

European Branch to France 4th – 5th October 2003.

It does not seem eight weeks ago that I was writing the report on our first trip of 2003, but now, eight months later I am writing the final report of 2003. If time continues at this seep we will soon have to become the SAGA branch! So, at 19:00 on Friday 3rd October, Metal Mickey, The Standback Fusilier and Z troop arrived at Blyth to collect The Exiled Brummie and myself for the start of our final 2003 trip. I took the wheel, we have the drive to Dover down to a fine art now and arrived spot on time to board the 23:30 sailing for Calais. The ferry was less than half full allowing us a very pleasant crossing, the well-stocked restaurant gave us a large supper and the tax-free shop produced a bargain or two. As usual my full stomach and the rolling of the mini – bus had me “belly up” just after French customs and I stayed in the coma until our first stop.

It was still very dark when we arrived at the depot at Chalons – sur – Marne so we took the chance to have a brew before obtaining permission to visit. Once we did, a walk round produced 30 numbers including two ex DB class 202 diesels numbered AT3 ATA0463 and AT3 ATA0623. Guided by Clara we found the nearby engineers yard, somewhere we have never visited before, finding Y7205 and Y7566 in residence. Next came a long drive to Nancy, punctured only by a physical needs break (Z troops bladder is not what it used to be). The yard held just one electric loco and three EMUs. We did better at the station, once we had found somewhere to park 35 numbers were noted tightly packed into the compressed station area, these included two of the big French diesels, 72005 & 72009 and Belgium Electric 1304. From here we did the short drive to Woippy, noting five locos in the yard before arriving at the SP. As usual we were made to wait for a visit here, this time due to a shift change. It’s always worth it though and, when we finally were allowed to walk round 62 numbers were found. DB electric 181204 was there and so was Y8152 wearing it’s new fret livery. We moved on to the depot at Metz, the foreman was pleased to allow our tour and we found in excess of 100 numbers “on shed”. The excitement was just too much for the exiled Brunnies camera and I suffered a pen failure, but we did the tour in just under 40mins. Next on the agenda came Conflans Jarny, here, after agreeing to our visit, the foreman took us down the yard in the cab of EMU Z11514. Although small the SP usually contains some interesting locos and Chalindery allocated 66448/477 were among the 11 numbers here today. As we left 27033 passed through the station with a freight train and EMU Z11515 arrived with a passenger. A twenty min drive found us at Thionville Depot, once again a full visit was allowed, this time escorted and 88 numbers were at home. Here I finally copped Thionville allocated Locma 0066 (not bad after five full visits) and we managed to photo Avignon allocated 62501, on of the fast disappearing ex NS diesel locos. Our guide then threw Metal Mickey into mass confusion by asking if we had visited Messe. Now, Pete, totally unsure what country he is in at the best of times, thought that this meant the city centre and proceeded to ask if many locos were there. Yes came the reply “many of them” he was getting quite excited before we pointed out that he was not, in fact in Germany, but France and Messe was the French pronunciation of Metz, where we had just come from. We easily found our hotel and after a quick brush up we made our way to Longway for the outstabled shunter, on this occasion Y7247, before it was time to feed. Large steaks are always the order of the day on our final tours of each year and once again Standback attempted to better his own world record for not buying the beer.

Chalons – sur Marne (07:15) 15050 16623 26083 63680/700 66422/437/441/484

66490/492/493/497 67583 68527/529/531/538 X4368 X8357 Y6567 Y7263 Y7523
Y8109 Y8227 Y8408/72 Y8510 Private Owner AT3 ATA 0463/0623. **Chalons – sur
Marne Yard (08:00)** Y7205 Y7566 **Nancy Yard (11:00)** 15029 Z16306/312/317
Nancy Station (11:15) 15024 16685/693/738/770 22202/311 25117 26035/087
64033 66418/420/433/440/491 72005/009 X4408/12/14/32 4528 4761/74/85
X8558/73/93 8631 8761/85 Y8500/38 Z11509/516/520 Z6308 SNCB 1304 **Woippy
Yard [view] (12:25)** 26212 61003/010 64706 64806 **Woippy SP (12:35)** 15007
16605/614/649/706/729/732/734/748/758 22277/282/373/383 25110/153/157
25163/166/169/180/181 26108/115 27007/033/039/054/061/083/086/087/088/089
27095 61005/009 63772/781/816/823/868/966 64709 64809 Y8152/81 Z11506 DB
181204 **Metz Depot (14:15)** 15012/049/060/065 16686/695 22224/226/272/391
25101/108/118 26198 27020/087/092 63417/538/575/628/651/655/665/690/726/772
63781/811/816/819/823/824/826/840/844/867/868/883/905/913 64008/060/706/707
64708/721/806/807/808 67510 X4320/41/43/49/53/64/66/68/69/77/79 X4409/16/18
X4421/30/36/47/48 X4759 X4802 X8326/37/43/54/56/57/59/61/81/83/95 X8427/28
X8520/26/41/88/98 X8628 X8759 X8802 X73904 Y7104/13/15/16/94 Y7262 Y8340
Y8346 Y8539 SNCB 1347 CFL 3004 **Conflans Jarny SP (15:35)** 27053/078 63691
63763 664434/442/448/477 X4445 X8425 Z11514 **Conflans Jarny Stn (15:50)**
27033 Z11514 **Thionville Depot (16:40)** 15051 16599/614/637/654/680/691/692/694
16696/732/755/756/758/769 22202 25104/106/107/115/122/123/158/159/164/168
15169/182 26082/107/123/128/223 27022/029/035/037/038/043/045/046/048/054
27055/056/058/059/065/066/072/074/079/086/089/100 62501 63670/845/849 64045
Locma 0030/32/66/94 Y2215 Y6510 Y7133 Y7232 Y8124 Z6301/03/05/16/19/26/30
Z6331/32/34 Z11513/522 SNCB 1325/30/31/43 **Longway (18:30)** 16689 Y7247
Z11509/510/520.

Sunday was a nice bright day and we headed first to Mohon. There is supposed to be a depot here but we failed to find it, locating only Y8525 in the yard and “preserved” electric 12087, plinthed on the village green. It’s windows were still intact, so it can not have been there long! A two hour drive followed, during which we all talked about where we would like to visit next year (watch for the trip programme on the web), before we arrived at Aulnoye Aymeries. This was our first visit here, the main SP is behind the station and permission to visit was secured easily. The stroll round found 20 numbers at home, but very little in the way of cops. The sprawling yard over the road bridge was a lot harder to see, with no obvious way in, a drive around it produced just 5 further numbers including Lens allocated Y7500 (just three left now Bryan!)

A guidless tour of Valenciennes followed, not knowing which is left did not help, but eventually we found the freight yard, a haul of just six numbers hardly seemed worth it. The nearby station provided plenty of exercise for us all as we walked the long platforms for the 8 numbers on offer. Our final call, of the final trip of 2003 was to be Somain Yard. Pete produced a rabbit from the hat by getting us through the squark box activated gate and securing a full visit. There were 30 locos here, all fret allocated and, even though the rain came, we enjoyed our first visit here. It was time to load the mini-bus with cheep booze and return to England, Thanks goes to Malc for all the driving in France and Pete for all his hard work in planning the whole thing. I’m looking forward to next year already.

Mohon (09:25) 12087 Y8525 **Aulnoye Aymeries SP (11:20)** 16012/042/536/649

16751/787 26120 63592 63717 67481/589/590/626 X4548/81 X8561 X8600
Z23502/534/558 **Aulnoye Aymeries Yard (11:45)** 63754 X4645 Y7475 Y7500
SNCB 1203 **Valenciennes Yard (13:20)** 63539/727 Y7714 Y8169 Y8278 TGV 94
Valenciennes Station (13:35) 16503/523/547 Z23506/514/517/565 TGV 71 **Somain
Yard (14:10)** 16516/554/555/648/707/716/719/764/771 22269/275/368 25540
26089/092/101/227 27017 63413/764/841/858/923 64719/720 66159/274 Y7296
Y7636 Y8290.