

Review of *Early Railways 4*, London 12-15 June 2008

Many, arguably most, railway enthusiasts believe that Richard Trevithick ran his *Catch me who can* locomotive around a pizza shaped track inside a wood-paling fence somewhere in London and will probably also have seen a published copy engraving, ostensibly contemporary with the event. The Conference opened with a public lecture debunking much of the myth, exposing forged artwork, and adding substantial new information about the *Catch me* event including identification of the site of the show. Given that this year is *Catch me's* 200th Anniversary, undoubtedly the correct way to open proceedings.

It is always difficult to review this type of event as the relevance and significance of any speaker's presentation varies with your own areas of expertise. Overall it was a good and well organised conference covering a wide range of topics. With regard to my own specialist interest areas the papers with the most relevance were:

- Rutways in Malta
- The Silver Gill mine 'hund' track relics in the Lake District
- Early railways in the English South West including some beach rutways from the late C16
- A paper on temporary and construction site railways and in particular those surrounding canals and canal construction.

Given that even Trevithick's early machines are 'modern image' in comparison with the horse worked waggonways the writer is researching the iron horse items also gripped. That to me proves what a good conference it was; with a well chosen balance to the content. As with ERC3 in 2004, which I also attended, I came away gee'd up and re-inspired for the research slog ahead. What ever your specific area of expertise is with regard to railways pre-dating the main line era you would have found attendance value for money.

Our thanks as a Society should therefore go to the organisers for once again producing an event which all who attended will have found stimulating and for lining up a collection of papers which when written up as the Conference Proceedings will once again provide a permanent advancement in our understanding of the commercial, human, military, technical and iconographic aspects of the early railway scene.

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