

MONMOUTHSHIRE RAILWAY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023

Information Desk

Programme of Meetings 2024

Thurs.	18 th Jan.	David Postle	Railways of the UK on Plate Glass Negatives
Thurs.	15 th Feb.	MRS	Video evening
Thurs.	14 th March	Andy Cope	The Last Wheeltapper
Thurs.	18th April	Graham Sturgess	The Vale of Berkeley Railway
Thurs.	16th May	Ian Boskett	The Great Train Robbery
Thurs.	13th June	MRS/Ray Viney	The South Wales Main Line Recalled
Thurs.	12th Sept.	AGM followed by films	

MEETINGS AT LYSAGHT INSTITUTE, ORB DRIVE, CORPORATION ROAD, NEWPORT NP19 ORA

All meetings are held in the main ground floor room at Lysaght Institute, Orb Drive, Newport. There is FREE parking for 50 cars within the grounds (with spaces set aside for disabled) and FREE overflow parking spaces arranged by Lysaghts in the adjacent Morrisons Supermarket car park. The 60-seat room is just a few steps from the foyer with level access, as are the toilets and coffee machine. If possible, please have the correct entrance fee of £5 (members) or £6 (non-members) to reduce over-handling of money. Doors open at 18.45 for a prompt 19.00 start. We aim to vacate the building no later than 21.15.

If anyone will find it difficult in terms of transport to attend meetings at Lysaght Institute, please contact the Committee's liaison, Phillip Stallard, thus affording the Committee an opportunity to resolve travel difficulties. His contact details are:- mobile 07854 078032, email- philip.stallard1@outlook.com

MEETINGS SUMMARY

In **January**, Kidderminster Rly. Museum's curator, **Dave Postle**, pays us another visit when he dips into a small sample of KRM's photo archive. Plate glass negatives are renowned for the detail they captured, due to the sheer size of the negatives, so this scanned selection dating from the 1880s through to just after WW2 should provide a fascinating insight into the UK's railways of yesteryear.

February 2023 will be our usual **video evening**.

Andy Cope makes a first ever visit in **March**; starting as a 17-year-old apprentice in 1972, he rose through the ranks to become deputy managing director of First Capital Connect and later served as a non-executive director with East Coast Trains and Directly Operated Railways. With quite a variety including video sequences, the essence of this talk is effectively a couple of chapters from his book 'Changing Platforms' (pub. March 2021) detailing the technological

revolution which occurred on the railway in the 1970s, but is not always recognised..

The Vale of Berkeley is a new heritage railway created from the old branch line running from Sharpness Docks (its main base) to Berkeley Road. Closed in 1964, enthusiasts are restoring it ready to run trains again. Engineering Director **Graham Sturgess** will be along in **April** to recant the first nine years of developments and what the future might hold.

Ian Boskett has studied the events of the early hours of 8/8/63 and the subsequent investigations and inquiries, creating a presentation on The Great Train Robbery. On his first visit in **May**, Ian will also detail how the signaling was interfered with to bring the train to a stand.

Meetings summary continued overleaf

MEETINGS SUMMARY (contd.)

Departing briefly from covering the valley lines, our Journal Editor **Ray Viney** makes his regular appearance in **June** to present a new talk titled "The South Wales Main Line Recalled". Ray will be including images from a host of fine photographers in the Society's collection that feature action on the main line from east of Newport through to Cardiff during the steam and early diesel eras. He will also be calling in briefly at major sheds along the SWML such as Ebbw Jcn. and Canton.

Note: This presentation is different to a similar Zoom talk given by Ray a few years ago.

Further details of our meetings will appear on our website and in the Journal.

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

At our AGM in September the Committee were re-elected with no changes from the previous year. Listed below are the Officers & Committee as elected for this season.

President	Dave Mathew	Memb. Sec.	C. Hopcroft
V. President	M. Cornick	Journal Editor	R. Viney
Chairman	J. Livsey	Website Mngr	K. Gomm
Treasurer	David Burden	Ord. Member	J. Bishop
Secretary	B. Thomas	Ord. Member	P. Stallard

RCTS SOUTH WALES BRANCH

Meetings are held at the Old Church Rooms, Park Road, Radyr, Cardiff, CF15 8DF. The next meeting is on 13/12/23, 7pm -10pm:-

Rail Freight Group Director Maggie Simpson presents an update and overview of the situation regarding rail freight. In addition, she will also present prizes for the Branch's photographic competition.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Renewal of M.R.S. membership was due on 1st September.

The subscription fee increased to £15 with effect from this 2023/24 season, the first increase in 20 years. Many thanks to the vast majority who have renewed already.

Membership Secretary, 27 Cwm Lane, High Cross, Newport.
NP10 9AF

[Please remember to enclose an SAE and notify us of ANY changes to your contact details INC. EMAIL ADDRESS]

As an alternative to handing over/sending a cheque**/cash, consider the more efficient method of Standing Order. An ever increasing number of members have been switching to this in recent years, and can be easily set up in various ways; writing to your bank, filling out a proforma (which they can usually supply), on-line banking or your banking app..

The essential destination bank details are:-

Monmouthshire Railway Society, sort code 40-34-27
a/c no. 31535900, £15 annually on 1st Sept.

Our Treasurer and Membership Secretary will see your renewal on bank statements, but please notify us of ANY changes to your contact details.

**** Our bank are charging us for every cheque deposited, but our Treasurer requests, If paying by cheque, please write the full name of the Society as payee, not 'MRS'.**

FFOS-Y-FRAN CLOSURE

Extraction of coal from Ffos-Y-Fran opencast pit ceased from Thursday 30th November with the loss of 150 jobs. While there has been no official notice, at the time of writing observers had indicated there was a substantial stockpile on site for the continued movement of coal trains from Cwmbargoed to Margam, potentially into January. 66009 was noted working the 05:31 Margam to Cwmbargoed empties on 4/12/23. TATA Port Talbot already imports most of its coal through its own docks.

Mike Macleaur

It was just as the latest Society Journal was being printed in early September 2023 that we learnt of the sad death of MRS member Mike Macleaur.

Mike grew up in Caerleon and captured on film the early sixties railway scene in and around the Newport area while he was just a teenager. In his youth and in recent years, he travelled to many rail venues around the UK rail network with his long-time companion Geoffrey Lloyd, who was a close neighbour.

Around 25 years ago he generously loaned to the M.R.S. the majority of his negatives from his photograph collection that were taken around the Newport area, later becoming a Society member and attending many of our meetings.

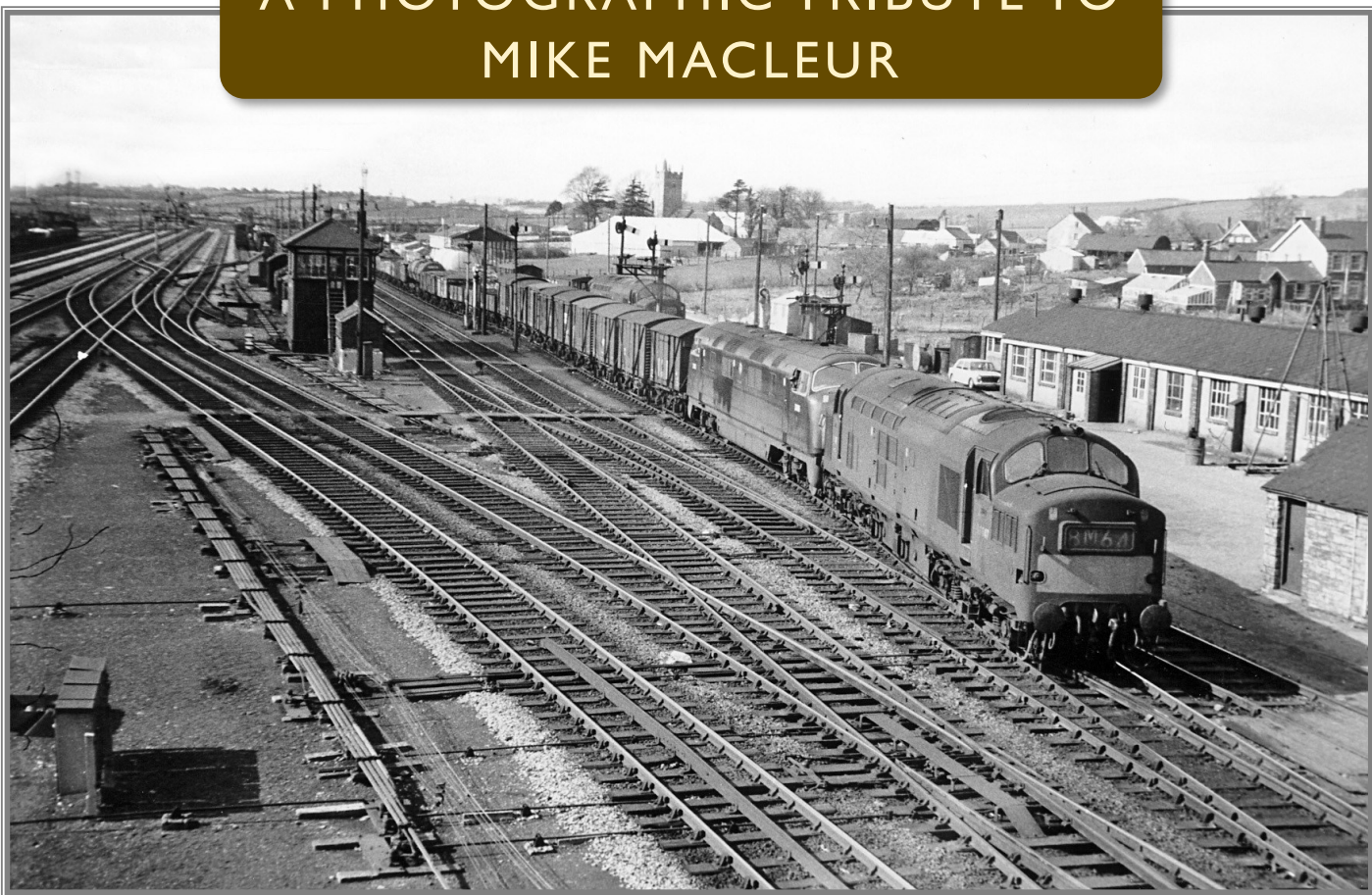
Mike was also a regular and much respected photo contributor to the Facebook group 'Railways in South Wales'. A recent much-deserved and fitting tribute was organised by the group via a special 'Zoom' meeting where Mike's family and other RiSW members were invited and shown a selection of his images that were posted by Mike over the years.

He will be greatly missed by his MRS colleagues and many others in the railway fraternity.

Our condolences go to his family and relatives.

In paying our own tribute, we include a couple of Mike's photographs on the following page of this Newsletter.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC TRIBUTE TO MIKE MACLEUR



A double-headed freight, hauled by an unidentified EE type 3 and Warship leaves the up yard at Severn Tunnel Junction in early months of 1966. The new diesel servicing shed is seen under construction to the right of the signal box.

M. Macleur



A trio of youthful spotters witness 'Castle class' No.5077 *Fairey Battle* enter the island platform circa 1962 with an express to Paddington. The Landore-based loco has its customary silver-painted buffers, a distinctive feature applied by the Swansea shed. The newly installed MAS signalling is in evidence on the platform during what would have been a transition period in the Newport Area Resignalling scheme.

M. Macleur

GWR/BR(WR) COACHING STOCK BOOKLETS

A series of coaching stock booklets were first compiled between 1959 and 1962 by 'The Railway Publishing Society', a local group who were amalgamated with the Monmouthshire Railway Society in 1960.

Three editions detailing former GWR/BR coaching stock have survived in the Society archive and are now available in PDF format to download/print from our website (under the **MRS Media** drop-down), or type this in to your browser....
www.mrsoc.co.uk/coaching-stock-booklets

Printed copies can also be supplied by contacting the Journal Editor, Ray Viney 01446 750471 or 07581 796520.

Ex. GWR and BR (WR) Push/Pull Auto Coaches. 5th Edition Summer 1959.

Compiled by M.J. Cornick. A companion to the restaurant car booklet, this booklet lists the W.R. auto cars and gives dimensions, allocations etc.

Western Region Restaurant Car Survey, 1st Edition Spring 1960.

Compiled by M.J. Cornick. Booklet lists all the W.R. Restaurant Cars, giving dimensions, etc.

Western Region Close-Coupled 'B' Sets. 3rd Edition Spring 1962.

Compiled by S.R. Irwin. A list containing dimensions and allocations for the sets.

CAERPHILLY STATION REDEVELOPMENT

An application was made in early November to Caerphilly County Borough Council (ref. 23/0771) to demolish and redevelop Caerphilly Station, with the intention of creating a new integrated and accessible interchange building to seamlessly connect rail, bus, taxi and active travel transport modes, including the increase of bus stands from 11 to 12 and layover bays from 3 to 4, alongside new public conveniences, active travel and retail facilities. It is believed Caerphilly is the last example of Rhymney Railway buildings on a bridge, Bargoed and Tirphil having lost theirs. Objections to the planning application must be registered by 6th December.

JOURNAL 'COPY DATE'

The next issue of the Journal is due for release mid-March but as always, the Editor will be delighted to receive contributions towards its content, so forward your photographs, notes, observations and comments by email or post, to :-

Ray Viney, 5 Rectory Drive, St. Athan, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 4PD. Tel. 01446 750471 email: rayviney5@gmail.com

The Journal **copy date** is Sunday 28th January, although it always helps if material is received earlier.

EBBW VALE ROUTE & PARK JUNCTION SIGNALBOX

The final phase of track and signaling enhancements on the Ebbw Vale line were being implemented at the time of writing. Part of a £70m investment, Llanhilleth and Newbridge stations received new platforms (including lifts at the former), and extending the existing platforms so that they can potentially accommodate longer trains in the future. The existing double track section of approx. 3 miles between north of Rogerstone and Crosskeys will be extended by seven miles when a new second track will be commissioned up to Aberbeeg. Grade II listed Park Junction Signalbox is closing, control of the signaling migrating to the Wales Route Operating Centre (WROC) in Cardiff. The last passenger service to be signalled through was believed to be the 22:37 Ebbw Vale Town - Cardiff on the evening of 14th November 2023. A Cardiff/Ebbw Vale bus replacement service was put in place from 15/11 to 3/12 inclusive. Ballast traffic from Machen seemed to have continued for at least the earlier part of the possession, as the official closure date was not until 4th December.

With the introduction of the winter timetable on 10th December, the much anticipated Newport/Ebbw Vale Town service will operate from 11th Dec., almost doubling the number of services on the Ebbw Vale line to more than 60 per day (a new general pattern depart from Ebbw V. xx.35 to Newport, xx.05 to Cardiff). A Newport/Cross Keys service was implemented at the end of 2021 but was subject to periods of suspension or bus replacement (due to covid-related issues and stock shortages for example), before being withdrawn in May 2023. Apart from the Sunday service which operated as Cardiff-Ebbw Vale via Newport.

The Ebbw Vale line reopened in February 2008 after being closed for more than 45 years. In 2014, a new station at Pye Corner opened and in 2015, approximately 1.5 miles of new track was laid to extend the railway from Ebbw Vale Parkway to a new station at Ebbw Vale Town.

No doubt as part of the ongoing engineering works on the route, 70814 was possibly the first Class 70 to reach Ebbw Vale Town (confirmation or other sightings welcomed) when a Colas route learner/refresher ran. The 0240 20:54 from Westbury Yard first reached the terminus at 00:51 on 23rd Oct. and made several return runs to Pye Corner and back. The 0241 03:17 return was also booked to make several more return trips, but actually returned direct to Westbury.

EXTERNAL SOURCES - Transport for Wales, networkrail.co.uk, RCTS South Wales (Right Tracks), Railways in South Wales Facebook group, planningonline.caerphilly.gov.uk, googlemaps, walesonline.co.uk

We wish our members, families and friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!