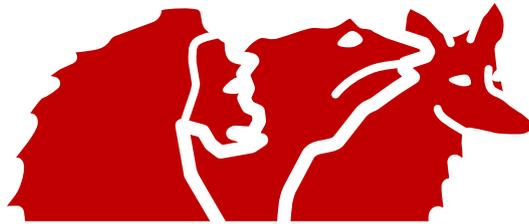


Liverpool University Public Transport Society

Annual 'Bus Tour

Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 April 2017



The Monkey, The Frog & The Fox

Third time lucky, we settled on our transport for this year's tour.

Howards Travel & Springfield Bus & Coach provided our transport, V23HOW, a Scania L94UB, delivered new (as YN51MKZ), in



January 2002, to Yarranton of Eardiston, Worcestershire. Howard's Travel bought it after it had also operated in York, Harlow and Stirling. However, the original proposal had been to take a double decker, a route having been carefully devised to avoid some of Stoke on Trent's notorious low bridges. It was only after a second trip to Caverswall Road, Blythe Bridge, to prod overhanging tree branches with an eight foot long pole (and avoid being arrested for suspicious behaviour), that the potential folly of this became clear.

The tour organiser being unfamiliar with the, erm, wonders of "Contravision", it was left to others to point out that they would rather like to see out of the 'bus's windows, so that the second vehicle chosen also fell by the wayside.

An 8' long pole prepares for its trip to Staffordshire

However, there was little to fault in V23HOW, nor in its friendly and accommodating driver.



V23HOW at Tithebarn Street, Liverpool (photograph: Jonathan Cadwallader)

The Apedale Valley Light Railway was officially opened in September 2010 by the Moseley Railway Trust, which aims to



In the shed at Apedale. The ex Ffestiniog coach can be seen beyond the steam locomotives, extensively covered in newspaper prior to painting.

preserve industrial narrow gauge railway locomotives, rolling stock and other equipment. The trust seems to be pursuing this ambition assiduously, as there was plenty to see as we toured the workshop and shed. Among the largest items on display was the



Arrival back at Apedale Valley station.

body of one of two coaches, bought by the railway from the Ffestiniog Railway (albeit without bogies) which is now in the process of being restored. The tour was followed by a return trip on the quarter mile long length of track, behind 0-6-0WT 3014, built by Kerr Stuart in Stoke-on-Trent and new to the French Commission for their artillery railways in 1916. Footplate rides were made available to a few lucky individuals as the locomotive ran round stock or returned to Apedale Valley station.

It was for Mr Cadwallader to point out that this wouldn't be one of Mr Poole's tours without a wrong turning being taken at some



The 1300 arrival at Kingsley & Froghall, which was to form the 1320 to Leekbrook and return.

point, so he was not to be disappointed during the leg of the journey to Kingsley & Froghall, despite the driver's very impressive satellite navigation equipment. Fortunately, the detour was short (digger fans were at least afforded the opportunity to see the location of JCB Earthmovers' Loader and Fastrac Innovation Centre, with an average review rating of 4.6 stars on Google Maps - I have no idea what that means - from the roundabout on the A522), and plenty of time remained for refreshment at the award-winning station tea room or the nearby Railway Hotel, before catching the train.

No 5197, an S160 Class 2-8-0 built for service in China by Lima Locomotive Company in Ohio, USA in 1945, provided the motive power for the trip. Various locomotives could be seen at Cheddleton, including two BRCW Type 3s named,



The traditional group photograph was taken at the start of the day (when timings were more generous and everybody present was still sober and talking to each other). The location is in the car park, outside Apedale Heritage Centre.



5197 ready to depart from Kingsley and Froghall.

respectively, *Captain Charles* and *Sophie*, providing the chance to construct a sentence that included the words “*Captain Charles*”, “*Sophie*” and “*a rather smart pair of 33s*” to anybody who wanted to avail themselves of it. The return journey went, in fact, to Leekbrook Junction, and the end of the Cauldon Lowe branch. Opened to passenger services in November 2010, its 4.7 mile route from Leekbrook Junction as far as the former Ipstones Station takes visitors over typical



33102 ‘Sophie’ at Cheddleton.

moorland scenery and offers some of the steepest gradients in the country. It is open on a few weekends during the year.

A fairly tight schedule at this point in the proceeding meant a quick return to the ‘bus and on to Blythe Bridge for the Foxfield Railway. Our driver agreed, on seeing the trees overhanging the Caverswall Road approach to the station of the same name, that it was a good call to substitute the double decker that was originally booked - despite having been told that the railway itself had moved locomotives to the site by the same route. The advertised steam haulage

was unavailable, so 1959-built Bagnall 0-6-0 Diesel Mechanical Shunter *Wolstanton No 3* deputised, with one member of the footplate crew making his debut run. In conversation with one of the volunteers at the railway, we



Wolstanton No 3 runs round its stock at Dilhorne Park, the current terminus of the line.

were told that the long awaited commencement of passenger services to Foxfield Colliery (which would incorporate a run over a gradient of 1 in 19 when leaving the colliery) may happen later in 2017.

Various forms of refreshment were taken after the journey, several participants gravitating to the One Legged Shunter, the station’s real ale bar, before departure for a tea stop at Nantwich and return to Liverpool.



And the subject of this year’s caption competition is...



The Anderton Boat Lift, “The Cathedral of the Canals”, photographed in April 2016

Twenty people made the trip to Cheshire on the Sunday, to visit the Cathedral of the Canals

The Anderton Boat Lift is a two caisson lift lock near Anderton, Northwich. It provides a 50-foot vertical link between two navigable waterways, the River Weaver and the Trent & Mersey Canal. Built in 1875, the boat lift was in use for over 100 years, until corrosion forced its closure in 1983. Restoration began in 2001, and the lift was re-opened in 2002.

A boat trip on *The Edwin Clarke* along the River Weaver to the edge of Northwich town centre, with a commentary that explained the links between the town’s industrial past (much of which was based on salt and coal) and the present day Country Park, was followed by an ascent of the lift.

Lunch followed at the Stanley Arms. Fortunately, several members of the party had pre-ordered their meals, meaning that they were able to tuck into their main courses a mere two hours after their arrival at the establishment...

The without whom department...

Staff at all three railways were unfailingly hospitable at every stage of the proceedings. The same is true of those at the boat lift and, the difficulties encountered on Sunday notwithstanding, at the Stanley Arms (which I can still heartily recommend, if you turn up on a quiet lunchtime, in the middle of the week, with a mate and two dogs...).

Staff at Howard’s Travel were particularly helpful at every part of the booking stage, and the driver has to be commended for his friendly and professional manner on the day.

I nearly didn’t get to participate in my “own” tour, and I am very grateful to my “deputies”, Jonathan and Rob, for stepping in at various points in the week leading up to the event and on the day itself. Earlier, Charles had also provided invaluable help while I was setting up the tour. I am also indebted to Angela Stagg (wife of Tony), who arranged a day with her sister in Staffordshire so that she could drive Tony and I to the start and finish of the “meat” of the Saturday tour. CP