

DECEMBER 1997

The ex-Great Western Railway featured prominently in a slide presentation entitled "Steam on the Western Region" presented by Mr Trevor Owen who had travelled from Aberystwyth. Three hundred colour photographs in the form of transparencies illustrated steam traction at numerous locations in the region. The show started at London's Paddington station and the area covered incorporated the routes across the country to south west Wales; and the ex-GW lines to Birmingham via Banbury; Oxford and Worcester. These were supplemented with the inclusion of many other interesting and picturesque branch lines and secondary railway routes on the Western Region of British Railways. Sadly, many of these have closed since Mr Owen's expeditions that took place during the 1950s and 60s. Consequently, there is now very little trace that a railway line ever existed at some of the locations where the photographs were originally taken.

However, there are some exceptions with some lines having been taken over by dedicated enthusiasts in the dream of restoring services. Hopefully, this will allow steam trains to once again be seen working on some of the lines featured in the show. An example of this is the Stratford-upon-Avon to Cheltenham line, where a section has already been reopened as a tourist attraction.

A photograph depicted a steam-hauled passenger train captured on celluloid at the remote station of Hayles Abbot Halt - the result being a very delightful and tranquil scene. Then a later slide showed ex-GWR Castle Class locomotive passing the same location hauling a train run by the Gloucester Warwickshire Railway.

As mentioned, numerous branch lines and secondary routes featured, many of these being situated in the South Wales area where the scene appears to change quite dramatically as forays along the valley lines take place. Impressive viaducts and bridges played an important part in this respect. Sadly, the landmarks of Crumlin Viaduct and the old Severn railway bridge can no longer be seen as they were both dismantled many years ago. A couple of slides featured the famous scrap yard of Dai Woodham situated at Barry Docks, where hundreds of steam locomotives awaited their fate. Remarkably, many of these giant iron workhorses were saved from the cutter's torch by being purchased for preservation by dedicated railway enthusiasts. One example of this great escape is BR Standard Class 8P 4-6-2 No. 71000 'Duke of Gloucester' which spent many years in the yard, its condition deteriorating rapidly and gathering rust along with other 'thought to be doomed' locomotives, before being saved.

It is most fortunate that Trevor Owen in his pursuit of recording steam traction and the changing railway scene on film was not deterred from doing so by inclement weather conditions. Even on days when venturing out may have been considered by some to be 'a waste of time' he successfully secured an extremely favourable outcome. This was certainly the case in several of his excellently chosen photographs that made up the slide presentation. Therefore, he must have been well pleased with the fruits of his efforts!

John Tuffs

NOVEMBER 1997

Guy Fawkes Night produced something other than bonfires and fireworks when Mr Ron White presented an array of impressive colour transparencies from the Colour-Rail Collection.

Throughout the show he continually complemented the slides with his usual wit - just as he had done on a previous visit to Burton a few years ago. Though some of his remarks may have been controversial, I am sure however, there was no deliberate intention of offend anyone present, even those who have great affection for the ex-Great Western Railway.

Ron White was very quick to humour the audience when some of the photographs presented him with an opportunity to jest and an example of this included the occasion when an ex-GW 4-6-0 was seen passing beneath a bridge where part of the structure had been rebuilt. He made the suggestion that the photographer had taken the picture to depict this feature rather than the train itself. On another occasion, the northbound "Devonian" was captured tackling the 1 in 37 gradient of the Lickey Incline behind a Peak Class diesel that sported the headcode 1N37. Quite appropriately, he commented that the characters perhaps meant 'one in thirty-seven'!

Some of the selection had been photographed locally with both Derby and Lichfield Trent Valley featuring on several occasions; the latter being the location for a shot of a Coronation Class 4-6-2, captured on celluloid as it passed the impressive signal-box and station on a northbound express. Considering the former location, examples of ex-LMS locomotives were observed on the shed. There were changes to the landscape and infrastructure too. Some scenes of which have since changed beyond recognition in the period of time spanning more than thirty years.

Over 100 colour slides of railway images shot by numerous individual photographers were contained in the presentation. These were recorded over an extended period of time on all of the regions that made up the British Railways network and some examples were actually captured prior to Nationalisation of the railways, which took place in January 1948. Unfortunately, as most of the photographs had been gathered from other railway photographers' collections, occasions did arise when little detail was available to complement the picture, Mr White therefore appealed for any help in ascertaining the locations and any other relevant information from anyone in the appreciative audience.

Interestingly, although colour transparencies of steam locomotives dominated the overall presentation, there was however a small section where 'modern traction' featured. Here, examples of both diesel and electric locomotives which played an important part in the transitional period when steam traction was being withdrawn were screened. Not surprisingly, most of the classes introduced for that period have since been taken out of service and subsequently broken up.

Nearing the end of the presentation, a number of transparencies were projected that for one reason or another needed special attention during the copying stage. Mr White explained that 'early' colour films varied so much it was almost impossible to obtain multiple rolls of film that had matching results, unlike monochrome, which was more consistent. In addition, the advent of computerised technology has made it much easier to enhance photographic images, resulting in a better picture being obtained. The latter was demonstrated on examples where the original photograph needed certain items deleting, such as lamp posts or telegraph poles giving the appearance of emerging out of a locomotive chimney, or perhaps, a photograph needed special attention to highlight or defuse a particular area. Concluding, Mr White offered Society members and guests the chance to ask questions about any aspect relating to his presentation: he may have been relieved when no one seemed prepared to take up this opportunity.

John Tuffs

OCTOBER 1997

“Southern Steam in the 60s with Strong Country Connections” was the title of the presentation given by the well-respected railway photographer Mr Hugh Ballantyne. Although residing in Staffordshire for many years, he originally came from Bath, a city where Southern Region-based locomotives regularly visited. His show was based upon a pictorial trip taken over many routes that incorporated the Southern Region of British Railways. In all, the presenter selected some 170 transparencies taken by himself to illustrate the region during the early 1960s and prior to the cessation of steam working on the Southern Region in 1967. The majority of the slides were colour but to complete the story a small number of monochrome examples were projected which had been made from original black and white photographs.

The county of Kent was the starting point for this journey before moving on to the very important secondary route linking Redhill and Reading. Then, the trip moved to the former London and South Western Railway lines to Plymouth via Salisbury and Exeter and also the route to Bournemouth and Weymouth, that witnessed the last bastion of steam working. It is here where the association with the ‘Strong Country’ is best remembered. Strong, incidentally, being a Hampshire-based brewery that at one time used display hoardings to publicise its name. The exceedingly eye-catching signs, used for advertising purposes, depicted steam locomotives and consequently proved to be a successful marketing method as the numerous passengers on the trains passing each location could not fail to see wording such as “*You are now in the Strong Country*” inscribed on them.

One of the first pictures to be screened was a locomotive which carried the name of a well-known public school. This was Schools Class No. 30926 ‘Repton’ seen resting between duties on the shed at Ashford in one of several showing this particular engine. Fortunately, this locomotive was one that escaped the cutter’s torch and has since been preserved. Another exceptionally interesting photograph was that of a Southern Region Q1 Class 0-6-0 as it passed through Ashford station with a lengthy fitted freight train.

After viewing a number of transparencies depicting steam-hauled trains in Kent, the pictorial journey continued by visiting the Redhill to Reading (Southern) line. One memorable shot was a panoramic view of Guildford Shed that showed a number of steam locomotives of various classes stabled on the depot. This picture was taken from the vantage point of a nearby road bridge. In his exceptionally detailed narrative, Mr Ballantyne explained why this particular shed was regarded as one of the few in the British Isles where it was impossible to gain access without permission. The shedmaster’s office was located adjacent to the stairway leading to the depot and any person who tried to ‘bunk’ the shed would get their marching orders as soon as they reached the foot of the steps.

However, on the line side it was a different matter and he was fortunate to capture changes to the motive power used on this route prior to its dieselisation in early 1966. A variety of locations were visited during this period where trains hauled by Maunsell ‘Moguls’ in the early 1960s were photographed before BR Standard Class 4s became the common sight.

On the former LSWR route to Bournemouth and Weymouth and also the Exeter line via Salisbury, both the rebuilt and un-rebuilt Bullied Pacifics of the West Country/Battle of Britain and Merchant Navy Classes reigned supreme on express services - these included the named trains such as “Atlantic Coast Express” and “The Royal Wessex”.

As expected, Mr Ballantyne's presentation included a number of special workings that were organised during those final years leading up to the total elimination of steam working on the Southern. Some of those worthy of special mention included the Ivatt tank No. 41298 hauling a charter train along the Weymouth Quay Branch in 1966; un-rebuilt WC 4-6-2 No 34023 'Blackmore Vale' trailing at the rear of another special traversing the Swanage Branch near Corfe Castle; and a steam-hauled excursion near Marchwood on the Fawley Branch line in Hampshire. Yet another special, on the Chessington Branch in Surrey, provided a unique opportunity of seeing a steam-hauled passenger train over a line that never had any regular steam workings, as it had been built in the 1920s as an electrified route from the inauguration of passenger services. Finally, it was fitting to show the last British Railways steam operated train into Cornwall that produced WC Pacific No. 34002 'Salisbury' as motive power for a Plymouth to Penzance special. A Southern locomotive was used instead of an ex-GW example because there was not one of the latter available on the day that was suitable for the duty.

Sadly, many scenes that Mr Ballantyne's transparencies reflected have since changed beyond recognition since they were taken over thirty years ago and he was quick to point this out in his excellent narration. One that he made special mention of was the scene at Yeovil Town station, in Somerset, where an ex-GW pannier tank No. 5416 was seen coupled to an auto-train waiting in one of the platforms. This was surrounded by a variety of infrastructure which formed a most delightful scene comprising on the right hand side the engine shed where steam locomotives of both ex-GW and ex-SR origin were stabled. Unfortunately, when the services operating through the station were withdrawn along with the closure of the locomotive shed, every item pictured in the photograph became redundant and as a result the scene changed beyond recognition with everything being razed to the ground.

SEPTEMBER 1997

"Railways around Burton-on-Trent and the Surrounding Area" was the theme of Robin Jeffcoat's excellent presentation. Before the show began, a period of silence had been observed as a mark of respect to Diana, Princess of Wales, who tragically lost her life a few days earlier.

The presentation contained photographic images and a good narration of an imaginary journey taken in an anti-clockwise direction, beginning and terminating at Burton-on-Trent, covering many lines that once had regular services but have since being withdrawn, as well as those survivors of the ever-changing face of the British railway scene.

Mr Jeffcoat, now resides in Matlock, but he spent most of his early years living in Burton and had the foresight to record on film items that have since become railway heritage. Last year he was invited to give a show featuring his archive material appertaining to the immediate vicinity of the town, this compilation had been well received. Therefore, it was considered appropriate that a return visit be made to show another selection that would complement the images already seen. Consequently, this resulted in screening scenes relating to railway interest covering a wider area, but surprisingly, the photograph taken farthest away from the town was in fact of no greater distance than about 20 miles.

Somewhere in the region of 200 slides were shown, most of which had some historical value attached - producing images of railway scenes that can no longer be obtained. His carefully chosen selection included steam-hauled trains working over a variety of lines in the area - some that no longer exist, such as in the Churnet Valley, where a steam-hauled train was seen standing

at Alton Towers station and another majestically heading through the valley itself during its last year of operation. Others included the Swadlincote and Woodville branches; the ex-LNWR line from Nuneaton to Moira; the NSR Tutbury to Burton route; and the ex-MR line from Ashby-de-la-Zouch to Chellaston.

Trains were also photographed at the crossing on Derby Road, adjacent to Horninglow station, Stretton and Clay Mills, and Rolleston on Dove. A diesel-hauled freight train was seen at the latter negotiating Dove Junction as it joined the NSR "Tutbury Jinny" route from the former GN line whilst heading towards the town. Special workings featured too, such as SR Pacific No. 35003 'Royal Mail' parked complete with its carriages on the goods line opposite Burton Sheds; the last MR 'Duck Six' No. 43953 on a special train for enthusiasts in October 1964; and the special, named "The Midlander", hauled by locomotive No. 43002 and captured by the camera as it passed near Measham on the section of line between Nuneaton and Burton-on-Trent.

A couple of photographs that brought back memories of what the scene used to be like in the early 1960s. Firstly, there was the sight of a steam locomotive about to pass over Derby Road Crossing on the old A38 near Willington, where not a single road vehicle was to be seen at the time, and the second, a Stanier Class 5 heading north through Burton on a extremely dull and murky day hauling a rake of oil tank wagons - but it did give some atmosphere to the picture.

The Woodville and Swadlincote Branches were portrayed in much detail, although only a few showed an actual train - most of the photographs being recorded after the route had been closed to all traffic. Nevertheless, they still provided much interest due to the history contained therein. The final working over the line was included: this was the track recovery train in April 1965 engaged in assisting in the removal of the railway track. Fortunately, a section of the Swadlincote Branch remained intact and was regularly used for many years afterwards to serve Cadley Hill Colliery. Here, steam locomotives replaced much newer diesels on internal workings during the late 1960s. However, a picture of a diesel locomotive hauling an empty coal train along the truncated section of the branch line was an interesting sight, so was that of a long rake of 1964-built mineral hopper wagons seen stored on the disused Bretby Branch.

Mr Jeffcoat's excellent aerial photograph showing Drakelow Power Station was indeed a very impressive sight. This picture was captured as he travelled over the area in an aircraft during the late 1960s or early 1970s. The show ended with the sight of Burton Corporation single decked bus No. 64 travelling along Horninglow Road North in the vicinity of the BTR factory, whilst on a journey towards the town centre and it was enthusiastically welcomed even though it was not considered to be railway-orientated.

The audience must have been well pleased with the content of the show. Mr Jeffcoat said afterwards that he still possessed enough archive material that has not been shown to produce yet another show to present to the Society. I am confident this offer will be taken up in the not-too-distant future!

John Tuffs

AUGUST 1997

Society chairman, Phil Stanbridge, paid an appropriate tribute to the Burton Brewery Railways to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of its closure in a presentation given at the Club. Over 120 members and guests present were able to savour the memories of Burton's railway history as a pictorial trip around the system was taken, depicting many sights that unfortunately cannot now be seen -mostly as a result of additional road-building schemes that have taken place during the last three decades.

Mr Stanbridge has presented this show on a previous occasion to the Society - about eight years ago - but there have been several changes made to its content in order to incorporate more archive material which has since come to light. Therefore, no one could have been disappointed at this showing even if they had been one of those fortunate enough to have seen the original version in 1989.

Nowadays, it is hard to imagine why the brewery railway system played such an important part in the economic development of this Staffordshire town as it did and how it was disbanded so quickly a little over 30 years ago. Now, there is little remaining of what once was an important feature of the town because several one-time railway routes have been converted into major roads - one example being the former Bond End Branch railway line. Interestingly, prior to its becoming a railway in 1875, the route from Shobnall Wharf to Bond End had formed the Bond End Canal but the latter was filled in by the Midland Railway to enable the railway to be built. Isn't it amazing how things change over time!

The presentation by Mr Stanbridge enabled a historical journey to be made over the former Brewery Railway System - this included the breweries of Bass, Ratcliffe and Gretton; Ind Coope and Allsopp; Marston, Thompson and Evershed; and finally, Truman, Hanbury and Buxton. The railway system at each of the individual companies operated in different ways with each having its own livery and its locomotives being painted accordingly to indicate ownership. What a refreshing vision it was to see again the once regular sight of steam or diesel powered brewery-owned locomotives, some of which were constructed by the Burton-based locomotive builder, Thomas Baguley, wend their way over the many routes in the town to a number of different locations! These included the familiar sights of the former General Hospital; Hawkins Lane Bridge; the Gas and Electric Works in Wetmore Road; Wellington Street Crossing (which incidentally was the last crossing to be remain operative in Burton); High Street Crossing (adjacent to the Burton Mail offices); the old Swimming Baths (off the Trent Bridge); whilst at the other end of town, the Mount Pleasant public house (better known as Bessie Bull's) adjacent to the canal at Shobnall Basin and also near to Marston's Brewery together with views taken from the old 'iron bridge' which connected Shobnall Road to the Bass Cottages properties.

Lamentably, all these mentioned have since disappeared due to construction work of varying kinds taking place. Presently, the scene at Shobnall is changing rapidly as a new road is constructed over what once was an important railway location; Shobnall Junction with the exchange sidings beyond and close to the point where the former LNWR Dallow Lane Branch joined up with the lines from both Marston's and Bass breweries - the latter which included access to the extensive Klondyke Sidings.

Fortunately, most of the locomotives that operated over the brewery railways system were photographed at some time or other which gave the chance to see at least one example of each locomotive and be able to recall what they used to appear like when plying their way between

different points. Some of these pictures have been used as illustrations in various publications relating to the subject of the brewery railways, but it was still, however, interesting to see them again.

Although not directly linked to the brewery railways, a short video of local interest was also shown. This depicted the Tutbury 'Jinny' service on its penultimate day - the final train running on the evening of Saturday, June 11th 1960. Locomotive No. 41277 was seen hauling the two-coach train out of the north bay at Burton Station, crossing Derby Road, passing through the closed stations of Horninglow, Stretton and Clay Mills, and Rolleston-on-Dove, before joining the Derby to Stoke line at Marston Junction, for the run along the final section of its five-and-a-half mile route leading to Tutbury - its ultimate destination. The return journey was also shown. However, quite appropriately, a sequence was also included where the very last train was captured passing through the station at Stretton and Clay Mills. As it sounded its whistle, those fortunate to have been present, were privy to witness the end of an era which had spanned 111 years.

John Tuffs

JULY 1997

Mr Colin Jacks, a retired locomotive driver and author of several books on the subject of railways, was welcomed to Burton in July to give a presentation. He began with a monologue relating to how he first joined the railway, describing how at the time he left school at the age of 15 he had one objective - to join the Great Western Railway in the locomotive department. Unfortunately, two facts spoiled the youngster's dream. Firstly, it was in the early part of 1948, the year that nationalisation of the railways took place and the Great Western was one of the Big Four companies to be absorbed into British Railways. Therefore, joining the GWR had become a total impossibility as its individual identity had disappeared. Secondly, he was too young to be considered for a job in the locomotive department as recruits needed to have attained the age of 17 years before they could be considered for employment.

However, all was not lost as he took up an opportunity to be interviewed for another job on BR Western Region. This was at a time when you went to an interview, was offered the job and told to report for duty the following week. So, the young Colin was instructed to report to Birmingham Snow Hill Station to be shown the actual job he had been offered and what it entailed.

On his first day, he reported to the station as instructed and was then escorted to the stables. He vividly remembered thinking at the time, what has going to the stables got to do with being a Van Guard! The position he had accepted was to guard the van as deliveries of goods were made to various locations in the city and its surrounding area. The van used for this purpose was hauled by a one horsepower unit, and this just happened to be a horse! He went on to describe the job, which had the title of Van Guard, in great detail. By the tone of his voice, the audience realised that he did not intend to stay in that job for any longer than was necessary.

Accordingly, some months later he was fortunate to change jobs, becoming a clerk in the signal-box at Small Heath. He spent a couple of years there before he attempted to apply for a job in the locomotive department again. This time he was interviewed but his first try proved unsuccessful. A while later, however, he passed the necessary criteria and was offered a job. Finally, therefore, he had achieved his school leaving ambition. Then followed many happy years working from the ex-GWR Tyseley motive power depot and later the former Midland shed at Saltley. The duties

undertaken from both depots included passenger and freight to a wide range of destinations.

After the interval, Mr Jacks complemented his earlier talk by showing a number of colour transparencies, some from his own archive but a some of classics by courtesy of the Colour Rail Collection. These photographs certainly helped illustrate the railway scene as it would have appeared between the late 1940s right up until the early 1970s very well indeed.

Whetting the appetite of the attentive audience by informing them some ciné footage would be shown later depicting scenes at Burton-on-Trent. This inevitably kept most people in their seats and they were rewarded by scenes taken through the cab window of a Class 25 diesel as it hauled a northbound freight train through the town on the 'Up' main line. However, it was a pity more film was not available to be incorporated as unfortunately the only shots shown were of some withdrawn steam locomotives dumped on a line near the south end of 17B's shed yard, and ex-LMS 'Jinty' 0-6-0 No. 47643 in the process of shunting wagons just north of Burton station.

John Tuffs

JUNE 1997

Fun Quiz Night

MAY 1997

Burton Railway Society once again welcomed former shedmaster Mr Richard Hardy to a Club Night. It was back in July of last year when Mr Hardy first visited to club - such was the interest shown then, he was invited to make a return visit and give another talk based on his working experiences as a shedmaster in the majestic days of steam. This talk was about the days he spent at the once-important south London depot of Stewarts Lane.

Mr Hardy began his work there in August 1952 after spending time at Woodford Halse, Stratford and other depots on the Eastern Region of British Railways. He believed the move on to the Southern Region was the best thing he had done, although he was only in his late twenties at the time. This proved to be the case for later he described it as having been a very enjoyable experience, even though the job itself needed commitment to the possibility of having to work a full seven days a week. The Southern Region depots were different from the other depots where he had worked as most of the shed's duties was confined to passenger turns from London area stations, although there were also numerous empty stock and freight trains to be taken into consideration in the depot's operations. Punctuality played an important role requiring strict operating methods to be adopted to ensure the depot did not slip down the timekeeping 'league' table.

Stewarts Lane depot was host to around 126 steam locomotives of various classes - these included Merchant Navy, West Country and Britannia Class Pacifics, King Arthurs and a number of others less well-known classes. The Britannia engines were delegated for use on the "Golden Arrow" Pullman train out of Victoria, whilst the others took up duties mostly dictated by their power. During the winter months, some of the depot's allocation was stored out of use - these locomotives being required only for the summer timetable which incorporated an enormous number of additional workings, so much so that every engine needed to be available for traffic.

Occasionally, this was not possible and 'strings had to be pulled' to draft in locomotives from other depots to cater for every service. It was on occasions such as this when personalities played a very important role. One example was the depot foreman, Freddie Pankhurst, who had a remarkable memory and always seemed able to get things organised when others found the same task impossible.

Organisational skills played an important part in the tasks of a shedmaster so good discipline was needed to make sure everything ran as smoothly as possible. Every train movement was recorded and 'league tables' were compiled using the formula of Time Lost per 1000 miles of Actual Train Running. The data used in this analysis included every working the depot was involved in and, therefore, it could be easily understood why good discipline was necessary at all times.

Mr Hardy commented that certain procedures had to be performed as instructed but enginemmen sometimes did attempt to deviate from those. One such directive was that a locomotive should not be coaled once it had been cleaned for its next turn. However, on one occasion the loco crew decided they needed additional coal and being under the impression Mr Hardy was not due at the depot that day, they took the chance to take the engine to the coal stage after cleaning had taken place. Just as the locomotive's tender was about to be replenished with coal, Mr Hardy appeared on the scene. An exchange of words took place and following this the driver refused to speak to the shedmaster for a very long time. However, revenge is claimed to be sweet! The driver had an opportunity for this some while later and appropriately any hostility between them then ceased, with respect for one another showing once again.

Something worthy of note, however, was the way in which Mr 'Dick' Hardy so vividly recalled events which happened so many years before, as long ago as 1952 in some instances. He did have a few notes available but it was only on a few occasions he needed to make any reference to them. Overall, the evening's talk was quite enjoyable and it is possible Mr Hardy may return once again to give another talk on his experiences as a shedmaster. Maybe it could be about his experiences at Stratford depot in North London, where he worked for a time.

APRIL 1997

Well-renowned railway photographer, Mr Colin Garratt, came to Burton to present an audio-visual show entitled "The Last 25 Years of World Steam". He gave an excellent and comprehensive illustrated talk to an audience of about 100 people using 80 colour slides.

APRIL 1997

The first event of the month was the club night when Ralph Ward, a railway photographer from Warwick, travelled to the town to give a presentation comprising 180 transparencies. Mr Ward enabled everyone present to have the opportunity of viewing some extremely interesting archive material which he had collected. These transparencies certainly helped to recall how the decline of BR steam traction took place at such an alarming rate around 30 years ago.

As expected, the majority of the photographs were of steam locomotives but the occasional diesel did appear in his selection. However, this did not detract from the main theme of the evening for the diesel classes which did appear were mostly of types which have long since disappeared from the main line scene, such as the English Electric Class 40s which took over many of the West

Coast main line expresses in the transitional period between steam and electric traction. The only exception to this being the Brush Type 4s which featured on a few of the transparencies - one example being the penultimate run of the "Bournemouth Belle" which, at the time, must have been a real disappointment to those who had been expecting a Bullied Pacific to be in charge.

The first half of the show contained an excellent selection of archive material - this had been photographed at a variety of locations throughout the United Kingdom from 1964 to 1968. The area surrounding Worcester featured prominently at the start, the presenter himself actually residing there in the mid 1960s, so he was on hand to capture some interesting workings. Some of these were normal service trains whilst others were specials such as the last County Class locomotive No. 1011 'County of Chester'. This was seen arriving at Shrub Hill Station with an enthusiasts' special which had emanated from Birmingham Snow Hill on a circular tour via Worcester and Swindon before it returned to Birmingham via Banbury and Hatton Bank. A shot of Castle Class No. 5054 'Earl Dude' in pristine condition on the local shed was another fine example.

Each of British Rail's regions featured: all of which provided the audience with something of interest. The last regular steam turns out of the Birmingham stations of Snow Hill and New Street produced pictures of the local Snow Hill to Hartlebury service, with its locomotive taking water during its mandatory stop at Stourbridge Junction and the stopping service to Gloucester making its call at Ashchurch. The latter station closing within a few years of the picture being taken, another victim of the Beeching cuts.

After the break we were given an insight into the railway preservation scene and how it has developed since the end of BR steam in the late 1960s. For many enthusiasts steam preservation was the only avenue open to them. Railway centres where both working and static steam locomotives can be seen have sprung up all over the country and this will enable future generations to savour the delights of the steam engine for many years to come. An example of this is the Gloucester Warwickshire Railway near Toddington. This has a short section of track which once formed the ex-GWR main line between Stratford-on-Avon and Cheltenham. As could be seen from the photographs, a variety of locomotives can be seen there, some of which are examples from other preserved railway lines.

John Tuffs

MARCH 1997

The Society was entertained by Malcolm Ranieri, from Stratford-on-Avon, who gave a slide presentation entitled "BR Steam in Action" which incorporated a number of steam-hauled specials operating on the main lines of the British railway network.

The first half was devoted entirely to main line steam operation. Fine examples were: shots taken in the area surrounding Stratford-on-Avon, where a considerable number of the specials from the London area had as their destination; the North Wales Coast line from Crewe to Holyhead; the West of England which included the South Devon coast; plus a number of other locations, some of which are much better-known than others.

Many of the famous classes of locomotives were pictured hauling a variety of steam-hauled excursions over a number of lines which are approved for the operation of these specials. As expected, some of the tracks where the trains were photographed included the regular haunts of

the Settle to Carlisle Railway and the London Marylebone to Stratford-on-Avon line, but other lines featured too. How pleasant it was to see these locomotives showing their paces once again! Some of these had spent years out of traffic before being restored to their former glory. Others had spent a considerable time awaiting their fate before being rescued from various scrap yards. Following the interval many of the preserved lines of the UK were featured along with a few transparencies of the Isle of Man Railway which runs between Douglas and Port Erin. Most of the narrow-gauge railways in Wales: the Tallyllyn, Ffestiniog, and Welshpool & Llanfair to name a few, were included. Standard gauge railways comprised: the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire; Severn Valley Railway; Llangollen; East Lancs, and a number of other lines, some of which are not so well known, but are in the forefront of the railway preservation movement which is actively seeking to retain our railway heritage. The technical quality of the transparencies was excellent, but it was unfortunate, however, that the presenter tended not to allow sufficient time with each slide to enable the audience to absorb its content. Therefore, due to the lack of time to study an individual transparency, difficulty was experienced in trying to appreciate the wide-ranging selection he had chosen for the show.

John Tuffs

FEBRUARY 1997

No report available.

JANUARY 1997

A warm welcome was given to Mr Cliff Shepherd who had travelled to Burton from Guisborough, Cleveland, to give a 140-plus picture slide show portraying the railways of the brewing town.

The show itself complemented the excellent book published in the autumn of last year on the subject of the Brewery Railways of Burton-on-Trent. With this in mind, many members who had obtained a copy beforehand brought their book with them for the presenter to sign. Naturally, Cliff Shepherd was pleased to accommodate their requests and in so doing was kept busy during any break in the evening's entertainment.

As a former resident of the town, albeit only for a relatively short period between 1961 and 1967, Mr Shepherd had witnessed during this time the gradual rundown of the brewery system as well as the vast changes taking place at a rapid pace the activities of the British Rail operation in the local area.

Although there have been others who have presented shows on the local railway scene, Mr Shepherd, decided on this occasion to take a different dimension by making a photographic journey along the branch lines of the town instead. This journey included the branches at Guild Street, the Hay, Bond End and the Dallow as well as a look at the various other operations which at one time existed, including an insight into the workings in the Shobnall area, and also some main line activity.

So much was the interest one could more-or-less hear a pin drop as most were so intent on reminiscing at interesting photographs of some final workings in the area, such as the inclusion of the last train to cross Derby Road, adjacent to the long-closed station at Horninglow. Another

shot pictured a train making history in itself as it waited for the gates to opened for the very last time at High Street Crossing, near to the *Burton Mail* office. The train, comprising ten wagons and hauled by Bass-owned diesel locomotive No. 7, made this historic journey on the 8th May 1967. Shortly afterwards the tracks were lifted ending yet another chapter in Burton's railway history. Perhaps, however, this was to the delight of road users who were regularly frustrated with the railway movements within the town - having to wait at the various level crossings for trains to pass before they could continue with their journey.

Cliff Shepherd's extensive archive of local scenes screened on the night certainly made one wonder how a town like Burton would cope now had the railway system still been in place. As locals know, some of the former trackbeds have been transformed into major roads within the town, which has helped to alleviate traffic congestion around the centre. Many would agree that it is now more-or-less impossible to recognise a number of the scenes featured for they have long since gone due to the various modernisation projects.

The photographic journey undertaken took in so much of the railway branch lines locally that it helped to restore memories of how the private railway systems played such an important part in transport needs within the major industry of the town.