

The Monthly Newsletter of The Bishop's Castle Railway Society

A Stunning Success

At precisely 1530 hours, on the afternoon of Friday 2nd June, a well oiled military style operation swung into operation. Its objective? To safely transport by road the 4mm scale model Bishop's Castle c.1932 from its usual home in the Weighbridge over to the Hospitality Lounge of Ludlow Racecourse where the model railway exhibition, organised by Craven Arms and District Model Railway Circle, and which we had been permitted to attend, was to take place.



First of all the layout had to be separated into its two main sections - a task deftly undertaken by David Hemsley and a new recruit to the modellers' group, David Thornton, who has turned his hand (he does in fact have two) to all manner of jobs, and which, thanks to Roger Dalton's superb woodworking skills employed earlier in the construction of the baseboards, was accomplished very easily. Then came the tricky part - turning the two main parts of the layout onto their sides in order to move them outside.

Earlier, on Friday morning, I had checked and rechecked that everything on the layout - including the hare and the rabbits - was securely fixed before removing all of the rolling stock and the handful of items deliberately left loose. However, it was still with considerable trepidation that he watched as the layout - representing some two years' hard work - was turned slowly onto its side. Would all of the buildings, the sheep, the Hereford cattle, the cow parsley, let alone the sparrow hawk on the goods shed roof stay in position? Or would they, in a scene akin to one in the film Titanic where, with the pitch of the sinking liner steadily increasing, all manner of fixtures and fittings break free plunging towards the bow - in this case crashing down onto the floor of the Weighbridge? Fortunately not a single item came loose and the respective parts of the model were moved through the Weighbridge and so outside. It has to be said that there, bathed in the sunlight of a glorious June afternoon, the layout looked spectacular.

Thereafter, the two main components of the model along with the traverser were duly loaded into David Hemsley's pantechicon. Actually it's a van, but pantechicon is rather more appropriate as the vehicle resembled nothing short of Dr. Who's Tardis; in that it proved capable of accommodating all the other paraphernalia associated with the layout. This was because, in addition to the baseboards and traverser, there were to be loaded in the posts and the splendid name board with its white black shaded lettering on a maroon background crafted by Malcolm Reeves, along with one of the three trestles on which the layout rests when assembled. Stuart Taylor brought with him over to Ludlow the other two trestles to which he had fixed the lengths of square drain pipe into which the posts of the name board slot, David Thornton the spotlights, and myself, all of the loose items.

The journey to Ludlow was accomplished without mishap and in a far quicker time than it took to travel by train from Bishop's Castle to Craven Arms - even with David H proceeding along at a stately pace on account of his precious cargo!

Once at the Racecourse, inside the exhibition hall, the layout was then quickly reassembled. The end result can be seen in the accompanying photographs - a real credit to everyone involved who, over the past two years, had given so freely of their time and expertise to turn what began as an off the cuff suggestion into the reality now standing there before us. Everyone involved with creating Bishop's Castle c.1932 felt not only a real sense of achievement and satisfaction but also a much entitled glow of pride. However, the real test would come on the morrow, the day of the exhibition. **Continued on next page.**

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And so, on the morrow, here we all were, reassembled together on the morning of the exhibition. Thanks must be extended to the members of the Craven Arms and District Model Railway Circle for organising the show which was very well attended, with several fine railway layouts present, in a variety of scales, and with excellent trade support.

But what of Bishop's Castle c.1932 ?

Three words sum up its reception at the Ludlow Show which I have used as the title of this piece: **A Stunning Success**



With the Honourable Mrs. Lin Dalton having most graciously performed the opening ceremony - see photograph left - by cutting a piece of suitably inscribed ribbon affixed across the Love Lane bridge, the members of the BCRSMG were under starters orders and then, having posed for the photographer from the Shropshire Star, with the public being admitted to the show, we were off.

The plaudits were not long in coming and, without any conceit, were numerous - whether on the locomotives - in particular Carlisle - the other rolling stock, the "weed grown" condition of the track, the appearance of the decaying buildings, the scenery and so forth; all of which one visitor said together engendered a wonderful evocation of the infinitely remote, rundown terminus of the Bishop's Castle Railway in its twilight years. I am not sure of the number of visitors, but there were always people looking at the BCRS layout, taking photographs, and usually asking questions.

Those of us there were in due course joined by David Etheridge who had hot footed it all the way back from Anglesey to help us operate the layout. Time never stood still - even if the trains did - this occasioned by problems coupling and uncoupling the scale screw and 3-link couplings, to which there is a definite knack. Nonetheless, the BCR was never known for its speed of operation, so the resulting delays merely added to the authenticity of the scene being presented. There was also an electrical short circuit on the goods shed siding which is still under investigation by Stuart "Sparky" Taylor but which did not, per se, affect the operation of the layout.



All too soon it was time to run the last train and then dismantle the layout, load it again into David H's capacious pantechicon, and return everything back to the Weighbridge. The modellers' group will reconvene at the Weighbridge in the coming weeks to discuss the exhibition, what went well and what did not, as well as planning work for the next few months.

So, in conclusion, to everyone in the BCRS who over the past couple of years have helped to bring Bishop's Castle c.1932 into being, my heartfelt and sincere thanks.

Jonathan Moor



WEIGHBRIDGE RAILWAY MUSEUM

Malcolm Reeves has been busy adding a crossing gate lamp, kindly donated by Richard Newcombe, to the newly painted entrance gate. A roundel awaiting attachment to the gate will complete the railway theme to the smartened up entrance.

Photos below: Malcolm Reeves securing the lamp



Weighbridge Railway Museum
Station Street, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5AQ.

Next Open Days
Tuesdays 13th & 27th June
11am – 3pm

All Railway Books in the Banana van,
£2 each or "fill a bag" for £10.
Offer applies to a standard size shopping bag
or equivalent

The advertisement features a photograph of the museum building, a map of the railway area, and several railway-related items like roundels and books.



Some of you may remember that in the summer of 2020 we were given an LNWR Station seat from East Didsbury and Parrs Wood Station. It had been in the same family for 50 years and their wish was for it to be restored and used at the Weighbridge. Closer inspection revealed it was in a worse condition than originally thought, but whilst it was not an original BCR seat, we did need outside seating, so it was added to the long list of jobs to be done and put into storage.

With some of the existing outdoor seating finally coming to the end of its life (it was originally rescued from a bonfire and has been repaired several times), it has been decided to start work on the extra large LNWR seat. New oak timber has been ordered at a very reasonable price from our friend Anthony Jones, who made all the windows and doors for the building.

Once again, Malcolm Reeves's carpentry and painting skills are being brought into use to bring the seat back to its former glory.



Open days continue to see both members and tourists visiting the weighbridge and many an interesting conversation is had. It is a very pleasant way to spend a few hours, so if you live locally or are visiting the area, don't forget to call in. A warm welcome awaits.

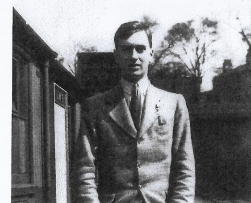
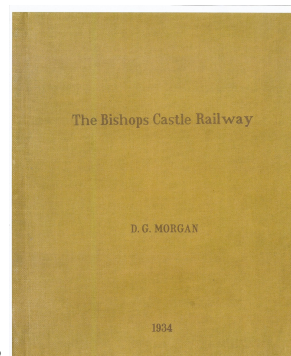
Archive Update

Towards the end of last month - May 2023 - I took with me up to Shrewsbury a collection of original documents from the Weighbridge relating to the Bishop's Castle Railway for permanent deposit with the Shrewsbury Archives. Against all the odds, and the passage of nearly ninety years, these have somehow managed to survive the closure of the railway, the fire which badly damaged the School Lane museum, and the subsequent storage of items at various locations around the town after the relocated museum closed.



Among the waybills, invoices, plans, and other memorabilia, is the record of a visit to the line made in April 1934 by seventeen year old David Morgan contained in his own typewritten account of what he saw, complete with beautifully drawn track plans of all the stations. Additionally there is a very large, superb photograph album of nearly three hundred black and white photographs taken on the Bishop's Castle Railway all of them neatly captioned as to when and where the pictures were snapped. There is a clutch of images from October 1931 when the line was still in business, but the majority date from the protracted period of the line's dismantling.

Shrewsbury Archives were very pleased indeed to be presented with this cache of original documents - especially David Morgan's Journal (photo right) which is such a personal, and what I will term an immediate record of the old railway, along with the photograph albums (of which there are in fact two). As one of the archivists observed to me, it is very rare to find a set of photographs so accurately and comprehensively captioned. Before the documents were deposited in Shrewsbury, the Society commissioned high quality colour facsimiles of all of them and also copied the images from two photograph albums. This means that we can change the displays in the Weighbridge at will and if, God forbid, anything happened to the building, facsimiles of the safely housed originals may once more be reproduced.



While it is to be regretted that the Society could not keep the original items in the Weighbridge, it was imperative for their long term preservation that these precious survivals, whilst not of any great antiquity, were placed in a suitable environment. Their move to the archives in Shrewsbury achieves this and also ensures that access to them is properly controlled. With my own interest in medieval and Tudor history, having worked with centuries old archive material for research purposes, I have at times found that, whilst understandable, the insistence of former town councils and other organisations to hang on to at any cost such documents - which by the passage of time have come down to them - when they do not have the facilities to care for them has led to items being damaged, lost or even stolen. For while the Weighbridge is always left secure, it is small with limited wall and storage space. In due course, when the necessary cataloguing of the items has been completed, they will be available for inspection and study by those using the archives.

Jonathan Moor
Honorary Archivist

Then and Now in April 2023... Following last months photographs of Stretford Halt and Horderley stations, here are the next two along the line.

PLOWDEN



The original Post Box is still insitu in the wall



The track bed looking towards Craven Arms

EATON



Below left: The old platform remains and track bed looking towards Bishops castle



Thanks to John Williams for taking and allowing the Society to use these photographs

Jim`s monthly selection of videos.....

How dated this seems. It's "Goodbye to Steam" from British Pathe, made in 1958, about railway modernisation. Running time 6:51

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZf9uSaXwQc>

Stunning footage from the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's Winter Steam Gala on a snowy 2023. Running time 25:00

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rasmHOccw9w>

Here's Sir Nigel Gresley at Shrewsbury recently having steamed up from Bristol. Running time 4:44

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv2zaseeSkA>

Here's a tour of the Dapol model railway factory. It's on the Moreton Business Park, just off the A5 to the south of Chirk and in sunny Shropshire not Wales. Pity about the adverts by the sponsors but the video might not have been made without them. Running time 20:29

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BTHvFGVLzE>

SOCIETY WEBSITE

Over the past year the Society website has received a considerable update, not least it is now a secure website. By paying an annual fee of £25 we have a secure URL, which begins "https" rather than "http". For those not in the know, the "s" stands for secure, which indicates that the site is using a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) Certificate. This lets you know that all your communication and data is encrypted as it passes from your browser to the website's server.

A PayPal button has also been added, allowing visitors to the website a quick, easy and safe way to make a donation.

We are now working on a "Members" section. This will have three pages accessed by a single password, changed annually when membership fees are due. One page will contain all the BCR documents held at the Shropshire Archives, plus direct links to other storage facilities where BCR documents are known to be stored. The second will have links to all back copies of the quarterly Journal printed by Craven Design and Print, who have kindly provided the files to enable us to do this. The third page will be the Society's collection of photographs, for the first time, all one place, making it easier for members to research a particular subject.

As you can imagine, all this is a lot of work for a few volunteers, but should be available to view shortly.

<https://bcrailway.co.uk>



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If you have an item for the Newsletter please send to Lin Dalton at mail@ludfordpark.plus.com by the 1st of each month

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