

## SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At its March meeting the Society welcomed back a long-standing friend, Martin Connop Price, to lecture on the 'Railway West of Whitland'

The Great Western Railway, and its associate the South Wales Railway, were keen to extend a main line through south Wales to exploit the movement of steam coal to the larger towns and cities and to consider the development of a western harbour to service the Irish and transatlantic trades. Brunel was chief engineer to both companies and he in particular saw Neyland, then only a huddle of houses in the parish of Llanstadwell, as a viable port for this enterprise rather than – surprisingly – Milford. However, the gradient from Neyland to Clarbston Road greatly affected journey times and to overcome this Fishguard was also developed. Nevertheless, the transatlantic liners and their passengers preferred the longer sea crossing, but shorter rail journey, to Southampton and London.

Interesting asides to the railway mania of the 1840's were the proposed local lines that were not built and their suggested routes. While Brunel's focus was on reaching Neyland, and later Fishguard, lines were surveyed to Pembroke Dock and its royal naval facility. An early route went west of Whitland to Canaston, then south and close along the shore of the eastern Cleddau near Landshipping and Carew. A second unrealised proposal took an inland, central line from Whitland to Reynalton and Jeffreyton before curving westwards to Pembroke Dock.

It was not until the 1860's that a branch line in the east of the county was constructed, the now familiar route towards the coast, from the junction at Whitland south to Narberth and thence to Saundersfoot, Tenby and Pembroke Dock.

An informative selection of slides illustrated the lecture: the junction at Johnston servicing the lines to Milford and Neyland, the spur to the colliery at Hook, the busy dock trade at Milford and the special fish express trains and a variety of much changed (and much missed) railway stations with their waiting rooms, booking halls, well tended gardens, goods sheds and sidings.

The next lecture of the Society will take place at the Regency Hall at 7.30 on 15 April when Sandra Storch will talk about 'The Celts, their Art and Religion.' Non members are very welcome to attend.