

2026 Programme Info

January 30th

Member **David Mead** presents his visit to the Oporto area of "**Northern Portugal in 1976**". This was in the closing months of steam traction both on the narrow gauge and Iberian gauge lines including the suburban routes and Douro Valley. Many of the lines shown have now long closed.

After the interval, Member **Jol Bates** presents pictures of "**Railways Around the World**". A journey around the globe for business and pleasure, remembered through photographs taken over the past thirty years from New Zealand to North America.



February 27th

Phil Benstead presents - **Railways in the American Civil War**

The American Civil War was the first major conflict to feature new technology. It was only possible due to railways, telegraph, submarines, torpedoes and other technologies. Those with railway expertise became generals leveraging for the first time in war the ability to rapidly move 100,000's of troops, their horses and defence equipment hundreds of miles. This changed the course of battles and latterly enabled the Union to end the war.



March 27th

Geoff Baker brings '**S&D The Phoenix Returns**'.

On 7th March 1966 the Somerset and Dorset Railway ceased to exist. Preservation projects were proposed, some small, some more ambitious. This talk will focus on one station at Shillingstone and its progress from dereliction to an operational railway.



April 17th

Ian Boskett was fascinated by the **Great Train Robbery** of 1963. As a boy he had to research how they altered the signal in order to stop the Train whilst it was doing 80mph. Having read all the books and watched all the documentaries there were too many conflicting stories, His presentation is the result of this most interesting research and NOT a celebration of this crime. He will bring a 1960's colour light signal to demonstrate how the robbers pulled it off and fill the evening with all the unknown information he found out on the way.



May 29th

Marc Heighway investigates the '**Stories of Needs Oar Point**', one that has rarely been told despite the role it played in wartime. The talk includes never-before-seen photography and film, tales of bravery, inspiring stories, and how tragedy and high casualty rates struck the young men who flew from these local fields. For just three short, yet eventful months in WW2, the peace of fields south of Buckler's Hard was shattered by the arrival of four squadrons of Typhoon fighter bombers and lorries full of men. Some have said that this was the busiest airfield on D-Day. But just how true is this?

