

European Branch to Luxemburg and Germany 27th – 28th March 2004

At around 18:30 on the evening of the 26th March the five usual suspects, Metal Mickey, the Exiled Brummie, Standback Fusilier, Z Troop and Myself came together at Blyth for our first tour of 2004. The trip was originally planned as a tour to France, alas the intervention of a certain terrorist group caused us to change our minds at the last minute. DB had kindly supplied us with a permit for Saarbrücken depot, so we decided to make Germany the main destination of this tour. We had not seen each other since the last trip of 2003, although the “Stafford Club” had held a secret meeting, and the excited chatter made the journey to Dover pass quickly. So quickly did it pass that, despite a visit to the rubber glove shed, we caught an earlier than planned sailing. Sharing the bar with numerous English rugby supporters is worth a report of its own, alas it would have very little to do with trains! A smooth crossing followed, Pete Window – Seat Ayton powered up Clara, French passport control caused a massive hold up and I fell fast asleep, somehow we arrived at Luxembourg Depot.

It was just breaking daylight when we arrived but we had no trouble in securing a visit and 59 numbers were our reward. These included new electric locos 185519/520/523/524 a massively stripped 1803 and 8 “Flat Irons”, including 3608 which was undergoing repairs. Next we called at Bettembourg, if Pete had known his right from his left we would have arrived slightly earlier. A full visit was also granted here and the 18 numbers we identified included diesel 1801 and new electric 185522. It was time now to leave this fascinating little country and we made our way to the depot at Trier. The local German council had finally completed the extensive road - works in the area and with no diversions to tackle Clara guided us to the depot with no problems. Once again a full visit was secured. The influx of DMU’s in the area is quickly reducing the number of hauled trains, however 28 locos were “on shed” at the time of our visit. Moving on our next port of call was Mainz Bischofsheim depot, here we experienced the only “uncertainty” of the whole tour. At first the depot engineer did not want us to visit, however as we were about to leave a driver came to our rescue by volunteering to take us round. So it’s a big thanks to Kris for showing us the 48 numbers that were “on shed”. These included diesel shunter Kof 6478, which was posing for a photo, brand new 189025, which we were allowed to enter the cab of and 212023 in its original dark red livery. Next came Darmstadt depot, here, as always, we received a warm welcome and were allowed to wander around unaccompanied. Here we found 40 numbers, including 218007 and 218010, both of which appeared to be being stripped of parts.

No visit to this area would be complete without a visit to the freight depot at Mannheim, so it was there we went next. If any of you visit this depot on your own, look for the framed photo above the depot engineer’s office (we gave him it) and the ICRS mug on his desk. Once again a visit was granted and once again over 100 numbers were at home, 117 to be exact. Included in these were 189001, BLS 485002 and surprisingly 101034, 38 more locos were stabled in the yard and with 13 further locos passing a total of over 150 numbers in just over an hour is as good as you will get anywhere! On the way to our final depot of the day, Ludwigshafen, 363621 was noted at Mannheim HBF, unusually on its own. Having negotiated the tunnel we secured a full visit and found 29 numbers at home. I have always found Ludwigshafen to be an interesting depot, the influx of DMU’s has certainly taken the edge off it, but it’s easy to take photos here and there were still seven class 218 diesels and a smart 146007 at home today. A long drive to Saarbrücken followed and we were all happy to reach our hotel. After a de-louse (and a change of bedroom for some people, but only after they had used all the towels!) we headed to the nearest bar to remove the cacti growing in our throats. From here the barmaid took us to a nearby restaurant where an effort was made to eat everything on the menu, it’s a pity the snails were off! Ignoring his growing thirst Warwick heroically guided Metal Mickey and Standback to the station, Z Troop and myself choosing instead to reserve the table back in the bar. Sleep came quickly this night.

Luxembourg Depot (06:30) 254/61 802/04/06/54/56/57 901/03/04/05/06/10/13 1003/04/11/23 1604 1803/04/07/10/12/14 2002/03/14/21 2105/06 3002/05/07/11/15/17 3605/08/09/10/11/12/17/18/19 185519/520/523/524 628463 928463 Me26-03/12 SNCB 2001 DB 181210. **Bettembourg SP (07:30)** 253 801/05 912 1002 1801/06/08/09/19 185522 Me26-02/05/08/11 with SNCF 11511 25125 passing **Trier Depot (08:50)** 110209/295/335/343 141063 143164/255/366/662/833/837/873/910/919 151095 155112 218136/137/206/216/364/366/371 225018 332260 335136/150/157 425128/131 426004/538 612639/645 614017/018 628455/456/488/506 643530/532 914009 928455/456/488/506 **Mainz Bischofsheim Depot (11:25)** 140044/118/119/270 145072 151158 152121/151 155031 185028 189025 212023/356/367 215135 216067/205 225017/051/059/133 226156 290046/051/511 294083/108/239/302/318/337/711/719/723 333698/716 335078/142 360022/770/774/802

363717/724/825 365138 381020 Köf 6478 **Darmstadt Depot (12:45)** 110423 143811/819/878 181208
 189007 218007/010/123/125/182/183/236/249/272/277/293/312/417/420/449/483 290033 294162/401
 323696 332064 365173/646 420316/733/743 612004 628443/486 701142 703001 714005 928443/486
Mannheim Depot (14:15) 101034 140108/171/318/421/500/602/606/607/616/631/632/654/679/687
 140691/692/713/714/718/726/753/755/757/782/793 151017/086/156/158 152067/088/092/110/125/131
 152154/156 155009/024/029/030/039/048/059/070/080/087/089/099/101/117/141/144/168/195/206
 155216/228/232/239 185003/014/023/025/026/036/047/058/078/082/086/090/115/131/148/149/153
 185156/157/163 189001/024 216057 290008/045/091/092/127 294073/124/238/369/658/713/732/740
 294746/809/829/843 332081 333647 360297/588 363170 365101/102/104 702055 BLS 485002
Mannheim Yard (15:10) 152011 155270 189007 212346 216057/073/113/138/142/165/185/196/212
 216223 332129/153/206/209 335017/018/023/053/057/060/062/094/108 360023/153/297/338
 364409/504/563/771/885/923/936 BLS 485005 with 101047 143118/311/347/647 218301 401087/587
 402054 425223/237/239/712 passing **Mannheim HBF (15:50)** 363621 **Ludwigshafen Depot (16:00)**
 143103/182/195/348/353/872 146007 152135 218130/246/295/296/390/392/393 294751 363152/229
 425218/228/235/611/721 628273/277/563 928273/377/563.

After an excellent breakfast we headed off to the nearby depot at Saarbrücken, we had a permit for 09:00 and were expected. We were provided with an English speaking guide who gave us a quick safety brief apologised for the lack of locos as many were involved in engineering work, then took us downstairs into the workshops. Here he showed us various classes of loco, in various states of undress, taking us through the maintenance schedules of each one and allowing us inside the engine compartments of each and every one. Saarbrücken is the home of the class 181 electric locos and also maintains a small fleet of class 212 diesels, many of these were on shed this morning among the 54 numbers we noted and we wondered just how many should have been stabled here. At the end of our visit we were taken to meet the depot engineer, during the course of our conversation I asked him why this depot insisted on permits when most other depots would allow "on spec" visits. He explained that after one such visit, from an English Society (which he named, but I will not) various "pieces of equipment" were found to be missing. If anyone reading this was involved, I hope you realise what you are doing, although sadly you will probably find this situation funny!

We said our thanks and moved on, Völklingen produced 4 numbers and 4 further numbers were noted at Luxembourg station. Arlon station was the next call and even we were surprised when, despite the large hole in the ground that once was the railway, 24 numbers were still stabled here. Our final call was the depot at Stockem, once again our request for a visit was granted and the two lines of stored locos inside the shed bumped the total numbers up to 52. You still have to play "dodge the pigeon poo" and some sort of cap is a must, is it not Jim? but there is a large amount of work going on in and around the depot here with new lines being laid and the existing shed buildings being upgraded, can anyone cast any light on this? The drive back to the ferry port was interrupted only by a stop at the cheap beer shop and despite the headlights of the mini-bus pointing at passing planes, the drive home was uneventful. So, as usual, it's a big thanks to Pete for the navigation, Malc for the driving and both of them for the planning, I'm looking forward to our next venture already.

Saarbrücken Depot (09:00) 110333 139309 140057/213/255/388/415/600/672/727/759/783/797/824
 140826/853 141352 151104/116/158 181210/211/212/220/225 185001/035/044 212059/084/104/294
 212345/347/349 232424/567/613 290021 294129/320/404/955 362415 363194 364447/537/557
 365117/141/202/680 SNCF 61017/019 **Völklingen (10:15)** 140317 294259/960 425638 **Luxembourg Station (11:30)** 901 2001/012/021 **Arlon Station (11:55)** 643 1336/58 2010/11/13/25 2327/30/35/39
 2359 2608/19/25/28/29/34 7341 7723/24/25/26/28 **Stockem Depot (12:20)** 155/58 264 509/13/14/17
 519/20/23/24 638 2006 2201/05/17/18/25/34/37/42/44/46 2316/80 4112/25 4404/06/08/10 4502/04/08
 4509/10 5205/09/14 5304/05/06/07/12/13/16 7339 7727 9135/48/53/59.