

Sunday 28 May

RAILWAY 72

Churnet Valley and Foxfield Railways

Froghall	1030
Ipstones	1140
Froghall	1239

The Churnet Valley is quite close to home, and the last time I did it was on our 2012 holiday here. A nice welcome at Froghall with the café open, then a large loco arrived with the train. It is a railway that wants you to pre-book, and seems to make its money by “upselling”. You can book breakfast on the first train, but there is no buffet coach you can just wander along to - which is a shame as I could have done with a mug or two of tea en route. There were some people breakfasting, but the train was hardly full.



Three stations on the first stretch - Froghall, Consall and Cheddleton - and it is a lovely stretch beside the canal. It would be good to have a proper explore.



We went through the tunnel and up to Leek Brook Junction. The line from Stoke exists, but is out of use. There are plans to re-open to a new site in Leek, making a destination, and a new Y junction. Some of the track for this has been laid.





It is a lovely ride over the Staffordshire Moorlands, and the blossom is gorgeous this year. But there is nothing there. We stopped for a few minutes to get steam up for one of the gradients, and continued to nowhere. The line continues, to nowhere else, but the loco runs round, and we go back.

We had a bit of a delay at Cheddleton while they got new gas cylinders into the restaurant coaches, so we were late back to Froghall. The station was heaving, lots of people for lunch.





Flicking through the OS map app, I realised that the Foxfield Railway was only seven miles away at Blyth Bridge. I got there about 1330 and they (just) managed to find me a space on the 1400 train and do me a burger.

Caverswall Road	d	1400
Dilhorne Park		
Caverswall Road	a	1450

They were running the Knotty Heritage Train, coaches like the Tanfield Railway. My seat was in the wheelchair accessible area with a lovely little family. A much shorter ride as far as Dilhorne Park, much more family-friendly. The line continues down the bank to Foxfield Colliery. This stretch has not been open for a while - the gradient is very steep. The Colliery is now open occasionally, but you have to visit by car which is a shame. Nice museum too, and little shop. Another one ticked off!





I drove home along the main road. Matt Hunns came with Sophie for supper - lovely to meet her.