

Belgium, Germany and France, April 2007

After spending the night in the Blyth Hotel, the Exiled Brummie joined me (the ex-branch official) in boarding the tour transport that had arrived shortly before 04:00 on Friday morning. The 'old' gang was back together again, Jim (Z Troop) Marriott, having arrived the previous night from Southampton, Metal Mickey and the Standback Fusilier completing the party. These are the guys (along with Dean, Captain Snoozey, and Jones) that started it all off, all those years ago and it was great to have the team back together. As is usual I took the first leg down to Dover, as is also usual Pete had allowed plenty of time for this drive as we were booked on the 9:30am sailing, meaning (as usual) we caught the earlier sailing, while Malc, as usual slept the entire way! He was so sound on that even the smell of the catering departments freshly brewed coffee failed to rouse him and Z Troop had to jump start him from the van battery when we arrived at Dover.

The Ferry provided a full English start to the day and a very smooth crossing, Standback took over the driving and I repaid the compliment by sleeping all the way to our first stop, Monceau. This depot is long since closed but still contains a hatful of withdrawn diesels and the yard is still used as an SP, so, in bright sunshine, and armed with machetes (for the overgrown old depot) we noted our first 37 numbers. If you think I am joking about the machetes, just look at the photo of 6266! From here we did the short drive to Marchinelle SP where the Chief, a young lady in a fetching pink dress, who spoke no English, allowed our visit. Fate played a trump card on Standback because among the 16 numbers in residence were no fewer than 7 class 2600 electrics, but his last one 2620 was not one of them. From here we made our way to the depot at Stockem, after obtaining permission to visit we found it almost empty, just 5 shunting locos were inside this huge expanse of a depot, 7341, & small shunters 9135/48/53/59 plus a further 4 outside made poor pickings. There were further stored locomotives in the far side of the depot but we were unable to gain entry into this bit! Arlon came next, the north SP held just 2011 & 2019, but the station provided it's usual gaggle of electric locos, including a further 3 class 2600's but still not 2620. Having made its way up from the depot 2005 allowed it's self to be photographed, before we boarded our transport and headed into Germany. The plan was to go to our hotel in Trier, but we were running ahead of time, so we headed for the depot.

We obtained permission without a problem, a guide was provided and the presence of 7 stored class 143 electrics bumped up or number total. According to our guide the head of DB has decided that it is cheaper to run EMU's on local trains and get rid of the class 143's. A straightforward visit was almost over when our guide asked if we would like to ride in a locomotive, would we! He 'powered up' diesel shunter 335157, contacted the local signalman a took the lok, with the five of us and himself in the cab, 1½Km down the line to the depot yard, here he allowed us to leave the lok and collect all the numbers in the yard, once we were happy, we climbed aboard and retraced our steps to the depot. What a way to finish the day!

We stayed in the 'Mercure', the rooms were excellent, although one was missing a bed for a while, giving Peter a chance to chat up and grope the young lady at reception, (he was trying to catch the mattress apparently) the food spot on and the beer as good as anywhere, which all led to full bellies and a sound nights sleep.

Monceau Depot / SP (13:30) 5123/31/47/48/50 6240/66/73/86
7301/06/10/13/14/16/18/21/22/28/33/35/44
7345/48/84 7739/41/47/48/49/87/88 7825/26/27 8439/43 **Marchinelle SP (14:25)** 251 617/69 772
2214 2371 2608/13/14/19/27/28/30 2722/24 6262 **Stockem Station (16:25)** 7764 passing **Stockem Depot (16:30)** 168 243/48 514/16/22 2005/25 2629 4128 7340/41 9135/48/53/59 **Arlon SP (16:55)**
2011/19 **Arlon Station (17:00)** 176 672 705 2025 2301/08/32/36/39/51/63/77 2602/05/18 **Trier Depot (18:30)** 110295/320/333/340 140345
143025/102/147/149/216/366/575/647/662/920/932/945/946 218128/216/217/424 335136/150/157
364524/851 425126/588/630 426539 628455/456 928455/456 with 140851/866 151096/119 181211
and SNCF 37021 passing

The smell of cooking bacon filled the lift, so we knew what awaited us before we made it to the breakfast table. Standback, ably assisted by the Exiled Brummie, demolished the bacon and eggs,

before we made a painless checkout and headed to Ehrang. There is a small SP here and this morning it contained 10 numbers, including SNCF 37023 and CFL 4002, with NEG 02 (ex DB 202242) available in the station, it was a good start to our day. We moved on to Hermeskiel, there is a preservation centre here, alas it was not open today, as well has the headquarters of HWB and between them they provided us with over 20 numbers. Unfortunately they were all bunched together and photos proved impossible, we made a note of the opening days and may well return later in the year.

Manheim Depot was our next call, the old DB brick built buildings are now abandoned and the foreman now operates out of a two story portacabin, but he was happy to allow our visit. I was astounded by the complete lack of locomotives; the last time I visited here over 120 locomotives were 'on shed' today we did not make 60. The only thing that lightened my mood was the presence of 212079, withdrawn it may be, but it was in full sun and allowed it's self to be photographed. Peter renewed acquaintance with 151138 (his last one) which again was in the sun and easy to photograph and at least 155038 provided me with a cop. There is a small preservation site at Manheim, we found it easily and were made most welcome, preserved electric E244.31 looked good in the sun and a handful of K6f diesel shunters provided plenty of entertainment. The location of this preservation centre is most interesting; being lineside on the entrance / exit of the large yard at Manheim and it is a place we may have to return for a spot of main line photography as the line is open in both directions. Dragging ourselves away we did the long drive to Stuttgart, The sun got hotter (my shorts came out) and we were glad to get there. Stuttgart No1 depot was our destination, the depot engineer was happy to allow our visit and a very pleasant walk round found 45 numbers at home. These included 110228 in blue livery, but in a totally un-photographical position, and long sort after 143900. We took the obligatory photo of plinthed 163001, said our goodbyes and headed to Kornwesrheim, the main freight depot for the area. The dept foreman here was not as welcoming as at Stuttgart and we were not allowed to enter the shed buildings, but as a public footpath (to some allotments) passes directly through the depot yard we were still able to net 25 numbers. Across the line is a small EMN owned depot, we were made more than welcome here, despite being only small it contained some interesting items of stock, 206364 (ex 202364), 206466 (ex 202466), V100 1357 (ex 211357) and two class 360 diesel shunters.

Having got our photos here we made our way to the small preservation site within Kornwestheim Rbf, it took some finding, but was well worth it. We got a classic from Standback, who, when asked to turn right onto a bridge, uttered the immortal line, 'does it go all the way across' and had two false starts before we located it. A visit was secured and the two preserved V200's 200015 + 200016 became the object of many photos, however undoubted star of the show was steam loco 50.3636, which was in full steam and undergoing a safety valve check. While the 'blowing off' pressure was being adjusted something went wrong, plenty of shouting and running about followed then an emergency release of steam was instigated through the train heating pipe. The noise was deafening, at one stage we thought the boiler may explode; the photos though are probably some we will never get again.

Excitement over for the day Standback redeemed himself by expertly driving us the 2 and a half hours it took to reach Saarbrucken and our hotel, which I must say was excellent. However he reverted to type by saying Oliver Kahn (the German national goalkeeper) has been very popular in England ever since he let five goals go past him in Munich, causing us to retreat rapidly from the hotel reception. After a quick de-louse we consulted the Alan Wardman book of disappearing steak houses, then settled on a nearby restaurant. Once again this proved to be a great choice, frogs legs in garlic (sorry but it had to be done) were followed by large steaks and larger sticky puddings washed down with lashings of beer. The late night walk to the station produced nothing, but walked the food down and sleep came easily.

Ehrang Station (08:10) NEG 03 (202242) **Ehrang SP (08:20)** 140381/613/844 151080 152039 185086/254/279 SNCF 37013 CFL 4002 **Hermeskiel (09:10)** Diesel 7 21 232375 310131/881 EMU 701005/007/022/032/038/114/120 DMU 998768/890 VS32 VT83 Steam 22066 422753 441251 442196 52662 528123 **Manheim Station (10:50)** 363623 **Manheim Depot (11:00)** 139262 140119/506/644/771 140820/856 151128/133/138/170 152093/146 155083/224237 185011/026/027/037/079/117/140/149/152 185166/212/251/276/281 189016 212079 225021 290057 294116/129/573/610/658/757/776/812 296034 332081 333647 335183 362589 363186/666 365715 EMN V365.03 SBB 485008 **Manheim**

Preservation Site (12:00) Steam 18316 Electric E24431 Diesel 322640 323642/942 332317 DMU VS240 with 101119 185152 425239/520/620/762 and SBB 482032 passing **Stuttgart Depot (14:00)** 101115 110228/237/239/400/414/424/425/445/460/474/478/483/484 111047/074/075/077/080/163/164 120133 143091/105/645/802/804/881/899/900 146201/219/221 363150/193/685 425312 with 163001 plinthed at the depot entrance **Kornwestheim Depot [view] (14:50)** 140108/827/828 151040/071 152001/103/136 185073/149/181/195/204/252/255/265 232438 290633 294781 362536/592 363196/209 714002/015 **EMN Depot, Kornwestheim (15:20)** 206364 (202364) 206466 (202466) 211357 701052/072/152 V360.01/02 **Kornwestheim Rbf Preservation Site (15:50)** Steam 11 16 64094 86348 503636 Diesel 50001 200015/016 Köf 6169 6524 Electric E9307 E94088 DMU AVG47

Standback had beaten us down for breakfast; hence the bacon and eggs had a large hole in them. Checkout was painless and a short drive to Säärbrücken depot followed. The depot engineer (another lady) was happy to allow our visit and the inside of the depot contained only trams, sorry, light rail units. The main line lokos were all outside, 181222 being the star of this particular line up. We said thanks and headed into France, for what was to be our first visit to a French depot since SNCF had 'thrown their toys out of the pram'. Thionville depot was our chosen destination. The depot foreman was very nice about it but was unable to allow our visit, he told us he could not authorise it and the man who could did not work Sundays. We viewed the depot from all angles, this produced 29 numbers, then it was time to decide, do we press on in France and try Chalons – Sur – Marne, or go home via Luxembourg depot? The former won, the foreman was nicer than the one at Thionville and he allowed a full un-escorted visit, what a bonus, with the 17 withdrawn locomotives on site a total of 52 entered our books, we could not say thank you enough, mainly because the foreman had changed shifts and the new one knew nothing about our visit! Oh well, some things never change!

The 3 hour drive to Calais was performed faultlessly by Standback; Metal Mickey was un-screwed from the front seat and carried kicking and screaming into the back, where, along with The Exiled Brummie and Myself we planned our Switzerland trip.

Säärbrücken Depot (08:00) 120121 139314 140028/644/760/774/814/835 151095/118 152059/073 181222 185022/031/032/101/202/219/278 225006/084 294828/954 363153 365173/221 SNCF 37016 61007 light Rail (Trams) 1004/09/22/24 **Thionville Depot [view] (09:30)** 15001/003/063 16744/788/794 25123/125 27014/033/144 37003/004/005/015/025/030/047/048/057 X76538/594 Y7232 Z24572 Locma 0032 0094 SNCB 1320/23/27 **Châlons – Sur – Marne (11:35)** 16511/523/566/567 25331/505/508/511/520/529/535/556/559/568/656 27003/018/069/119/138/142 63601 66069/417/429/470 67469/528/588/592/631 69418/428/432/433/434/436/439/483/486 X4349/78 4436/43 8432 8541/78/98 Y7405 7653 8340 8504 with 15023 passing **Frathum Depot [view] (15:35)** 16617/645/647 36026 67278/279/596/617 EWS 66010/023/028/038/073/229 92001/005/022