been a limiting factor this year because, even though we had good temperatures around Christmas, it seems to have been particularly cold throughout January and February. This makes working outside on mechanical components a chore and painting nearly impossible.

Never the less, we have come through. When we look back to where we were at the start of the winter period with the restoration then it becomes clear how much has been done. At the start of November the team were putting up the ceiling panels in the standard class compartment and preparing to panel the walls. Now, at the end of winter, the compartment is virtually complete with new lino and seats ready for passenger use.

The start of the winter also saw mechanical work. Firstly the systems that service No.1 engine were built up (coolant, fuel and electrics) and a successful start, for the first time, was made. Mechanical work then continued to install other missing components such as alternators, exhausters and freewheels resulting in a very special occasion in the first week of January. As darkness descended the vehicle made the first tentative steps in preservation. The first time the vehicle had moved under its own power for twenty years.

Spurred on by this momentous occasion mechanical work has now turned to the exhaust systems, fault finding and general tweaks to prepare the vehicle for service. Internally, work has begun in the large guard's area. Important repairs to the cant rail (the area which joins the roof to the body side; always a source of trouble on Mk1-style vehicles) have progressed to allow the guards doors to operate properly. Some painting of the parcels cage and bulkheads has also been done. The walls and ceiling will be started once the metalwork repairs are complete.

There is still a lot to do but 2013 promises to be an exciting year for our Class 119 W51073. With a fair wind, the vehicle should return to its former glory operating services for the first time in preservation on the weekend of 10th/11th August at our Multiple Memories event. The weekend will include all of our operational DMU vehicles and the Saturday night will have a special train featuring fish and chips and all of our vehicles coupled together in one train. That certainly will be a sight! If you would like to join us for our special occasion then full details can be found on the railway's website at www.e-v-r.com/multiplememories and you can pre-book the special evening train online from there..

HENRY ELLISON - 1947 - PRESENT. Neil Hardwick.

Henry Ellison worked its entire life at the Yorkshire Tar Distiller's Kilnhurst site in what is now South Yorkshire. It is named after one of the joint founders of Ellison & Mitchell Ltd who started a tar distillation business here in 1886. The locomotive was bought new from Andrew Barclay's, Kilmarnock in 1947 to replace 'Chemicals', a smaller Barclay built in 1924 that proved inadequate for the larger tar tanks that were being introduced from 1946 onwards.

Henry Ellison's working life was mundane, shunting two trains and traveling a mile or two daily. Typically they would consist of 18/20 tanks of tar from Manvers Main plus empty tanks and wagons for filling with finished product. They were first propelled down a steeply inclined cutting into the plant by a British Railways locomotive. This cutting was owned by BR and shared with Baker & Bessemer, an adjacent large steel works. The trains were split into sections and Henry Ellison's job was to propel them further into the YTD premises. The tar was unloaded by gravity into one of three holding tanks, whilst the empties were shunted into various sidings for filling with benzole, naphtha and pitch.

Retirement came in 1971 with the transfer of a Fowler 0-4-0 diesel mechanical shunter from Midland Tar Distillers site at Oldbury in the West Midlands. The Fowler took over completely 'even though it could push on the flat, it were no good on hills'. Henry Ellison was dumped outside the shed. When Croda International bought YTD in 1975 Henry Ellison was given a new coat of paint: Croda green with the inside of the cab painted white. The arrival of Croda brought further investment in the Kilnhurst site: a modern fleet of bogie rail tanks, a new exchange siding and another diesel. Henry Ellison was steamed only one more time after that, for a party of railway enthusiasts, an occurrence that was rapidly hushed up since the boiler was out of ticket and the locomotive not insured

Croda refused to allow Henry Ellison to go for scrap. She was bought in 1975 by the haulage contractor Brian Harrison, put onto a low-loader and transported the short distance to his yard in Tinsley, Sheffield. She was stored outside for the next 30 years, the rust kept at bay by a periodic dousing of old sump oil from the transport fleet. On Brian Harrison's death Henry Ellison, together with Ferrybridge No 3 and Cathryn were offered by the family to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway on an extended loan, arriving in the Autumn of 2005.

Len Nuttall was a 15 year old boy when Henry Ellison was first delivered:

'I were 'shunter lad then. We had a little, tiny engine that wouldn't pull owt, only one wagon, can't remember what she were called .I would get up at five to light up. Should have been 'driver's job but he was allas late. I'd get thur at quarter to six and go straight down. We'd use empty tar barrels that we'd bust up, a bit of inflammable stuff, and 'fizz'. Get coal on and get out o' road. Driver rode and fired it, I were thur to help 'shunter. Thur were two mainline shunts a day, one at half past seven, ' other at dinnertime They used to bring 'em down as far as the weighbridge and then they used to fetch all ours out at tea time, about half past four. Normally we were really busy, but it eased off in' summertime. They got it inter thur minds that we needed two shifts. Then we had 'gaffer ' main gaffer, come and spend a day wi' us to see what we were doin'. On 'afternoon shift we spent' time shoving 'tanks about, coupled t' engine, back'ards and for'ards, He thought that we were shuntin, but we were just kiddin' him on like. He stayed to about eight that night then he went home, he'd had enough. It were afternoons that we used to play cricket, day shift used to do most o' work'.

'It were in '47 when they brought her down from Scotland. An engineer rode down in all that bad weather, which he had to by law, like. She were painted black all over with Henry Ellison in gold along the tank. The management came down to have a look, it were in their own interest, it were them that bought it. There were no fuss, they came down in dribs and drabs like to see what were goin' on. We weren't given any instruction, but 'driver, Bal Gomersal, knew all about steam engines. Well, we got her under steam and took her out for the first time, she worked all day, up to half past four, and then she split ' points. That were her day out done. So when she dropped off ' track, I were home, they wouldn't let me stay'

Basil Whitfield joined YTD as a fitting apprentice in 1951. Following national service he joined Bakers as a fitter in the engine shed. *'At Bakers, where the union were stronger you were either a fitter or a turner. At 'Chemicals' you could do both. They were good like that, you could see jobs through. He remembers the Bakers engines requiring more maintenance than Henry Ellison. 'You see the Bakers engines were running up and down the cutting all the time. They were only little engines so they could only take a wagon or two at a time. Henry Ellison on the other hand only shunted the works yard. It were stood more often than it were working'*

MAY MUSE: MORE FROM THE HINDLOW PAPERS - Vince Morris

My next delve into the "Hindlow" papers involves the Country Ticket Agent. The what? Back in the good old (pre 'phone/internet) days, if you wanted information on train services you went to the station or a travel agent. If you lived in a remote village that might mean a lengthy trip on public transport just to get the information, let alone travel. If you were lucky enough to be going on holiday, say to Cornwall or Northumberland, you might not even know which railway company you should be travelling on. Hence the country ticket agent: someone in your community who could tell you train times and sell you a ticket. Often the agent worked from his/her front room and was paid on commission.

One such agent in the 1930s was Miss Wain of Old Row, Harpur Hill and her Controlling Station Master (CSM) (that is really what they were called) was our old friend at Hindlow, Mr Edgar (and subsequently Messrs Peake and Graham).

But, of course, life was not that easy: there were rules. Not least was the concern expressed by the Chief Accountant, Audit Section, Euston that some CSMs were paying the commission (~5%) without his authority and, worse, that the agent was accepting the money without signing for it over a 2d (2 old pence for you youngsters) stamp, and was thus avoiding the tax! Since it was the agents who had to pay for the stamp, failure to provide it meant that the LMS was assisting in tax evasion, and the matter should be reported to the Chief Accountant for him to deal with. (This was a general circular, dated 25/10/3, there was no suggestion that Miss Wain was involved in such an heinous procedure). However Miss Wain's agency did cause some consternation in 1945 when it was asked for two first class tickets from Buxton to Colwyn Bay. Reading between the lines (some of the correspondence is missing) it appears that the agent had to go to the station at Hindlow to find out the fare to be charge and to get blank [Edmondson] card tickets to write in the journey details for the passengers. Should the agency get the commission since the station master provided the ticket and the fare information? The Chief Accountant's Office, now at Watford, where it had been evacuated during the war, wanted to know what fare had been charged. The Chief Commercial Manager accepted the Station Master's figure of two tickets at 29/11 each, or £2/19/10 in total, and agreed that Wain's should receive their three shilling commission. The sting in the tail was the underlined instruction that the receipt should be "endorsed as instructed".

With nationalisation in 1948 came a small change: the Country Agent would be provided with the timetables for their Region (the London Midland) and any other which was deemed appropriate. It would appear that only the Western Region timetable was considered necessary for Miss Wain.

Miss Wain died in 1957 and her brother asked to take over the agency. The Hindlow Station Master/Goods Agent (that is how he is addressed, although passenger services finished in 1954) was asked whether Walter Wain was a suitable person to take over the work. He replied that Walter was "a very suitable person" and indeed had been running the agency for his sister for years! However during 1958 Mr Wain terminated his agreement since he was leaving the district. The Station Master was asked to see if there was any other suitable location for the agency. At the same time the District Passenger Manager, Manchester, was concerned that the total 12 months takings by Wain was only £64/15/5, with no sales at all in February and November. I do not imagine he was much concerned when the reply from Hindlow reported that the only suitable location was the Harpur Hill Post Office, and Mr Williams, the Sub-postmaster, was "not in the least enthusiastic, but promised to think the matter over". Another Country Agency had died from inactivity.

As well as the paper work Mr Wain returned the following items to BR:

- Window sign: "Enquire within, Railway Tickets obtainable"
- Window sign: "Seats now re-servable here for Summer trains"
- Tin Box (9.5"x12.5"x4") for storing tickets, with padlock attached
- Fare Book, showing fares from Buxton
- Date stamp - Out of date

I'd love to know how out of date it was!



Carriage Restoration: The shining new rake of Mk1 Carriages (above).

Progress on the rebuild of the LMS Open 3rd (below).





Henry Ellison naming ceremony, May 4th - *John Weaver*.

5643 approaching Wash Green, Steam Gala, May 2013.





Henry Ellison at Ravenstor on his first day on service trains.

Ferrybridge No.3 returning from Duffield with a works train - *Paul Spencer.*





New Platforms: Duffield extension (above).

Shottle Platform rebuild (below).



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PERMANENT WAY REPORT - Tony Watt.

The preparation of this permanent way report has been left until the last minute, because, due to the severity of winter weather earlier this year, there was the real possibility of there being no progress to report. However, spring has arrived at last, and we are able to proceed with our jobs.

We had three major projects to be completed before the arrival of our visiting steam locomotives. The first of these was the realigning of the track, and reshaping of the pointwork, at the southern end of the Shottle passing loop. This was scheduled for the end of January, but was postponed when the track became covered in snow, and temperatures fell dramatically. Not only was the trackbed frozen, but also the ballast in the Dogfish hoppers. The January possession of the line was not used, but the work rescheduled to a pre-arranged possession at the end of February, when the weather was more forgiving. A good turnout of p-way volunteers resulted (after much grunting and heaving) in the work being completed. All was finished in time to allow trains to run along the new loop, so that the main line could be closed, to facilitate the rebuilding of Shottle platform. Entry to, and exit from, the Shottle Station area is now smoother, and faster, a more comfortable ride should result.

The second project was the raising and realigning of the track at MP139, just south of Barnsley Lane bridge. This was necessary because a cattle creep underbridge had been replaced (many years ago) with a pre-cast structure of greater depth. Hence the track was raised on additional ballast, graded to and from the new bridge. Over time, with the passage of heavy stone trains, the track sank and moved away from its correct line. The work required was relatively simple (though hard and tedious), involving lifting the track to its correct level (in some places by as much as 150mm / 6in), packing new stone under the sleepers, and then slewing the track with crowbars to give the correct smooth curve. As the February possession was used for the Shottle project, this work was rescheduled to just before Easter. Again, winter weather dictated otherwise, and the task was substantially completed only a week before the deadline for this report. What had been planned as six or eight days work, during a two-week possession, was achieved in just two days. We hope that our passengers appreciate the smoother ride, which has resulted from the graft and sweat of massed permanent way stalwarts.

Finally, this summer's steam operations will consist of longer trains, and hence, Duffield platform needed to be extended northwards. A masonry extension would have been preferable, but too costly at present, so a timber structure was specified. Our neighbours at Hazelwood provided the large lumber required (basically new sleepers), which were cut and bolted to form support trestles. Adjacent trestles were connected by three more timbers, one each at front and back, and one at the centre. Across these three horizontal members are laid the top boards of 50mm depth and 200mm width, all nailed in place with the aid of many hammers!

All this work was completed in time to allow our first visiting locomotive of the year to steam rapidly and smoothly over the results of our labours at Barnsley Lane and Shottle, and slide into Duffield alongside a marvel of the joiner's art.

ECCLESBOURNE RIVER CATCHMENT PROJECT

Heather Turley

We all love our rivers. They're great to walk beside in winter when they rush past, catching an off-guard duck in the current. They are a pleasure to linger beside on a hot summer day, watching the ripples as a fish below the surface or unseen insect makes its presence known. Rivers often form natural boundaries between counties and sometimes countries, instilling and reinforcing local loyalties.

Faithful and constant as our rivers are, we are not always inclined to treat them with respect. Industrial pollution has taken a severe toll and intensive land management continues to cause severe declines in the quality of our rivers. Through regulation industrial pollution is being addressed and this decline is now slowly being reversed. We are starting to see the return of species such as otters and salmon to many places – a sure indication that water quality is improving. However, there is much more to be done if we are to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive – a piece of European Union legislation which requires all member states to improve the ecological status of their water bodies by 2027.

The River Ecclesbourne is one of 25 river catchments in England included in a national Defra Pilot Catchment Project – among the others are the rivers Ribble, Don and Rother and the Lower Wear. The aim of Pilot Catchment Projects is to encourage statutory agencies, water companies, land managers and local communities to work together towards achieving good water quality in our rivers. In the River Ecclesbourne catchment the Amber Valley and Derbyshire Dales District Councils, Derbyshire County Council, land owners, National Farmers Union, Environment Agency, Natural England, Severn Trent Water and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust are working together to prepare a plan of action for the river. But we can't do this alone, we need the support of the local community, towns and villages, rural land managers and user groups to make a difference to the local environment.

The River Ecclesbourne flows for around nine miles from the market town of Wirksworth until it meets the River Derwent near Duffield. It is popular with walkers who enjoy a stroll along its banks and with anglers who enjoy the appeal of the river's brown trout population. The river supports a variety of wildlife including some important species such as brown trout, white-clawed crayfish, mayflies, kingfishers, otters and water voles, but it faces challenges including pollution and weirs which prevent fish from migrating.

The partnership is consulting with local communities in the river valley and encouraging people to get involved in projects. The aim is to produce a Catchment Restoration Plan which will identify the issues and some ways to fix them. Some work has already been undertaken by the Environment Agency, including fencing to protect river banks from damage by cattle and restoration of an old river channel in Duffield so fish can pass a weir. More fish passes are planned and the Trust has been carrying out surveys of the wider catchment to identify where problems exist and how we might resolve them.

Over the summer, we co-ordinated Himalayan balsam clearing work parties with volunteers on the river as part of our wider work to combat invasive non-native species.

Community groups and schools in the area are being invited to become

Meander Monitors, taking the lead on caring for a short stretch of river. They can choose to get involved in a variety of ways, including helping to survey and monitor species found there, or helping with practical conservation work.

Schools are also being encouraged to sign up for free environmental education activities through the project, so that pupils can develop an understanding of the important role the river plays in their lives.

If you are interested in getting involved we want to hear from you! Contact Louise Valentine at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, 01773 881188 or: email enquiries@derbyshirewt.co.uk

To find out more about the project watch the local press for updates. For information on the catchment approach, visit:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx

LONDON MIDLAND BRAKE VAN - Tim Oaks

The inside of the van is largely finished and the van has seen occasional use with the Driver Experience workings. It has also occasionally been used as a refuge by the carriage restoration team. We still have to build one more bench seat. The outside painting has had to wait for better weather, and will resume shortly.

The Duke.

We bought a small consignment of sleepers and used these to build a crib ready to receive the boiler. The lift was undertaken by Messrs Robinsons of Longcliffe and went very smoothly; we can now get at the remaining areas of the firebox for conservation and inspection and begin work between the frames.

Our OO gauge models have been selling well. Two new ones, ICI Buxton Lime Firms Ltd and Wilcocks of Chapel en le Frith, have arrived at £13-00 each, postage £3-00 for one, £3-50 for up to three. Also available in the EVRA Shop.

Pallet van.

Purchased as a store for the less valuable parts from the Duke and being fitted out with shelving etc. We would like to thank Andrew Briddon for his assistance in the purchase and transport of this vehicle.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION - GIFT AID. June Cooke.

Thank you to those of you who Gift Aid their subscriptions, donations or donations of goods. For each pound you donate, I claim 25 pence from HM Revenue and Customs on behalf of EVRA. When all donations are added together this raises substantial funds for us and hopefully will continue to do so in the future!

However, if you were one of the people affected by the changes to the personal tax allowance from April 2013, which raised the personal allowance for those under 65 years of age to £9,440, and no longer pay tax on your income, you need to inform me, as soon as possible, at jcke@clara.co.uk or by telephone on 01773 824166, to be removed from our list (it lies with the donor to keep us informed due to changes in their circumstances). I shall continue claiming Gift Aid until donors cancel their instructions. If you do not already Gift Aid please contact me for more information.

STEAM ON - REFLECTIONS ON A SUMMER'S DAY 1997

Tricha Birks.

The words "Steam Engine" should, to most ladies above a certain age, evoke fleeting thoughts of grime, draughty railway stations and mud-strong tea. (I must say I was guilty of this myself when asked if I would like to go to an engine rally. . .) But, to a few folk I met not long ago, it seems to unlock loving and nostalgic memories of yesteryear with such strength they are quite transported.

A steam engine rally? Why not? I was sure I could amuse myself just moseying around the side-shows, the car boot sale and the craft tent – given a free couple of hours and a dry wind. It was not just being there but the taking part that changed my concept of what I thought might just be a pleasant, meandering sort of day: An early start is imperative or desirable at least. Keen exhibitors – and I was with one – have much to prepare, especially if it's the first rally of the season.

Firstly, the caravan has to be serviced with food and water, not forgetting all those little essentials that make life easier on the move. Next comes the engine. Much cleaning and oiling is called for. Much sighing and swearing has its place too! Will the treasured piece ever be ready for the show? When the trusty blue rag is finally placed in the corner of the boot along with a bag of spanners and a spare this or that, then and only then, do we afford a faint hope that we may be ready for the journey.

Finally, the quite stationary engine, object of much unsought attention, is, at last, heaved onto the waiting trailer. By now the caravan has turned into a Tardis-Time travel is alive and well, and presently visiting the rally-field. We are ready to leave.

Steam is nostalgic! How surprised I was to find that one lungful could bring memories, which until now, had remained lost: Visions of faded seats, of coal dust on cream paint, (dear old LMS), the pull on the leather strap as I tried to open a door. The shrill peep as the engine drew out.

Mmm... dream. Mmm...steam. I'm pulled back to real time and real steam by a great showman's engine ambling along before me! Wow! That mellow smell of burning coal and hot metal is hard to describe and even harder to ignore. The puff-puff, rattle-rattle of engines is strangely soothing, a fitting backdrop to the events of the day.

A glint of sun on polished brass attracts me to a tiny army, or so it seems, in the distance. The colours glow gold and blue, red and green – a royal sight. Edging nearer, I discover ranks of stationary engines, each one popping and banging its own sweet tune. I am impressed. Here is a hub of activity. George helps Joe. Jim helps Fred. How is it that each man is so adept at mending the next man's engine?

The car boot and the craft exhibition fade from my mind. I'm genuinely interested in what makes these engines go, what stirs these folks to spend their time in pursuit of such perfection. I see their joy as yet another faltering machine springs into life

– I sense a silent cheer. Satisfaction in beating the near impossible is their reward, satisfaction in a job well done.

Soon the crowds appear. Will the beer hold out, will the ice-cream last? Watching their faces, I know they are as tickled as I am by these whizzing contraptions. For the young it is an en-wondering experience. Their eyes grow round. “How this Dad? How that Dad?” Their questions are lost beneath the clatter of metal wheels and the sound of the commentary in the show ring.

For the old and the not so old it’s a glimpse into their past. The barrel organ is grinding and the toffee apples are bobbing. Candy floss is fluttering in the breeze. Nell passes in her Victorian dress. Hey! Is this 1997 or 1897?

Day one is drawing to a close. The crowd ebbs and random patterns of smoke spirals begin to pepper the sky. I wonder what is happening. Here and there, a Tilley lamp lights up the faces of groups clustered around their fire or bbq. It’s dusk and supper is underway. A smell of sizzling meat drifts passed me. In my head I’m singing a song from my youth: “campfires burning, campfires burning, draw nearer, draw nearer...”

With the Primus primed and the kettle singing, we are ready for our own meal, a strangely modern and instant one. For a moment I’m back to reality with tinned chicken supreme and packet rice in the interest of simplicity as we have much to do tomorrow.

Later we hear sounds of music. The group have arrived. Offers of a drink entice me to the beer tent where the local would-be rock-stars entertain us with songs from our youth. We relax and enjoy their offerings. We are entertained, we are happy.

Day two starts slowly. Very slowly. The odd putter breaks the Sunday morning silence. The aroma of bacon briefly replaces the sooty smells.

Engine to polish and lamps to fill take care of most of the morning. I’m amazed how at home I feel in this world of meticulous timing and mechanical precision. Is it nostalgia for the past, for things obvious and mechanical rather than mysterious and technical?

After a hurried lunch we are again ready for the visitors. The arena is cleared in readiness for the grand parade. Ah! The soldiers are coming. How wrong I am. This parade is a “Wheellie one!” Everything mobile joins the queue to enter the ring. In come the tractors, the vintage cars and busses and then the motorbikes but I’m waiting for the Showmen’s engines. At last! Steaming and spluttering the great girls lumber in. They give us our shots of steam – we are intoxicated once more. I whisk out my hanky to blot a tear, a smut flecks its snow white. I’m away, its 1947 and I’m on the train to Auntie’s...

The show goes on. What joy to smell that steam! Steam on... Dream on... And I do!

ECCLESBOURNE VALLEY RAILWAY EVENTS: May-August 2013.

Summer Timetable: Saturdays, Sundays and Tuesdays on both the Wirksworth-Duffield and Wirksworth-Ravenstor Lines. (Thursdays from 25th July)

Day Rover Fares will be: Adults £12, Concessions £10; Children £6; Families (2+3) £29. Special Event Fares may be higher.

Trains depart Wirksworth for Duffield at 10.20, 12.20, 14.20 & 16.20 to connect with the East Midlands Trains Matlock Branch Service and return at 11.10, 13.10, 15.10 & 17.10. The normal services are operated using Heritage Diesel Railcars. **Steam from 20th July except Tuesdays and August 10th-11th (Sat, Sun).**

NB When steam is operating to Duffield the 10.20 Service is by Diesel Railcar.

SPECIAL EVENTS.

June 22nd-23rd : Diesel Locomotive Weekend at Wirksworth.

July 6th-7th : Classic Bus Rally. Steam on the incline.

July 20th-21st: Classic Transport Weekend. Steam to Duffield.

August 10th-11th: Multiple Memories Weekend. All the Diesel Multi Units in action including launch of newly restored Class 119 Unit.

August 24th-26th: August Bank Holiday Open Days. Steam to Duffield.

Full details, Timetables and Fares at: www.e-v-r.com

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