

CFV3V Celebrates 40 YEARS



by David Haydock

Belgium's foremost preserved line, the Chemin de Fer des Trois Vallées (CFV3V or Three Valleys Railway), celebrated its 40th anniversary of existence over the weekend of 20–22 September 2013. As well as a dozen of its own steam locomotives, there were five visiting locos – one each from Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands plus SNCB's only working loco from Brussels. The festival was, as usual, very well organised, the sun shone most of the time and there were many visitors from across Europe.

The Mariembourg–Treignes line, saved from oblivion by the CFV3V, was once part of a “main line” built from 1848 to 1854 from Charleroi via Philippeville to Virieux-Molhain in France, a junction in the Meuse valley on the line from Dinant in Belgium, via Givet, to Charleville-Mézières in France. Mariembourg was a major junction on this line, with lines branching off west to Chimay, Momignies (Line 156), and Anor in France, on the Lille–Charleville-Mézières main line, and to Couvin to the south (Line 134). There was also a line from Mariembourg to Herneton-sur-Meuse on the Dinant–Givet line, with a chord to Givet.

Lines gradually closed in the area and today only the Charleroi–Mariembourg–Couvin line is open to passenger traffic, with an hourly DMU service except at weekends when frequency falls to two-hourly. Passenger services on the Mariembourg–Virieux-Molhain line were withdrawn from Treignes eastwards in 1962 and from Mariembourg to Treignes in 1963. Freight

services lasted a little longer, being withdrawn from Nismes to Virieux-Molhain in 1970, then from Mariembourg to Nismes in 1977.

An association to save the line was created in December 1973, its name coming from the three rivers which it follows, although for most of the way, the line follows the river Viroin. Services were launched in 1976, initially only between Nismes and Treignes because of the remaining freight service on the Nismes–Mariembourg section. The whole 13 km line was covered by vintage trains from 1978 after the freight service stopped.

From 1987 to 1999, CFV3V added tourist services on the line from Mariembourg to Chimay (which has a well-known brewery) and Momignies. CFV3V even became involved in the operation of freight services on this line, through a co-operative known as Transports de l'Entre Sambre et Meuse, de Chimay et des Ardennes (TEMCA). In 2000, the Mariembourg–Momignies section lost its freight service (and consequently its tourist service) but TEMCA continued to shuttle

**Table 1:
The Treignes museum collection**

Steam locomotives		
1.002*	4-6-2	1935
16.042*	4-4-2T	1907
5620*	0-8-0T	1906
AD 09	0-8-0T	1951
CA 04 “GABY”	0-6-0T	1954
SA 03	0-6-0T	1929
Steam tram		
808	0-6-0T	1894
Electric locomotives		
SNCB 101.012 (2912)*	Bo-Bo	1949
SNCF BB 12120	Bo-Bo	1960
Diesel locomotives		
5120	Co-Co	1961
4611	1A-A1	1952
“550.09” §	A1	1953
608.05	1A-A1	1939
CFL 201 + 211	2-car	1956
“551 662” °	A1	1955

* Owned by SNCB. SNCB intends to move some of these elsewhere but may loan other stock. 1.002 and 5620 (SNCB 53.320) will go to Oostende.

§ Former Mindener Kreisbahn VT 9.

° Former DB 795 662.

Left: One of the CFV3V's stalwarts – former DB 2-6-2T 64 250, in its unusual grey livery, leaves Treignes on 21 September 2013. **Didier Delattre**

Right: Visitor “MARC SEGUIN”, a working replica of one of France’s earliest locos, is prepared for service at Treignes depot as the fog lifts on the morning of 21 September 2013.

Below right: The tiny, unusual, and indeed unique “YVONNE” was a visitor from Stoomcentrum Maldegem in Vlaanderen, and delighted the crowds.

Bottom: USATC 0-6-0T 4389 was a popular visitor from the Netherlands but suffered overheating and was taken off the passenger service. She blows off steam here at Mariembourg depot. **David Haydock (3)**



quarry stone from Momignies to Anor, using two former SNCB Class 60 diesels, of which 6086 is now preserved by the CFV3V. This arrangement stopped in 2008 when Colas Rail took over all services carrying stone from Momignies, using its own locos. In fact, the stone carried was being brought some 4 km by lorry to Momignies for loading from the CCM quarry at Wallers in France. In order to relieve local roads, a direct rail branch, entirely in France, opened in 2012 and there is now no traffic at all on the Belgian section of Line 156.

At the peak of its geographical spread, CFV3V also operated a tourist service from Dinant (Belgium) to Givet (France) over Line 154, which lost its passenger service in 1989. However, this only lasted from 1990 to 2000, ceasing when the freight service stopped on this section.

Back to basics

Today, CFV3V can concentrate wholly on the Mariembourg–Treignes section which is enough to keep any railway enthusiast busy





Above: AMTF's "ENERGIE" 0-6-0T 507, which is running with a tender, leads USATC 4389 out of Olloy-sur-Viroin on 21 September 2013 with a train to Mariembourg. **Didier Delattre**

Below: SNCB's only working steam loco, 2-8-0 29.013 leaves Mariembourg on 22 September 2013 for its home depot at Schaerbeek. **Tim Hall**

Opposite page: AD 05 arrives at Mariembourg on 22 September 2013 decorated with the emblem marking the 40th anniversary. **David Haydock**



Table 2: Stock in working order

Steam locomotives		
DR 50 3696	2-10-0	1939
DB 64 250	2-6-2T	1933
PKP TKt48-87	2-8-2T	1952
AD 05	0-6-0T	1926
DG 22	0-4-0T VB	1913
ELNA 158	2-6-0T	1940
MF 73	0-6-0T	1922
MF 83	0-6-0T	1916
NE 61 +	0-8-0T	1952
SA 01	0-6-0T	1945
Diesel locomotives		
CFL 914 §	Bo-Bo	1958
Cockerill	0-4-0 dh	1963
GV 69	0-4-0 dm	1964
Hunslet	0-4-0 dh	1983
SNCB 9008 °	0-4-0 dm	1968
SNCB 7304	0-6-0 dh	1965
SNCB 6086	Bo-Bo	1965
SNCF Y 5130	4w dh	1961
SNCF Y 6502	Bo de	1956
SNCF Y 6563	Bo de	1957
SNCF BB 63149	Bo-Bo	1958
Diesel railcars		
SNCB 4407	B-2	1954
SNCB 4608	IA-AI	1952
SNCB 4610	IA-AI	1952
SNCB 554.II (4611)	IA-AI	1952
SNCB 4616	IA-AI	1952
SNCB ES 301	B dm	1939
SNCF X 3998	B-2	1957
Stored		
DR 52 467	2-10-0	1943
ÖBB 52 3314	2-10-0	1944
SNCB 540.1	B dm	1924
SNCB 540.2	B dm	1924
Forges de Cleb	0-4-0T	19xx
MF 62	0-4-0T	1916
MF 91	0-6-0T	1930
SA 02	0-6-0T	1945
FDP	0-4-0 d	19xx
VT 5	Bo dmr	1934

* Currently awaiting restoration
 § SNCF BB 63123 in disguise.
 ° Industrial loco in disguise.
 + Ex Neuenkircher Eisenwerke, under overhaul at Treignes, return to steam in 2015.

for a whole day. The operating depot is at Mariembourg and is a hive of activity on days with a full service. Activities can be watched from tables in front of the association's well-run shop, bar and snack bar, right next to the tracks. There are three intermediate stations on the way to Treignes – at Nismes, Olloy-sur-Viroin and Vierves, and at the other end of the line, a small railway museum was opened at Treignes (pronunciation similar to “train”) by an associated club in 1994. A visit is recommended, and there is a second snack bar, a small workshop and lines of stored locos which can usually be visited freely. The CFV3V changes traction each time trains arrive at Mariembourg, so it is difficult to travel behind the same loco(s) twice.



Traction

The first locos acquired by the CFV3V were two 0-6-0 tank engines from the Monceau-Fontaine coal mine network near Charleroi: locos MF 73 and 82 which ran under their own power to Mariembourg. Sister loco MF 91 followed in December 1975 and MF 83 in May 1980. MF 73 (Couillet 1756, 1922) hauled the inaugural train on 27 March 1976. The next locos to arrive were also from coal mines – Charbonnages André Dumont in Waterschei – the 0-4-0 tanks AD 07, 08 and 09 arriving in 1977, 1978 and 1980 respectively. There followed a regular stream of new acquisitions, both steam and diesel, from many different sources. Some of these are still present, others not. Tables 1 and 2 show a full list.

The 2013 steam festival

In order to celebrate CFV3V's 40th anniversary, the railway extended its usual late September steam festival, by running on Friday 20 as well as Saturday 21st and Sunday 22 September, as well as inviting five “guest” locos. These were:

- “MARC SEGUIN”, a replica of one of the first steam locos to operate in France, from St Étienne to Lyon, built in 1829. This made only demonstration runs within the station area at Treignes.
- “YVONNE”, a tiny and unique 0-4-0T built by St Léonard of Liège in 1893 for the coal mines in Soumagne, where it worked staff trains. The loco is owned by a private individual and is based at Stoomcentrum Maldegem north of Brugge in Belgium and also made only demonstration runs at Mariembourg.
- United States Army Transportation Corps 4389, a former industrial 0-6-0T used in Dutch coal mines and recently restored to working order by Stoomtrein Goes-Borsele in the Netherlands (see **TR EU 211**). The loco was used to haul trains on Friday and Saturday but suffered a failure on Sunday.

The heat from the firebox started to raise the temperature of the rear suspension to an alarming degree so the loco was removed to allow cooling.

- 0-6-0T 507, built by Energie, and based at Fond de Gras in Luxembourg with Association des Musées et Tourisme Ferroviaires (AMTF). This tank engine, which runs with a tender, also headed passenger trains all weekend. Remarkably, in these days of “health and safety” and infrastructure managers averse to the risks posed by steam locos, 507 made the journey to and from Mariembourg under its own power!
- 2-8-0 29.013, Belgian Railways’ (SNCB) only working steam loco, arrived at Mariembourg on Saturday with only a support coach (what a pity it could not have brought a passenger special from Brussels), then worked passenger trains to Treignes on Saturday and Sunday. 29.013 was turned on the triangle at Mariembourg on the Saturday evening so that the loco would face forward on its return to Brussels. This is the last time this will be possible – infrastructure manager Infrabel is to remove the point on the line to Couvin in order to increase line speed.

The Friday was quieter but three rakes of four coaches operated seven train pairs with eight locos in steam. On Saturday and Sunday there were 11 train pairs, all but the last steam-hauled, with two rakes formed of five coaches. One rake featured a vintage coach which has recently been fitted with a wheelchair lift.

How to get there

Trains run hourly (two-hourly at weekends) between Charleroi and Mariembourg. CFV3V trains do not serve the main station – it is necessary to walk about 700 m from the station.