



In 1926 railway workers here came out on strike in common with many in the General Strike.

When it was decided that there was insufficient time for trains to stop at every station, a slip coach was used until 1960 to transfer people to the intermediate stations.

Improvements were made to the line in the 1930s.

Later on due to enhancements made to the main Euston to Birmingham line, this one was downgraded, and it was reduced to a single line in places. Indeed by 1970 closure of part or all of the line was considered. However in 1996 Chiltern Railways took it over. They re-doubled the line, and became so successful that they were given a twenty-year contract.

Peter showed about 70 photos illustrating parts of the line and how it was constructed and altered.

Although they were paid double the current agricultural worker's wage, life was very hard for the navvies who built the railways. Initially they were only paid monthly, so they had to resort to being given promissory notes to get them through the month. Later they were paid in cash every two weeks. As they were on piece-work they had to toil extremely hard, and most agricultural labourers who tried it gave up after a week or two. Many navvies were completely illiterate, and were therefore often taken advantage of by unscrupulous gang masters, who deliberately miscalculated the volume of "muck", i.e. earth, rock, rubbish or whatever shifted to underpay them.

In answer to questions Peter said that the viaduct columns were probably filled with concrete. In the early days most railway navvies were Irish, but by 1900 far more were English workers.

Keith McClellan said that he had once interviewed Ron Bowerman, and he had said that when young he applied for a railway porter's job at Banbury, and then a vacancy had come up at Aynho, so he went there instead. He worked on hump shunting, a system whereby wagons were released from a slightly higher position, and let down through a series of points to join trucks going to different locations.

The last official steam train to run was in October 1967, with the engine Clun Castle.

Someone asked what is currently going on at Nell Bridge. Peter replied that the whole line is being upgraded to make the timings 1.5 hours from London to Birmingham.

Rupert thanked Peter for a very interesting presentation.

## 6. AOB

Rupert reminded everyone that the next meeting on 26th January 2011 would be held in the Apricot Room of the Cartwright Hotel.

## 7. Forthcoming Meetings

December	No meeting	
January 26th 2011	The History of Musical Instruments	Richard York

(This meeting will be held in the Apricot Room of the Cartwright Hotel)