

## An Evening with Ron White

On 15 March, Ron White of Colour-Rail gave a showing of his extensive slide stock. He showed over 150 colour slides, 25 each from the GWR, Southern and LMS, 50 from the LNER and a variety of miscellaneous shots. The earliest of these dated from the mid-1930's, all taken on very slow film by modern standards, typically 8 ASA, although he also had some 2 ASA. These needed long exposures, the typical camera of the day only managing 1/100 sec at f7.5. Even so, it had its advantages; as Ron said, it was the first colour medium which was faster than oil painting!

He recounted some of the "finds" he has made. One roll of pre-war Agfa dating from 1937 came as a tightly wound cylinder held by a fossilized rubber band. After careful recovery it was found to have rare shot of the inside of Swindon Works. At another talk at ICI Wilton works, a man turned up with some photographs he had found. These had been stored in his roof for 60 years and included a shot of Silver Jubilee on its first run. However, his Dufay-Colour find of all time was a colour shot of a Silver A4. The photographer only took that one reel on Dufay-Colour and only managed this one shot successfully. According to his wife, he gave up colour photography as a result. This photographer was not alone in his abandonment of colour film; even the best photographers had disappointing results. Henry Casserley only managed one good shot of Chatham J Class 1597 after which he abandoned colour, and Cam Camwell only took 2 rolls of Dufay-Colour in 1937.

Ron has sold 2 million transparencies since starting in the late 1940s. Currently, he has 170,000 originals in his collection with 40,000 copies ready for sale. These are offered on a return of post service, although this can take a little longer when he is on holiday! Catalogues of his collection are available at £5 from 5 Treacher's Close, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 2HD.

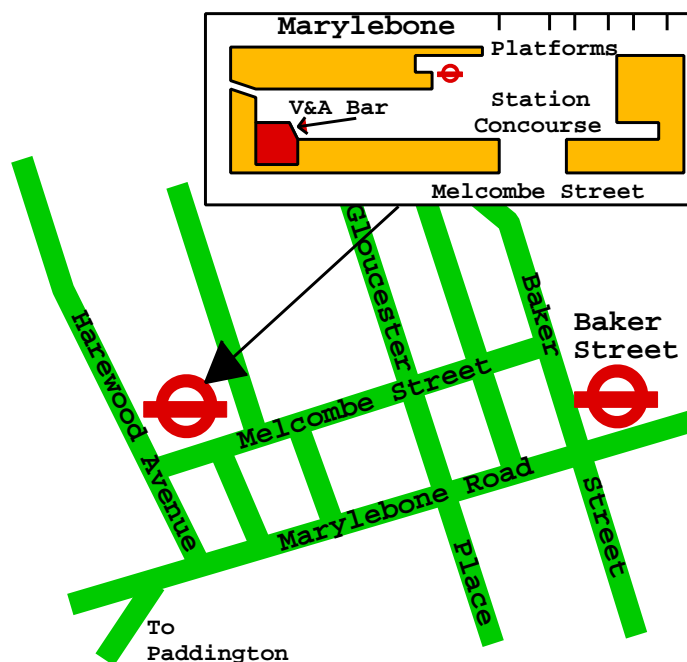
## The Railways of Sri Lanka

On 17 May, our Chairman, George Rutter gave the group an interesting insight into the railways in this tropical ex-British colony. The first line was built in 1865 from Colombo to the middle of the island. This later became the junction to Jaffna and Trincomalee. The next section to Kandy is heavily engineered, rising 1450ft in 20 miles with 12 tunnels, at a 1:44 ruling gradient. This line was then extended to Badulla, again via a very mountainous section. All of these lines are to the island's broad gauge standard of 5ft 6ins. There was also a 117-mile network of 2ft 6ins narrow gauge, which stretched from Colombo to Adams Peak and Openake. This network is now cut back to Avissawella and even this is now dual gauged, with the narrow gauge rails mainly used for tourist excursions. The narrow gauge track is in a poor state and it is likely that it will be abandoned shortly.

George illustrated his talk with slides of his visit, including photographs of the running shed at Dematagoda which houses a number of ancient engines, such as an unusual tender-tank engine. He also showed excerpts from his trip on the prestigious Viceroy express, and finished with illustrations of the island's unique working narrow-gauge, 1928-built Sentinel Steam Railcar. All of these photographs included backgrounds of the tropical countryside with typically British semaphore style signalling and other railway equipment.

There were only 2 serviceable broad gauge steam engines available at the time of his visit, and these were in poor condition. The absence of heavy machine tools will prevent restoration, however, just as important is the absence of skills. There has been talk of training local staff at the Severn Valley Railway boiler works, so that they can undertake comprehensive maintenance of the locos. Unfortunately it did not prove possible to get financial support from the UK or Sri Lankan governments, and the initiative lapsed. With the right support and encouragement, a section of the running shed could become an attractive museum. We wish the country well in preserving its steam past.

More extensive summaries of both talks are available on the Group's Web page



## Forthcoming Events

13 September 1999 - Mr R H N Hardy  
Life as Shedmaster, Stewart's Lane, Southern  
Region 1952-55

Richard Hardy makes a return visit to the group, to take forward the story of his life in railways. His last talk proved very popular, so don't miss the opportunity to hear this well-known speaker.

15 November 1999 - Beverley Cole  
The National Collection of Railway Posters

The National Railway Museum curator of the poster collection will describe the work to preserve and make available the historic advertisements of the railway companies.

The meeting will be held in the V&A Bar at Marylebone Station. Please enter from the station concourse and turn to the right into the private lounge bar. The talk will commence at 19.00 but refreshments can be purchased from the bar prior to this. There will be a voluntary collection to help cover the cost - donation of around £1 to £2 per head. Guests are welcome.

## FUTURE OUTREACH EVENTS

The Group stand will be out over the summer spreading the message about the wonders of the NRM at York. The current list of events comprises:

**17 & 18 July** - *Rocket* at the Kent and East Sussex Railway, Tenterden

**15 August** - Vintage Transport Meeting and airshow, Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden Airfield, Biggleswade.

**Mid August/start of September** - Excursion trains hauled by Green Arrow (still to be confirmed)

If you are interested in helping on the stand at any of these events, please contact George Rutter (see below). Other events come up, sometimes at short notice, so if you can't make any of the above, but would like to help, please contact George. You get free entry to the event or, in the case of the Green Arrow trips, free tickets to travel.

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