

Summer Outing – Isle of Wight

5th September 2019

Dear Members

The Old Cicestrians have been organising Summer Lunches for many years. The original idea was to provide a calendar event i.e. a Ladies Lunch allowing parity for wives/partners while the members continued to hold their Christmas Lunch event. Numbers have dwindled for the former so the current Summer Outing now includes relations and friends.

A nautical theme has emerged from the last two excursions involving trips down the Chichester Canal and around Chichester Harbour. Railway 'buffs' Bill Allen and Alan Green then came up with an idea suggesting a trip over the Solent to the IOW coupled with catching the Island Steam Railway and they set about drawing up a schedule. So we were going to reach the open sea at last!

Despite some difficulties in obtaining tickets via three sources eighteen persons booked on. All arrived in time at Portsmouth Harbour to board the 1115 'Fastcat' crossing a calm Solent to Ryde Pier. It was then a scramble to catch the Island Railway line to Smallbrook Junction.



On arrival yet another change this time to steam clambering into a reserved Third Class carriage (no corridor leading to toilets here) on the IOW Steam Railway line to Wootton. At each stop, Alan and Bill popped into the individual compartments to explain the histories of the three Island company lines. A return to Havenstreet Railway Station for lunch



I must mention the efforts of Rob Whitfield who had travelled down from Bristol and the eventful journey of Alan Coombs. Starting from Bournemouth by rail he got stranded at Southampton due to a 'serious' incident on the line. His daughter Ann-Marie motoring down from St Albans diverted making a gallant rescue and they arrived in good in time.

On arrival, we spent three leisurely hours exploring the Havenstreet railway station and exhibition site. Obviously a magnet for enthusiasts but for the rest of us getting a chance to get close up to the wheels and engineering, drawing in the aroma of steam off these powerful locomotives must have triggered distant memories. Envy for the footplate men can always be detected. The enthusiasm and demeanour of the volunteers in their pristine uniforms stood out.



A "regal" wave from the President Geoff Wills

A surprise distraction was provided by falconers flying half a dozen 'red kites' in an adjacent field. I often travel up the M40 and when approaching High Wycombe these v-tailed raptors can always be seen flying high endlessly performing their aerobatics. Here they were diving in amongst us and landing just feet away to consume the morsels offered up by their captors.

Soon it was time for the return journey but first an ice cream. Mine was rum 'n' raisin. As Ivatt Class 2 41298 2-6-2T pulled out a familiar sound of yesteryear resounded. I believe it was Reginald Gardner who in 1934 recorded 'Trains' a monologue depicting railway trains running on the track. He regarded them as 'beasts'. A boy I would listen to him on the radio introducing his own vocal version of the wheels sounding on the lines using a 'diddley dee' and 'diddley dah' mode which was most amusing especially when the wheels crossed the 'points'.



A little weary it suddenly dawned on us that this had been an epic journey. During the day most of the party had undertaken eight train transfers plus two ferry crossings! Someone remarked that they had also caught a bus as well! For personal reasons as always my pride was hoisted when approaching Southsea.

The weather was marvellous. At Portsmouth, we said our goodbye's and melted away. All in all it had been yet another good day out.

Colin Snook