

## European Branch to Belgium & Germany

### 14-16th October 2005

The start of this trip, our final trip this year, came, for me, at 06:20 on the morning of October the 14<sup>th</sup>. I say for me because The Standback Fusilier had started well over an hour before me rounding up our participants. Ztroop, the Exiled Brummie and Metal Mickey joined us, making up the five usual suspects and we headed down the A1 on the start of our journey to Dover. We were booked on the 11:15 sailing and made it in time for the 10:40, which meant two things, we would now get some time at Aachen in the daylight and, more important, we could still get breakfast on the ferry!

The smooth crossing allowed us time in the bar, where Standback suffered the usual wallet failure and bout of deafness that accompanies the words 'your round' and we were presented with the trip's final itinerary. French customs showed their usual lack of interest and even though we experienced heavy traffic, which prised the lid off the swear jar, we arrived at Schaarbeek depot at 14:50. The many light engine movements around the depot area made us wonder if we would be allowed a visit, but we experienced no problems getting permission. Even though the depot seemed empty, 71 numbers were actually 'on shed' 5501 was, for once, outside in the sun requesting to be photographed and we 'filled our boots' with photos of the stored class 80XX shunters. During our walk round Standback stumbled over something (it was not his wallet, as that stayed firmly in his pocket all weekend), overbalancing forward, he put his foot firmly down to stop himself from falling, but put it into a puddle of spilled diesel, thus slipping further. His back leg was now brought into play, it landed in the diesel and for a good few seconds his legs were going faster than Michael Flatley in 'river dance'. For those of you who know Standback you now have a frightening picture in your mind, eventually he restored himself to an even keel and, by Aachen, we had all stopped laughing!

The Ibis was to be our base for the next two nights, we know exactly where it is now and experienced no problems in finding it. We were expected and checked in with no problems, dumping our bags we shot off to the station for the final 40mins of light. The highlight of this was the passage of BLS electrics 421377+421386 heading a long freightliner which was being banked out of the station by BLS 482013. I managed a photo of it emerging from the station shadows, it's not good but it's a memory. Once it got too dark we headed back to the hotel, a full 7mins walk away, for a good scrub down, then gathered in the bar for a quick beer before walking off to find a restaurant. Unusually, for us, we decided on the first one we found, The Rossini, a full 2mins walk away. It was another European Branch success, a Ham and Melon starter, followed by a large peppered steak and rounded off with a homemade Tiramisu that Pocketbook would have killed for. Our hostess then bought us a 'grappa', "it will dissolve the excess fat" she told us, we could have run the minibus on it! We returned to our hotel and were entertained by a drunken Scotsman (is there any other kind) and a 'biker girl', (don't even ask) until it was time for bed.

**Schaarbeek Station (14:40)** 813/21 1602 2023 2133/50

**Schaarbeek Depot (14:50)** 1188/92 2105/14/17/18/46/55 2323 2503/14 2601 2710/38/46/54  
4402 4906 5114/83 5303/05/09 5501/09/11/14 5917 6249/77/81/82 7355  
8006/11/20/32/33/34/35/37/47/49/51/52/55/64/65 8206/07/08/10/11/12/13/14  
8217/18/19/22/33/36/41/43 9119/21 ES208 ES401 steam 29013 with 8440/52 in the process of  
being cut up and EMU 543/54/70 722 834 passing

**Aachen Hbf (18:00 – 18:40)** 101125 110373/419 111115/156/157 140675/824 146021 363739  
406054 425526 643702/703/705/711/715/719/720/723/725 SNCB 155 252 663 BLS 421377/386  
482013 DLC PB12

The grappa had the desired effect, at least in our room, or it may have been the excess garlic in the steak, either way the morning brought a shedding of our excess fat. We made it down at 07:00 where the usual Ibis breakfast awaited. We were the only ones in the dining area and made full use of being first for everything. Loaded into the bus by 07:30, we were away, heading for the stabling point at Köln Eifeltor. I took the one hour drive as a chance to catch up on sleep and, apparently missed the early morning fog, as by the time I reopened my eyes clear blue sky was the order of the day. A full visit was granted and even this early on an October morning, it was too hot for a jumper as we walked round. Further BLS Cargo locomotives were stabled in the yard among the usual DB Cargo engines. The low sun made photographs quite difficult but we managed a decent one of 421385 below the signalbox and a further one of 185544 stabled at the head of it's train. Standback continued his 'River Dance' practice by stumbling over a protruding sleeper, before we headed off to the main depot at Gremburg. A further full visit was granted here, although the German blood transfusion service were involved in some sort of collection and more than once thought we should be part of it, only being finally put off when Ztroop explained there was more beer than blood running through his body! Only 51 locos were at home, which is not a good haul for this depot, the only plus being that photos were easier in the open spaces this lack of locos created. A glance in the yard found 9 further numbers before we made our way to the preservation centre at Dieringhausen.

The entrance fee of 4 euro was well worth it as Dieringhausen is home to many interesting pieces of preserved rolling stock. Electric loco E41006 (141006) was undergoing extensive restoration and the small diesel Köfs, 323133 & 323462 busied themselves around the site. Vorhalle came next, a full visit being secured with no hassle, once again we were surprised by the lack of locomotives the depot and yard produced just 17! We moved on to Dortmund. I'd never visited this depot before so was quite looking forward to it. A GPS 'blip' put us slightly off track but we found the main car park (and I don't think it's moved recently) and secured a full visit. Dortmund provided us with a guide, Mathaius, who spoke excellent English and showed us everything. 47 numbers, 24 of which were loks, found their way into our books. The class 112 is not one associated with Dortmund, but 112162 was there for crew training, sadly for Mathaius, who was obviously most excited by the 112, my interest was in Köf diesel 323173 which was in remarkably good condition and made it's self available for photos.

Oberhausen came next, once again an English speaking guide was found and amazingly he remembered both Ztroop and me from previous visits. The sun was now quite high, for October, and we were able to get some excellent photos - 151159, standing outside the depot being just one example. Diesel locomotive 215049 was inside the depot and, according to our guide, it's 'workbook' said it was undergoing repairs! We moved on to the nearby yard, which produced it's usual mixture of shunters and scrap locos, and then to Oberhausen West. Just to clear up any confusion, there is an old roundhouse (overgrown and not in use) at Oberhausen West and the stabled loks are in this area. 15 loks were stabled here today, which is above average, 232201 was posing in the sun and in his rush to get into Pete's footprints Malc's 'River Dance' shuffle was perfected. Our final call was Duisburg Wedau, the roundhouse here remains firmly closed, but still rail connected, which was disappointing considering that all the shunting loks we had seen this day were carrying a Duisburg allocation sticker. The nearby DBG depot saved our blushes and 140827 had the grace to pass with a freight.

Standback did very well to squeeze the minibus into the Ibis car park and after a quick delouse we were ready to return to the Rossini restaurant. Metal Mickey was supporting a long, light brown cardigan last in fashion on December the 9<sup>th</sup> 1953; he ignored our comments and left the hotel wearing it. Thankfully he was arrested by the fashion police as he left the hotel and had his

cardigan confiscated. It now on show in the German museum of fashion disasters where it can be viewed every day between 10:00 and 16:30, Sundays excluded.

At the Rossini we enjoyed a further excellent meal, giant garlic prawns followed by three pork steaks in a cheese sauce, a further massive helping of the excellent Tiramisu, a few more bottles of the local brew and a further complementary 'Grappa', what a way to round off the day! We said goodbye in a continental fashion, I had to force a spoon between Metal Mickey lips and them of our hostess to break the suction and then buy him a brandy to speed his recovery. Our biker friends failed to show (not surprising the state they were in last night) so we all filtered our way to bed and further much needed sleep.

**Köln Eifeltor SP (08:30)** 140634 151004/028/137/151 152064/082/092 155072/179/235 185154 294714 BLS 421385 482009/017 HGK DE65/72/85 RSB 185544 with 218217 passing

**Köln Gremburg Depot (09:25)** 110252 139214  
140036/072/184/236/255/353/357/383/667/687/783/803/824 145030 151007/046/143  
152010/023/085/110 155160/243 185080/196/210 189075 225008/010/014/026/028/092  
294203/380/393/726 333043/096/680 335004/128/130/185/218 362540 363210 365203 SNCF  
37029

**Köln Gremburg Yard (10:10)** 152003/091/152 185011 290045 294165/200/377/399

**Dieringhausen Preservation Centre (11:00)** Diesel Loks 104 323133/462 93000 Kö 6020 V18-02 V36316 Electric Lok E41006 DMU 995409 VT959414 WBVT1 Steam 21 43 2243 2455 03092 41186 52148 95009 032155 441681 528095/116 THE04

**Vorhalle Depot & Yard (12:50)** 152058 155230 185008 189043 232484  
294195/365/383/403/405/604/731 332294 335217/221 363224/691

**Dortmund Depot (13:55)** 101104/122 110120/208/346/353/365 111016/125/129 112162  
143101/208/234 146014/026 323173 333648 363122/147/702 364511/520 365813 403504/509  
420183 612039/041/049/545 628528/531/540/541/674 640011/016/018/026/027 648121/621  
928528/531/540/541/674

**Oberhausen Depot (15:30)** 139145 140013/538/540/692/752/774/808 151007/045/102/145/159  
152027 155183/221 215049 218138/141/213 225001/015/053/113  
232092/109/190/259/283/388/426/502/509/531/595/700/901/903/909 241802/804 290052/054  
294352/355/390 333679 335006/082 362915 363128/649/823 364890 365109/130/733 HFW  
216012

**Oberhausen Yard (16:10)** 232298/374 294173/174/227/353/360/388/406/769/782/789/806  
365131/158/175/217/732

**Oberhausen West (16:45)** 151052/063/088 152077 232201/252/469/527/535  
294156/167/292/327/397/773

**Duisburg Wedau (17:20)** 140827 DBG 203305 335145/220 345021 RLG 68

We were allowed the luxury of a lay in on Sunday, with breakfast being scheduled for 07:15. Once again the breakfast area was totally devoid of any other life which meant we were on our way by 07:40. A short walk to the Hbf stabling point found 11 numbers at home before we fired up Clara and headed round to Aachen West. The sun came up, right into our eyes (and cameras)

denying us a photo of original green liveried 151049, which was one of only 12 locs stabled here this Sunday morning, we were expecting 20+ and this 'lack of locos' trend is becoming worrying.

We had now finished in Germany and heading back towards Calais and the ferry, we had to pass through Belgium so, obviously, it would be rude not to have called at any of these depots and Hasselt was the first we reached. The depot engineer was watching Manchester United on TV and allowed our visit with no worries. A total of 45 numbers were 'on shed', the highest numbered class 77 diesel we have seen, 7870 (which according to some people, will be the last) made an excellent photo as did electric 2722, however the highlight was provided by DB's 225027, still wearing its blue livery. The nearby infra yard had 5 locos in it, all of which looked like they had not turned a wheel since we last visited this yard, but the position of the sun was such that we could not ignore the photos it offered.

Antwerp Noord depot was to be our next port of call, we had been there a few times before and its location is firmly entrenched in the memory of our GPS system, Clara. BLUFF! Apparently, according to Clara, the depot entrance has moved to the pedestrian precinct in central Antwerp. Of course this could in no way be an operator error, could it Pete? A bit of manual navigation and a lot of 'it's not down here' and 'this does not look right' later, we found it. The depot engineer was happy to allow our visit, but warned us about the movements of locos between the depot and holding sidings. He was not wrong with locos moving back and forth all the time we were there. Preserved diesel 5404 was inside undergoing renovation, electric 2001 knocked a further 'want' off my photo list and shunter 8264 gave us a surprise 'cop'. After saying thanks we did the short drive to the holding sidings, the Exiled Brummie was totally confused by being asked to swap seats for the drive and was heard to say that if he was acting as the person he had been asked to swap with, did that mean all he had to do was snore and break wind?

The walk round the holding sidings took just over an hour and produced 126 locos, that's more like it! Even though the locos were stacked together we managed a few decent photos, the main focus being the older diesel and electric locos. Preserved 5166 & 201010 were there along with 2229 and long withdrawn 7209. 3 French and 1 Luxembourg locomotive added the spice, considering the current attitude in France it almost seems like we are 'cocking a snook' at SNCF by photographing their locos in other countries. After saying our goodbyes we headed out of the complex, taking care to 'waypoint' the entrance on the GPS and headed to Oostend.

As usual the traffic was horrendous, Standback liberally sprinkled the contents of the swear jar around and we accidentally found the new bypass road that took us direct to the depot entrance. A full visit was allowed and 15 numbers were found. Diesel 7814 had positioned its self nicely inside the shed for a photo, so we obliged. Trip over we headed for the port of Calais, via the cheep beer shop (an essential part of the tour) and the ferry to England. I took the wheel home, blinded a few pilots landing at Stanstead and squeezed the last remnants from the swear jar. The usual thanks are extended to the usual people and we are all looking forward to next years tours already, watch this space.