

European Branch trip to Germany and Belgium 8th – 10th October 2004.

Is it just me, or is time moving faster these days. I'm sure that's its not seven months ago that I sat here writing up the first of this years trips. Maybe I should try keeping awake, at least that's what my wife thinks!

So, to business. A change from the norm saw Metal Mickey, The Standback Fusilier and a retired Z Troop arrive at Blyth at 08:50 on the morning of the 8th October, where The Exiled Brummie and I joined the mini – bus. Now the more observant among you will have noticed two things, first was the set off time, yes 08:50, for the first time in recent memory a sociably departure time! Secondly a retired Z Troop, yes amazingly Jim has turned the magic 65 and legally jacked in work, he still looks (and acts) no different to when I first met him, over 15 years ago, although if he continues to rub in the fact that he no longer has to work, he may not see his next birthday.

The drive south to Dover was totally un-eventful, apart from the fact it was done in broad daylight, (I was so confused by this I had to wear sunglasses) it took no longer than at any other time we have done this trip and we arrived in plenty of time to catch the 12:45 P&O sailing for Calais. The boat was less than half full, the café was totally empty and the duty paid shop was well stocked, what more can you ask for. We arrived in Calais spot on time and headed off to Germany, via Belgium. Our route took us past Grand Synth Yard here 27013/033/078 were all visible before we all settled in for the long drive to Montzen. Originally this trip was planned around a visit to Luxembourg depot, but a change in the status of the class 36XX electrics forced us to visit earlier in the year and so we decided to do a trip based around Köln, but based in Aachen. The fact that SNCB had chosen to store many of its withdrawn class 51XX diesels at Montzen was purely co-incidental, that's my story and I'm sticking to it! Even with the aid of Clara we managed to miss the entry to Montzen yard and night was arriving fast as we drove down the road in. The foreman sits at the top of the yard tower and was well aware of us long before we got to see him. He was not keen to allow a visit at first but eventually he agreed to allow us to see the withdrawn class 51XX diesels, we all enjoyed the walk up the yard although photos were almost impossible. We went to say thanks and he asked if we wanted to come back the following day, when the light was better, to take photos. We had to decline, but managed to make arrangements to visit on the Sunday when we would be returning to France.

The drive to the Hotel, one of the two Ibis hotels in Aachen, was easy although the Hotel had obviously moved since we last visited, eh Peter! Tired, we let the hotel restaurant feed us and while 3 of the party walked to the nearby station, Z Troop and I drank merrily from the bar until it was time for bed, in readiness for the early start on Saturday.

Dunkirk Grand Synth Yard (15:40) 27013/033/078 Montzen Yard (19:00) 2022 2746
5502/04/28/32/39 8248 241801 plus withdrawn diesel locomotives 5101/02/03/05/10/25
5132/36/38/41/43/46/52/54/56/57/58/62/64/67/68/70/72/73/74/77/78/80/81/85/86
6271/98

The usual Ibis breakfast awaited our arrival at the breakfast bar, alas so do sixty or so American students on their way into Belgium. Obviously unable to believe that Germany is in fact a civilized part of the world, one of the afore mentioned Yanks was convinced that all the cold meats on the breakfast bar were Horse meat and consequently would not eat any, further more one of the young ladies took it upon herself to make toast for all the males in the party, causing the Exiled Brummie to acquire an American accent and two slices of well done toast (and they say the Irish are daft!). We reached Neuss SP by 08:30 only to find the drivers booking on point boarded up and just 294691 stabled in the sidings. We did not have time to check the yard at Neuss so if anyone knows if the loks are stabled here now, please let me know. We moved on to the Depot at Oberhausen where we were warmly welcomed and allowed a full visit. Here 65 numbers found their way into our notebooks including 212240 in original dark red livery. Our next call was the yard at Oberhausen, we told the depot foreman we were about to do this and he told us that all the withdrawn loks had moved the previous day to Köln, unable to believe this we looked anyway, we should have believed him. From here we went to the closed West depot, it's still closed. However as usual, loks are still stabled here. In residence today were 8, including big diesels 232358/528/691. The sun came out for the first time and 151150 arrived from Oberhausen depot making an excellent photo as it awaited entry to the yard. Returning to the mini-bus we headed of to Wanne Eickel, 152144 passed us at Gelderskirchen Zoo and Clara got us to our destination just before 11:30. For the first time ever we found the depot foreman, he was quite happy to allow our visit and 33 loks were at home, not counting the battery units stored in the old freight sheds.

It took a while to find the entry to our next depot, Hamm as the tunnel entry mentioned in Herr Piece's book was locked out of use. After two false starts we found the road entry, were granted a visit and found 15 loks in what's left of the depot. These included 202330, its not that long ago that these diesels were only found in the east of Germany and people would not believe you if you said you had seen one this far west. We had to make our next call at the main station because Standback and Metal Mickey wanted to buy a magazine (all together now...). Disaster struck as the shop only had one copy, it's not everyday you find two Englishmen, in a German station, arguing over a German railway magazine (at least the pictures were in English), we left them to it and found EMU 425019 and departmental 701140 stabled in the station. Vorhalle came next, a new depot has been built here and this was to be our first visit, we were allowed round (when someone eventually decided who was in charge) and found over 50 numbers stabled around the yard. A further class 202 was found here, 202439, the sun got so hot we were wandering around in tee shirts and 155112 became the latest addition to my class 155 photo collection. We left here and visited the depot at Hagen, now that Vorhalle has opened this depot is now operated by Westfälische Almetalbahn GmbH (WAB) and WAB11(V100.416), WAB15(202742) & WAB16(V110.970) were all at home.

The light was fading as we made our way to Gremberg Depot, we arrived at 17:10 and were granted a full visit as usual. The depot was not as full as we expected with only 73 numbers being identified, a further 9 were noted at work in the yard and a stop at Stolberg found 294377/725/777 stabled in the station. After a steam clean (the shower had only two settings, bl***ing hot and even hotter) we walked into the town centre for dinner. We found an entertaining 'Mediterranean' restaurant, confused the two Bosnian ladies who ran it by ordering 'English' well done steaks, entertained the German

customers with our attempts to speak German to them and got kissed by the pretty lady (at least I did), if we can ever find our way back there we will definitely return. With no Americans in the Hotel getting to the bar was an easy task (alas not for Standback, who is now known as Standwellback), and despite being tempted we refrained from entering into a drinking contest with the locals.

Neuss SP (08:30) 294691 with 111118 143578 passing **Oberhausen Depot (09:30)**
139133/166/250/555/561 140195/374/656/752/801 151090/093/097/117/150 212240
218012/114/116/139/145/146/149/213/247 225006/010/018/020/092/117/145
232068/122/125/203/205/241/283/400/421/489/505/531/541/906/908 241803/805
294130/282/289 333679 335006/082/219 360610 364511 365158/715/733/838 private
owner locos NIAG 4 and V60 BUG1 **Oberhausen Yard (10:15)** 218134 232298/374
294168/227/292/293/355/360/390/396 333044 **Oberhausen West (10:50)** 140065/247
232258/528/691 294149/167/381 **Gelderskirchen Zoo (11:18)** 152144 **Wanne Eickel**
(11:25) 140494/668/671/728 145043 155223 185019/112/177 232100/260/445/557
290054/069 294153/174/194/269/273/338/353/357 363223/702 365130/131/732 426021
640001/022 private owner RAG 842 **Hamm SP (13:15)** 140699 151167 155020 202330
232598 294195/274/365/723/731/742/744/800 360615 363691 **Hamm Bhf (13:45)**
425019 701140 **Vorhalle Depot (14:45)** 101019 120104 139313 140390/391/691/714
140800 145012/036/037/068/080 151059/071/080/114/159/169 152007/110/166
155036/112/138/163/188 185159 202439 203303/306 225025 232614 294151/156/202
294248/386/395/403/405/604 332294 335106/217/221/230 363224 701017 796690
798802 996299/309 **Hagen Depot (15:45)** WAB 11/15/16 with 110505 143258/605
152020 passing **Köln Gremberg Depot (17:10)** 110249 140024/041/052/065/149/249
140270/303/140420/490/515/623/631/634/685/710/716/776/813/837/841/867 151031
151089/115 155057/259 182005 185049/074 189026/032/038 225003/009/023/026/027
225032/131 290037/045/053 294165/203/348/356/389/399/407/726/801 333043
335004/036/058/075 335083/125/130/211/212/214/218/222/226 360346 362582/754
363178 701112 OBB 1116027 **Gremberg Yard (17:55)** 152047/049 189041
294169/307/330/378/408 335134 **Stolberg Hbf (19:10)** 294377/725/777 643210/710.

Sunday arrived, as it usually does, after Saturday and a bright cloudless sky greeted our emergence from the Hotel. Breakfast had been a more leisurely experience without the Americans and checkout was totally painless, resulting in us standing by the small depot at 07:30. At this time on a Sunday it is hard to find a shed foreman, but we got a visit and 15 numbers were noted. The short drive to Aarchen West Gbf produced 24 further numbers which included class 66 loco PB20 and big diesels 241802/804. From here we returned to Montzen, the lift had broken down so Metal Mickey had to climb 15 flights of stairs to see the foreman, (that man's so fit for his age). We were expected and allowed to visit the scrap class 51XX diesels but not the small depot, when we asked why we were told that the last group of English he had let visit had, and I quote 'helped themselves to thing that did not belong to them'. We got some decent shots in the bright morning sun and then made our way to the Depot at Kinkempois. Despite the civil engineer relaying tracks in the depot we were allowed a full, un-escorted, visit. It had been a long time since my last visit here and I enjoyed it, with approximately 100 numbers stabled within the depot confines we got some excellent photos.

Ronet Depot came next, where we had to decline the offer of a beer with the depot foreman (sorry Mr Chairman, we will try to do better next time) in order to get the visit in before our time ran out. Electric locomotive 1806 was inside the Depot and it looked as if it was undergoing some sort of work, restoration or just part recovery? Anyone know? A total of 40 numbers were available today, the scrap lines of diesels have gone, although 5204 is still here, so the visit took a lot less time than we expected. Without the aid of any maps we were able to find Salzines works and a view from the nearby road identified 24 numbers.

As anyone who follows our adventures knows our final visit is always to the cheep beer depot, this tour was not to be the exception and fully loaded we made a slow return home. So another years tours are over, it's thanks to Pete for the planning and Malc for the driving. We are currently putting together next year's trip plan so watch this space.

Aarchen Depot (07:35) 101080 110142/252/413/441 111015/112 362547 364611
643201/213/215/701/713/715 **Aarchen West Gbf (08:05)** 140078/149/217/280/383
140390/503/643/782/856/870 152128 155015 185121 225015/017/025/029/053/060
225133 232802/804 private owner PB20 **Montzen Yard (09:05)** 2007/08/09/23 2330
2619 5502/03/26/37 5541 8248 ES508 DB 225028 241801 plus the same withdrawn
locomotives as Friday **Kinkempois Depot (10:30)** 106/81 202 346 429/40 600/82/91
718/20 1502/04 1802/04 2125 2243/50 2338/50 2558 2613/18/30/34 2704/50/53/57/60
4601 5127/33/42 5504/07/13/15/17/19/23/24/28/29/30/31/32/38/39/40 6041
6211/25/88/96 6306/31 7340 7751/52/53/54/55/56/57/58/59/60/61/62/64/65/79/80
7816/17/35 8205/15/20/21/24/26/27 8228/29/34/38/45/51/53 9143/46/51/55/56 9211
Ronet Depot (12:30) 231 455 828/41 1315/34/52/55 1806 2011 2304/06/31/37/44/48
2365/71/81/82 2554 2603/04/15/17 2758 5204 6215/47/55/57 6319 7730/48 8240/55
9116/54 ES205/505 **Salzines Works [view] (13:30)** 1801 2202/39 2305 2511 5521/35
6220/30/69/87/89 6301/03/22 7308/12/15/34 8067/68/69 8230 9206.