

Luxembourg, Belgium & Germany, March 2006

Daylight was just about breaking through when the Exiled Brummie arrived at Blyth, signalling the start of our first trip of 2006. It was not long after this when the tour transport arrived with Metal Micky, Z Troop and the Standback Fusilier all aboard, we loaded our bags and set off for Dover. During the journey we heard that this may be Jims last European Branch trip, he has sold his house in Worksop and is moving to Southampton in the near future, we wish him well. We had booked on the 10:50 sailing with P&O but the surprisingly empty roads allowed us to arrive in time for the 10:05 crossing, which, by contrast, was surprisingly full. A smooth crossing and on time arrival followed but the bright sunshine of England had given way to heavy rain. SNCF 66214 & 66231 were visible in the yard at Dunkirk and we raced an unidentified 'dildo' unit for a while, otherwise the ride in to Belgium was brightened only by Pete's double, cigarette lighter sockets attempt to catch fire! (Industrial Sabotage was blamed; it can't have been the driver as he was asleep at the time.)

We outran the rain, Z Troops life support cut in (making a strange noise akin to snoring) and Monceau was our first port of call. The old depot is becoming more overgrown, but there are still engines stored in it, these along with the serviceable locos, gave us a total of 41 which included 7830 & 7832, the first 'cops' on our photo wants list. Running well ahead of time we decided to head into Charleroi, tackling first Marchinne – au – Pont station we located 8 stabled shunters. Marcinelle yard came next, this contained just 4 electric locos, however 2374 passed on a freight and SNCF 36017 was visible on the opposite side of the line. Charleroi Infra yard held 5 x class 62XX diesels and 7356 before we found our way to Charleroi – Sud depot.

A full visit was granted provided we could wait for half an hour until 17:00, we waited, we had only got to go to the hotel after this anyway. The rain caught us up and when 17:00 arrived we did a very wet tour. As always it was well worth it with 44 numbers being at home. The drive to Libramont and our first hotel was made in torrential rain, the Best Western is on the outskirts of the city near.....well nowhere really. We all enjoyed an excellent set meal of Duck, Duck and more Duck, washed down with a pint or two of the local brew before hitting the sack. Sleep came quickly!

Dunkerque Grande – Synthe Yard (13:00) 66214/231 **Lille Station (13:50)** 67414 **Moncean SP (15:00)** 2203/11/20/35/41/45 5121/23/47/48/50 6240/66/73/86 7301/06/10/13/14/16/18/21/28/32/33/35/63/74/77 7739/44/45/83/86/90 7825/26/30/31/32 **Marchinne-au – Pont Station (15:50)** 7305/17/20/23/24/25/30/31 with EMU 729 passing **Marcinelle yard (16:00)** 1211 2243 2371 2619 SNCF36017 with 2374 and EMU 458/84 passing **Charleroi Infra yard (16:10)** 6214/17/31/62 6320 7359 Charleroi – Sud depot (17:00) 734/53/73 804/24/26/30/41 2230/33 2601/02/12/15/27/34 2708/17 4102/13/16/18/19 6242/61/78/85 6311/14 7343/45/48/66/81/82/85 7738/41/47 7823 9115/28/44/49

Breakfast was pleasant and checkout painless, the day started cold and wet but we had only a short hop to our first call, the nearby depot at Stockem. A full visit was granted with no problems, the light was poor, in fact it was lighter inside the shed than it was outside. Extensive modernization work is continuing inside the shed buildings and for this reason it was quite empty inside, however, with the addition of the stored / withdrawn locos outside 44 numbers made their way into our books. Just about everybody needed a photo of diesel 5214 and all Stockem's allocation of class 73XX diesels were at home. Moving on to the nearby station at Arlon we found just 2008 & 2015 in the SP but the station held it's usual line of electric locos. A further change to the station approach saw us do a circular tour of the car park and 'borrow' a parking space of the local B&Q.

The drive to Luxembourg was un-eventful, a full visit was granted and the depot produced a stunning 61 numbers. 'Flat Iron' 3608 has passed to the preservation group and is stripped down being restored, 3602, 3609 & 3612 were parked side by side in the roundhouse and the newly painted 1815

made an excellent photo. By good fortune the rain held off long enough for us to stroll round the entire site, SNCF's 15017 & 15035 passed with passenger trains and preserved 1604 was, for once, in a photographic position. After saying our goodbyes we headed into Germany; we are very experienced at finding Trier depot now and made it without any problems. You could tell the rain was coming so, after getting the nod, we walked to the far reaches of the depot yard first. The lack of class 218 diesels in the area really hits you now, only 218137 was outside the depot with 4 further members of the class inside. It was nice however, to see no fewer than 13 class 143 electrics on shed. The rain came and once again SNCF provided the passing locos with both 37021 & 37026 powering freight services.

Next port of call was Ehrang, we have never been here before and it took a bit of finding, the shunting locos were stabled by the signalbox while the main line engines were in the yard, by the old abandoned depot, this produced the sight of Metal Mickey 'trotting' (no way can it be described as running) down the lineside. The long drive to Koblenz allowed Jims life support to activate again, the catering trolley to spring into life and Warwick to pass round the homemade shortbread biscuits (well done Sue, they were excellent again). It also started to snow. We had just over an hour on the station, it was cold! Electric 181204 was stabled near the shunting locos and freight passed at regular intervals, one of which was worked by SBB electric 421386. Standback got the video out, a loco train (consisting of at least 9 locos) passed, I would list the numbers but Standback said it was too light engines, so we suffered a lack of preparation and the Exiled Brummie got locked in the loo! I didn't see it, but apparently after he had paid and displayed the outgoing gate 'locked up' on he and he had to do his mountain goat impression to escape. When the cold got too much we moved on to Gremburg, the drive was just long enough to warm up. A full visit followed, the main shed was locked up, but the wagon depot was used to provide a warming interlude (it also provided 1 of the 67 numbers 'on shed' with 335185). We got some decent snaps before the snow got too heavy, said our thanks and headed for our hotel in Wuppertal. The excellent Inter-City hotel by the Hbf provided a warm welcome and after a de-louse we walked (in the snow) to a nearby restaurant and dined on large prawns, large steaks and even larger puddings.

We did not last at all long on the Hbf with our compulsory late night visit, but lasted a good deal longer in the hotel bar. Pete celebrated his impending birthday by getting bladdered on Campari (I know, I know), later waking the entire hotel on his search for headache tablets and complaining bitterly that his legs were hanging out of the bed.

Stockem Depot (08:10) 509/17/18/19/23 2003/06/11/21 2201/05/17/25/37/42/44/46 2608/09/11/33 2726 4124/26 4404/06/08/10 4502/04/08/09 5214/15 5304/07 6251 7338/40/41 9135/48/53/59 **Arlon SP (08:55)** 2008/15 **Arlon Station (09:00)** 520/22 2309/11/29/35/44/47/60/63/74/78 **Luxembourg Depot (09:45)** 252/56/62 455 802/06 851/53/58 906/07/09/12 1002 1011 1022/23 1054 1102/06 1501 1604 1810/12/15/16

1820 2009/13/17/19 2201/03/06/07/09 3004/05/10/12 3602/08/09/12 4002/04/09/13/14/16/17/18/20 PV6 Steam 5519 DB 628455/489 928455/489 with SNCF 15017/035 passing **Trier Depot (11:20)** 110166/300/333 143102/149/173/216/255/280/575/637/662/873/905/945/946 218137/151/206/411

218424 335136/150/157 425086/133/632/633/639 426006/008/042/536 628456/462/561 928456/462/561 with SNCF 37021/26 passing **Ehrang Yard (12:05)** 139287 145054 155185 362797 363686 364767 SNCF 37019/025/027/029 Private Lok 185522 **Koblenz Hbf (13:50 – 15:00)** 101078/080/093 110320/402/456 120140 139163 140828 143168/194/811/833/862/872 146011/031 152058/101/118/166

152168 155161 181204 185008/043/173/175/204 189098 363189/211 425028/037/091/101/127 612054/554 643025 701168 SBB 421386 Private VT254/56 **Köln Gremburg Depot (16:15)** 139164/309/556 140353/378/443/612/640/649/657/678/763/796/814/826/828/832/859/861 145071/072 151031/038/051/056/116/137 152009/080/118/165/166 155004/014/055 185005/046/059/176/178 189079/098 225023/024/026/117/120/131/145 290053 294165/693/787 333096/682 335013/026/130/137/156/185/218 362390/547/942 363415 365203 **Köln Gremburg Yard (17:00)** 145045/054 152001/020/029/103/110/116 290509 294203/393/399/657/830/832 **Wuppertal Hbf**

(21:20 – 21:50) 101028 110356/412 152155 420349 628662 928662

The Inter-City's breakfast is always worth the effort, even at 07:00. Standback ate his fill of the continental bacon and eggs and I drowned in the black cherry yoghurt. Pete 'won' a bottle of Champaign during check out, for being a year older (I suppose you deserve it if you manage to get to his age) and the roads were surprisingly clear as we drove to Oberhausen.

The depot was as full as I have ever seen it with 80 numbers being at home, we had no guide (for the first time I can remember) and got some good photos, diesel 232003 being one of them. No fewer than 5 of the 232/9 sub class were here, but only 1 class 218, 218138, and that was inside the depot. We thanked the foreman and Standback 'downloaded' in the depot toilet (what a present that made for the poor, unsuspecting, drivers!) before moving on to Wanne – Eickel. It's been a while since we have visited here and we found it surprisingly full. The 35 numbers included a nest of 10 class 294 diesels, Warwick got stuck in the back of the van (too many shortbread biscuits Sue) and 139311 provided an interesting addition to our photo collections.

Next call was the preservation centre at Bochum Dahlhausen, it cost 5euro to get in, Köf diesel shunter 4737 was giving train rides, but sadly non of their steam locos were working. It's an excellent site to visit, with English signs explaining each exhibit and access being granted to all areas. We were heading for the ferry now, the snow gave way to bright sunshine by Holland and some 'spirited' driving allowed us to make an unscheduled call at Merelbeke depot. A full visit followed and the 56 numbers at home rounded our trip off. We obtained some good photos in the bright sunlight, these contrasted with the ones we had taken in Germany, the withdrawn class 73XX diesels being the subject of many.

After the obligatory beer stop we made the ferry, a smooth crossing followed, during which England got hammered at rugby by the French (maybe that will cheer SNCF up) and an easy drive home finished off the trip. Thanks must, as always, be extended to Pete and Malc for the planning and if this is to be Jim's last trip, we will miss him.

We are off to Hamburg in late March, so watch this space.

Oberhausen Depot (08:40) 139163 140423/680/765/791/805/846/849/854/856/876 145012
151005/065/107/109/156/162 152058/118/120/142 155161 185080/157/166/173/214 218138
225010/014/017/018/028/029/040/081/134
232003/097/117/131/201/240/283/308/334/349/358/438/519

232535/564/595/901/905/906/908/909 241803 290052/069 294114/355/357/360/361 335006/082/648
361663 363128/649/823 364531/611 365109/130/733/838 **Wanne Eickel SP (09:45)** 139311
140273/379/752 143577 145054 151126 155107 185010/044/081 225001/092
232100/125/189/359/426 290054 294130/153/156/174/207/227/397/406/793/806 363147/206/625
364520 365813 Private RAG828 **Bochum Dahlhausen Preservation Centre (10:30)** Diesel 212007
360583 V36231 65011 Köf4737 Electric 3227 E94080 LPD3 S8515 Steam 01008 044377 053075
146 18427 382267 553345 66002 741192 80030 950028 97502 9964 DMU EHHUS1 EHHVT1 EMU
475003 712001 ET8507 Battery Unit 515556 815672 **Merelbeke Depot (13:45)** 188 348 418 560 630
755/57 1201 1310/15/23/28/32/37/47/50 2346 4167/71/74/76/80/84/90/94 6201/03/19/29
7311/53/56/67/68 7718/68/69/70/75/76/77/80/88/92/94/95/97 7803/05/06/10/14 9109/23/38/50