

The Bassil Shippam Centre
Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester, PO19 7LG

Wednesday 26 April
At 19:15

**An LMR Black and White journey from
London to Carlisle between 1958 and 1968**



An evening with
my father's (Derek
Cross) slides.

David Cross

Entry by donation
on the door.
Recommended
£2 Members
£3 Guests

Come and join us Bring a friend Everybody welcome

From The Chair

Welcome to our RCTS Chichester branch Newsletter, which continues to be collated and edited by Ian McKey. Contributions and comments are always welcome, however small, and should be sent to chichesterchair@rcts.org.uk

The branch was formed in 2007 and prior to the Covid pandemic our meetings had been held at County Hall in Chichester. Following a reappraisal by the County Council of the use by third parties, we were obliged to search for new premises.

Our move to the Bassil Shippam Centre has been very successful, a big thank-you to all who have visited and enjoyed a presentation in the past year. However, the move has come at a cost to the Society. The County Council were providing facilities for the community, but now we have to be completely self-sufficient. In the past twelve months we have purchased a new digital projector and other peripheral equipment critical to the presentations we offer. There are also increased charges for room hire.

Careful control of costs from donations we have received in previous years has enabled us to move forward unhindered. We are, however, now in a position where donations will not cover all our costs on an annual basis. In researching the history of the branch we can confirm the recommended meeting donation for members has remained at £2 since 2007. To cover the increased costs we are proposing to increase this donation to £3 for members and £4 for guests commencing with our meeting in September 2023.

Thank you for your understanding and we look forward to welcoming you to our meetings in the future.

Obituary

Sadly, we were advised recently of the death of Jon Carver. Jon had been a Chichester branch member for several years, an ever present at our local meetings and external group visits, notably to Eastleigh Railway Works in 2019. A willing volunteer, Jon had been helping with room set-up at the Bassil Shippam Centre, also storing branch equipment at his home, transporting to and from meetings as necessary.

Jon the real gentleman, first to stand up at our initial meeting post Covid thanking everybody involved for keeping in contact, principally through the monthly Newsletter, during the pandemic. He was not a great lover of the new Zoom technology preferring to revel in the personal contact of a meeting venue.

Ever helpful, friendly and very supportive Jon will be very much missed by us all.

There will be a commemoration of Jon's life in Yapton on Saturday 22 April. His wife Mary is happy for anybody who knew Jon to attend, but would like advance notice of individuals intentions. If you would like further details, initially please email chichesterchair@rcts.org.uk

Roger Sandford

Chairman RCTS Chichester Branch

Southern Coastway Class 313s the final weeks

By Roger Sanford ©

It has been confirmed use of Class 313s on The Coastway services will end by the timetable change in May. A farewell tour has been arranged for Saturday 29 April, details and booking can be found at [The Branch Line Society](https://www.branchlinesociety.co.uk/).

The first three units 313 – 202, 214 & 217 were hauled away from Lover's Walk, Brighton on Friday 10 March to Eastleigh for initial storage. This special ecs working was rather fittingly hauled by Class 37 800, over a decade older than the 313s, initially entering serviced in May 1963 as D6843, renumbered 37 143 in May 1974 and finally to its current identity in September 1986. This unusual consist travelled via the Brighton Main Line, South London and the South Western Main line. The accompanying picture is taken at Winchester, the service passing at line speed 106 minutes late, due to earlier delays in the locomotive arriving at Brighton from Wembley.

Please note, the Branch Line Society's website now reports that the Farewell Tour is fully booked. You can, however, add your details to a waiting list via a button on the website.



Where is it?

Still no correct answers to our "Where is it?" pictures. Last month's was an image of Exeter West Box which is, of course, located at the Crewe Heritage Centre!!



For April we have another tester. Can you tell where this image was taken??

Answers to chichesterchair@rcts.org.uk



Rafael Freyre Cuba

By Alan Wallbank ©

Those who have seen my videos at Chichester may recall a film titled Zafra about the 2000 sugar cane harvest in Cuba. I had previously visited the Island in 1996 and 1998 filming with my cine camera, but felt video was the way forward to capture the best images. Like the earlier years our group travelled to numerous sugar mills by air conditioned coach, while the more adventurous dashed about at break neck speed in hire cars to get those elusive photographs in fields away from the sugar mills.

For me the most exciting system was the Rafael Freyre 2ft 6in gauge with its numerous branches at the eastern end of the Island. We spent four days at this location driving about in hire cars over appalling rock strewn roads that criss crossed the railway rather than running parallel hardly anywhere. I have to say that I was very pleased with the film from that year and have received many favourable comments where ever it has been seen.

When steam ended the Rafael Freyre sugar mill was dismantled leaving just the skeleton remains of the old building, but it's still an interesting place to visit as a steam hauled tourist train is timetabled to run once or twice every weekday and there is a regular passenger service using two single coach railcars that travel over the old cane tracks, while the old steam engines remain as a reminder of happier times.

My wife has a house not far from the old mill so I made yearly visits there from 2016 to 2019, capturing not only the railway, but town life as well and of course the American cars. The downside of filming was the near constant unbearable heat that quickly rose 30+ on early January mornings with a complete lack of shade anywhere as I waited for diesel and steam trains to leave the station area and in the case of the latter I had to wait at least 40 minutes for it's return, but it was a case of 'no pain - no gain'. In my last film, I travelled on one of the railcars for an hour to La Sierra and what an experience! The noise and vibration in the jam packed standing room only railcar was unbearable and I was regretting being there at all! Fortunately, I was invited to ride with the driver only to see the appalling track work and under bridges that looked as if they were going to collapse as we passed over them, but it did allow me to capture some great footage probably from the cab that has never been filmed before!

When steam finished in Cuba quite a number of engines were deposited in the roads around Havana's Capitol building in about 2008 and I just happened to be there at the time. Does anyone know if they are still there? I also photographed two diesel locos at the railway station in Havana. One year I took my Kodak Carousel slide projector and numerous Cuban steam slides and donated them to the railway museum in Havana. I would love to return to RF, but there are no direct flights now and if there were I still wouldn't go as I really hate sitting in a plane for up to ten hours!

Editor's Note: The following pages contain a selection of Alan's images. © Alan Wallbank



The railway station at Rafael Freyre





Current Cuban Railway stock.





Steam remains!



Above:

Cuban
underbridge !



Left:

An example of
the cars that are
kept running in
Cuba.