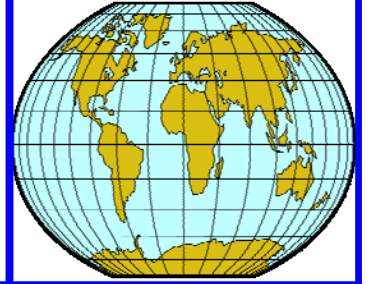


A Globe Special



WORLDWIDE GROUP *of the* *N Gauge Society*



Railway Byways of Germany *By Peter Collis*

Foreword

Cover Picture: Thundering up The Brocken. Photo by Peter Collis.

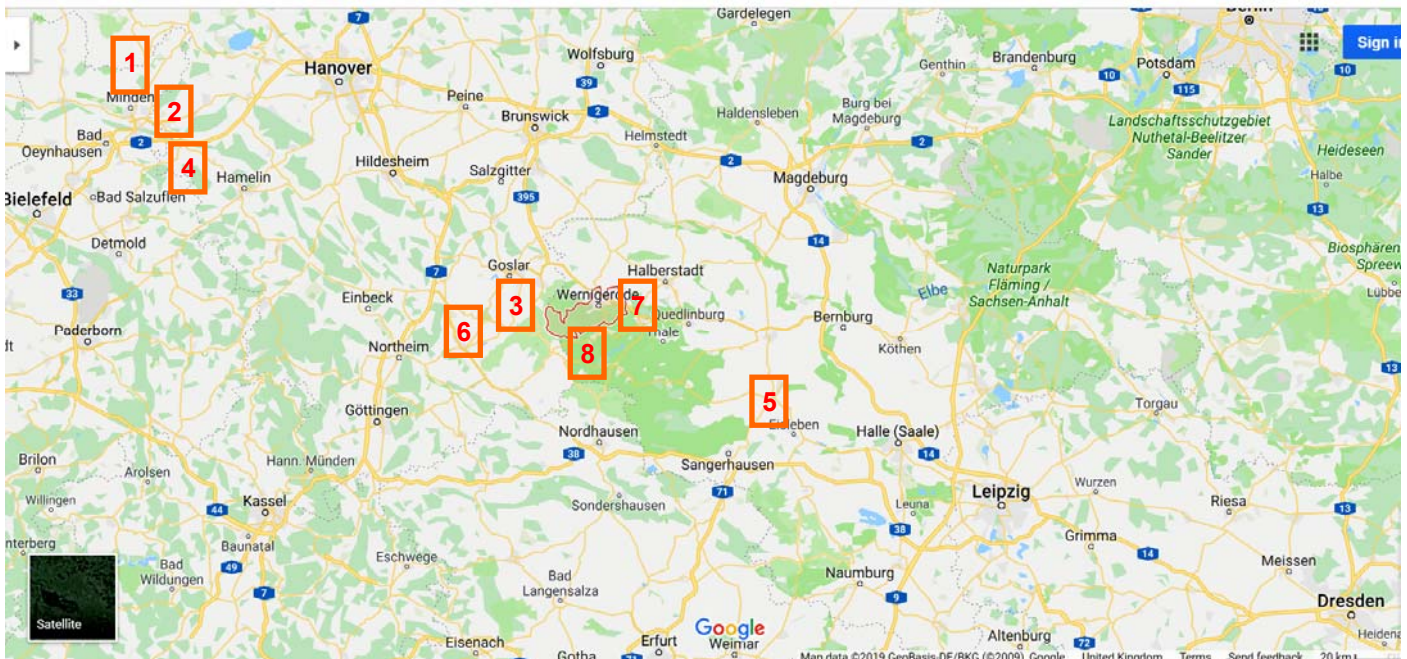
I first contacted Peter about publishing some of his Harz photographs in The Globe and he kindly offered to write some words to go with the pictures. After that he caught “the bug” and started producing a series of articles just for The Globe based on various railway byways of Northern Germany. These articles have provided some history and insight into these (generally) little known byways and local systems.

This booklet gathers together the byways articles which have been published in either The Globe or The Supplement in 2018/19. This is not a complete record of all the articles which Peter has provided for us.

The WorldWide Group is very grateful to Peter for this input to our magazines and we look forward to receiving even more articles which Peter is considering for the future.

Contents:

- Part One—Bückeburg and The Mindener Kreisbahn
- Part Two—The Rinteln to Stadthagen Line (RStE)
- Part Three—Harzreise
- Part Four—The Extertalbahn
- Part Five—The Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn and the Wipperliese
- Part Six—The Clausthal-Zellerfeld Tagesförderbahn
- Part Seven—The Rübelandbahn
- Part Eight—Die Größte unter den Kleinen



Acknowledgements:

Peter Collis provided the text and photographs
Maps are taken from Google Maps
Editorial addition and compilation by John Brady
Proof read by Norman Raven
Published by The WorldWide Group of The N Gauge Society

Part One—Bückeburg and The Mindener Kreisbahn

It was inevitable that I would become a railway enthusiast. My first home was a police house in Dorking, which backed onto the Reading to Redhill line. My earliest railway memories are of Maunsell 2-6-0s slogging up from Dorking Deepdene to Dorking West, with the exotic sounding Birkenhead Express racing through on (I think) Saturdays.

When my dad was promoted to Sergeant, we moved to Woking. Sadly, there was no railway line at the bottom of the garden but happily we were a short walk from a pair of footbridges, known as "twin bridges" which spanned the tracks just west of the junction of the Portsmouth and Basingstoke lines. Many a happy hour was spent here, spotting various BR standard classes, Q1s, USA tanks, etc with a Bulleid Pacific hauled Bournemouth Belle Express the highlight of the day.

For me the icing on the cake was spending my childhood summers and a few Easter holidays too, with my maternal grandparents at their flat in Bückeburg, Germany. Bückeburg is a picturesque and charming small market town, set in lovely countryside, with a stunning baroque Schloss and an excellent helicopter museum. A steady stream of tourists make their way there. The attraction for me was that, situated just east of Minden, it lies on the North-South main lines from Köln, Düsseldorf and the Ruhr, and also the East-West lines from the Netherlands via Osnabrück, to Hannover. In the fifties, sixties and into the seventies it was the perfect place to see a whole miscellany of steam and diesel hauled passenger and freight trains.

Better still, there were four quirky, privately operated lines in the neighbourhood. One ran from Bückeburg to the neighbouring spa town of Bad Eilsen, using in the main railcars which operated under a 600v overhead system. Sadly, the Fürst (Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe) - who owned the line—decided that even his pockets couldn't stand the mounting losses and it closed in 1966.

There are a couple of murals in the station subway at Bückeburg, which recall happier times.

The ET204 Triebwagen (below) was the mainstay of the line from 1950 to 1966.



More happily, the other lines still survive and what follows are some photos which I took of them when I stopped in Bückeburg in September (2017), en route to our home in the Harz mountains. I'll describe the Mindener Kreisbahn in this article, and the others, along with some unusual railways in and around the Harz mountains in later articles.

The Mindener Kreisbahn

Minden is a significant railway centre lying at the intersection of the river Weser with the Mittellandkanal. The Mindener Kreisbahn developed as a private network, linking the river and canal docks with the industries in the town and extending out to the villages in the rural areas.

Whilst much of the rural network has now been closed, the urban core and the branch to the iron ore mines and stone quarries at Nammen Grube are still in use. The disused section beyond to the mining museum at Kleinenbremen was being restored whilst I was there. Mindener Kreisbahn also hauls freight on the DB network.

Right: A Mindener Kreisbahn train, travelling from the docks at Hille.



The MK network provides one of the two bases for the Museums-Eisenbahn Minden, the other being at Preußisch Oldendorf (which I didn't visit). The MEM's base is at the charming station of Minden Oberstadt, which is quite different to the more normal, Prussian style stations in this area.

Left: Minden Oberstadt bf.

They also have an adjoining shed, which houses the Preußenzug, a show piece recreation of an Epoch 1 passenger train, as well as locos and other bits and pieces they are working on. I arrived unannounced on a weekday but luckily one of the volunteers was fettling the operational loco ready for the weekend so I could just poke around the shed at my leisure. I've found that German heritage railways are very relaxed about letting enthusiasts wander around their facilities, seemingly with few concerns about 'Elf and Safety'!



Above: At Minden Oberstadt some carriages with the shed beyond.



Left: A ubiquitous Köf, with the "newer" carriages i.e. not the Preußenzug.

Currently T13 7906 "Stettin" is hauling the Preußenzug, which runs to the docks at Hille and to the quarry/mine at Nammen Grube.

It operates once a month from April to October, plus special trains for St. Nicholas and Grünkohl Zeit (green cabbage season!).

Historic diesel trains, including a Wismarer railbus operate from the MEM's other base at Preußisch Oldendorf.

*Right and below:
"Stettin" in the shed.*



Also in the shed at Minden Oberstadt was a T9.3, 7348 "Kattowitz", which is being rebuilt.

If you'd like to know more about the Museums-Eisenbahn Minden, the website is <http://www.museumseisenbahn-minden.de>

The mining museum at what will, once again, be the end of the line in Kleinenbremen.



Part Two—The Rinteln to Stadthagen Line (RStE)

My grandparents shared the German passion for going out in the afternoon for Kaffee und Kuchen. A favourite destination was the neighbouring spa town of Bad Eilsen. Nowadays a quiet and genteel little place, you would never guess that during the war it had been the main design centre for the Focke-Wulf aircraft company and after the war, the HQ for the RAF.

Bad Eilsen was near enough to Bückeburg for us to be able to walk there through the forest. However, for me, it was much more fun if we took the Bückeburg - Bad Eilsen Kleinbahn (nicknamed the Eilser Minchen). In those days its main motive power was the ET204 Triebwagen, mentioned in the previous article but during and after the war it had seen an array of heavy steam locos and DMUs, the latter including one of the streamlined SVT 137 "Fliegender Kölner" sets which had been commandeered by the occupying British forces. On New Year's Eve, 1945/6, this low-slung unit became stuck in the snow - stranding its complement of RAF officers and their wives who had been on their way to a knees-up in Bad Eilsen!



The former station at Bückeburg Ost (above), on the Bückeburg to Bad Eilsen line. It was just beyond here that Fliegender Kölner became stranded.

The picturesque little station at Bad Eilsen (left) (although it has seen better days) formed the junction with the Rinteln-Stadthagen line (RStE). The RStE runs for 20km from Stadthagen, which

is on the main line from Minden to Hannover, to Rinteln which is on the secondary line from Löhne to Hameln. Heading south from Stadthagen, the line serves the ballast works at Georgschacht, a former coal mine; the small halt and sidings at Nienstädt; the town of Obenkirchen, with its glassworks; the halt at Krainhagen; the junction at Bad Eilsen; and the stone quarry and halt at Steinbergen, before reaching its final stop at Rinteln Nord, just opposite the DB station. At Rinteln, as at Stadthagen, there is a connection to the DB network and an extension down to the docks on the Weser. There was also a connection to the Exteralbahn which I'll describe later.

To me, as a young boy, the RStE seemed impossibly glamorous. Not just because of its route, delightful though it is, but because of its railcars. One was an Esslinger Triebwagen, a handsome enough vehicle in its red and cream livery. The one which really fired my imagination, though, was "Der Türke" (The Turk)!

At the start of the 1940s, the Turkish Railways had ordered six two-car, streamlined, high speed diesel units



from MAN. One made it to Turkey, and after the war three sets ended up in Slovakia. Another set had been destroyed, which left the sixth set looking for a home.

Above and Left: Tank wagons at Nienstädt and Steinbergen.

The Deutsche Eisenbahn Gesellschaft, which owned minor railways all over Germany, including the RStE desperately needed new motive power and rolling stock, so it was decided to split the set into two rail-cars, one of which arrived on the RStE in 1949 and continued to serve until 1965 when the passenger service ceased.

The incongruity of this former crack express unit meandering along a quiet branch line only added to the charm and I thought it was wonderful. Looking back, I realise just how privileged I was to have spent part of my childhood surrounded by the likes of the ET 204, an Esslinger Triebwagen and Der Türke. I haven't even mentioned yet the wooden box-like electric locos of the Extertalbahn! Sadly I don't have any photos of my own of these exotic creations and I didn't want to infringe copyright by taking photos from the internet. If you're interested, a little Googling will soon reveal all.

Nowadays, the RStE sees occasional freight traffic, mostly timber, and the sidings at Nienstädt, Obenkirchen, Steinbergen and Rinteln are also used for storing wagons. As far as I could see, these were all tank wagons awaiting renovation at Kaminski's wagon works in neighbouring Hameln.

The RStE also enjoys both steam and diesel heritage train services. The steam trains operate monthly from June to October (with extra services at Christmas) and are hauled by a class 52 with a rake of former DR coaches. You can read more at: <http://www.dampf-eisenbahn-weserbergland.de>



Stadthagen West (left) is the base for Dampf-eisenbahn Weserbergland and home for 52 8038.

The diesel service also operates monthly from April to October using a Uerdingen Schienenbus. My wife and I travelled on this a few years ago, and it's a great trip. The excellent visibility from the Schienenbus means you can enjoy the lovely scenery to the full, with the bonus - if you sit just behind the driver, or stand next to him - of also seeing the road ahead. The driver had no qualms about chatting to his passengers as we trundled along.

Refreshments were taken at the half-way point of Obenkirchen. The only lunch choice available was Leberkäse with mashed potato. Being half German, this holds no horrors for me - but my wife thought it was revolting! More information is at:

<http://www.der-schaumburger-ferst.de>



Below: The station at Obenkirchen. Beware the Leberkäse!



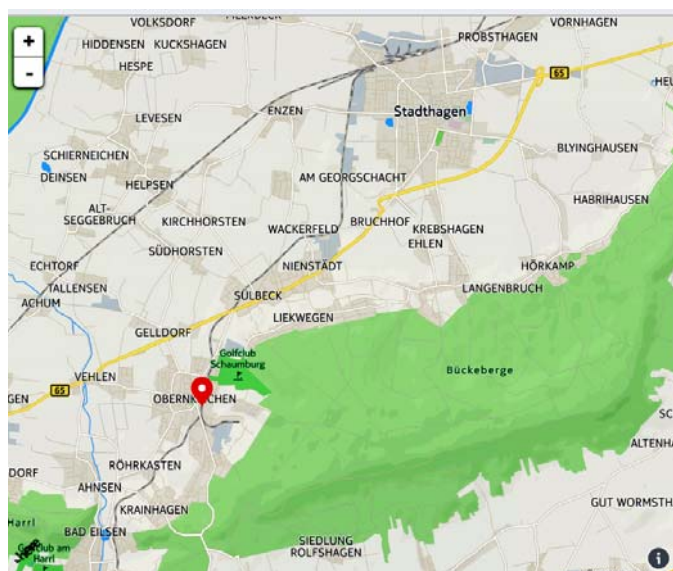
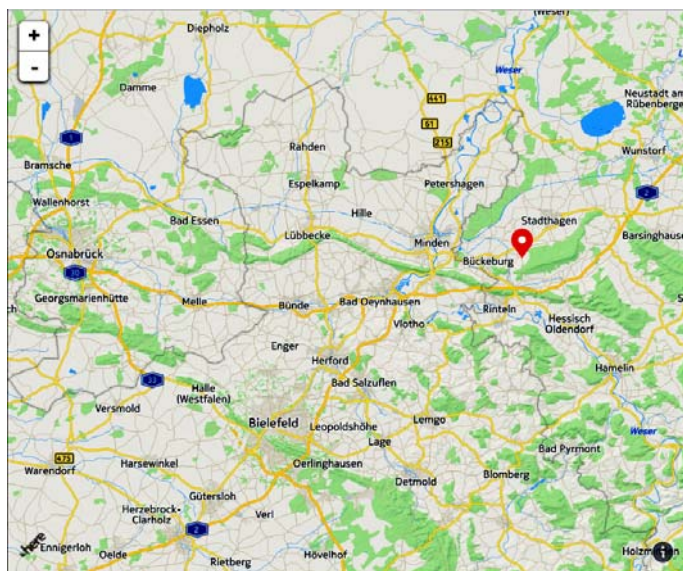
Above: The loco shed at Rinteln Nord is home for the Uerdinger.

These days the line is operated by a partnership between Rhein-Sieg-Eisenbahn who operate a number of minor railways across Germany and hold the various approvals and Bückebergbahn Rinteln—Stadthagen which is responsible for the local management. They lease the line from the local authorities who own the infrastructure. There is a campaign to have regular passenger services reinstated on the line and the Land of Niedersachsen is apparently considering this.



The final station at Rinteln Nord, with the very unattractive DB Station in the background to left.

But, who knows? If Verkehrsclub Deutschland and others have their way, then perhaps, one day, streamlined railcars will again ply their trade through the rolling hills of the Weser Valley!



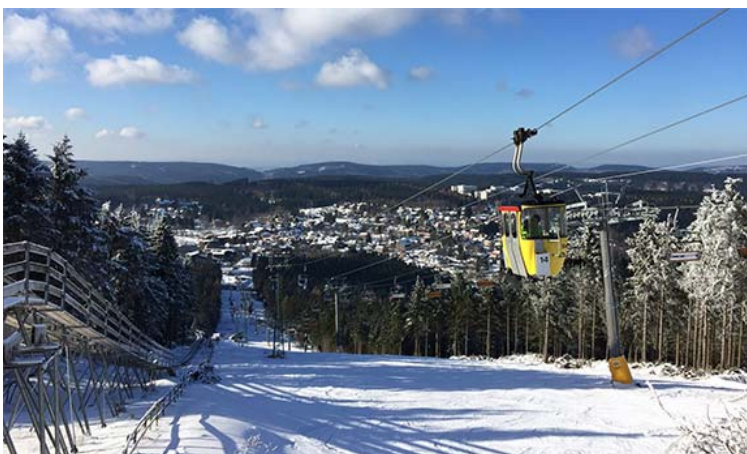
Part Three—Harzreise

(with apologies to Heinrich Heine!)

My wife and I have been fortunate to own a holiday apartment in the village of Hahnenklee in the Harz mountains for over 10 years. Local advice and experience has taught us that February is a very good time to visit, usually offering both deep snow and blue skies. Herrlich!

Right: Not a train, but I think the little cable cars in Hahnenklee have a charm of their own.

Experience has also taught us that public transport can be relied upon even when the snow is deep. While a hire car does give more flexibility (useful when exploring and photographing the more esoteric railways of the Harz - watch this space!) we enjoy using the buses and trains which are also much cheaper.



Above: A slightly grubby Erixx train at Goslar, arrived from Hannover

Hahnenklee has an hourly bus service to the nearest town, Goslar, and it's a pretty half-hour ride down through the mountains. For a town of 50,000, Goslar is very well served by local trains heading in all directions: north-west via Salzgitter-Ringelheim and Hildesheim to Hannover; north via Salzgitter-Ringelheim or Vienenburg to Braunschweig; east to Bad Harzburg and via Vienenburg to Wernigerode (for the HSB!), Halberstadt, Halle and Magdeburg; west to Seesen and then south to Herzberg and the southern Harz; and west to Kreiensen and then west to Holzmin-den and south to Göttingen.

I was sorry when DB lost its monopoly with the timetable change at the end of 2014, not least because this was one of the last stomping grounds of class 218s and N Wagen! Now DB operates the services to the west and south; Erixx the services to the north; and HEX the services to the east although these are to be taken over by Abellio. Almost all services use Alstom Coradia LINT DMUs, possibly because they are made locally in Salzgitter. That means there's not much variety but from a passenger's point of view they are very comfortable, the massive picture windows allowing you to make the most of the views.



Above: HEX service about to leave Goslar for Halberstadt and Magdeburg:



Hannover is the nearest airport to the Harz, and is served by BA from Heathrow. The vagaries of BA's scheduling mean that it sometimes suits us better to travel via a different airport which also opens up the possibility of an extra train journey! So in February 2018 we flew to Hamburg, then by S Bahn and ICE to Hannover and onward with Erixx to Goslar returning via Berlin.

I've a soft spot for loco hauled IC services, such as IC 2311 here from Westerland on Sylt to Stuttgart Hbf. The train leaves Westerland (Sylt) at 09.26 calling at Niebüll, Itzehoe, Hamburg, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Köln, Mannheim arriving into Stuttgart Hbf nine hours later at 20.24. *This was taken at Hamburg Hbf.*

Hildesheim was very heavily damaged at the end of WW2 but has been rebuilt into a pleasant, modern town with a few interesting (restored) historic buildings and some lovely churches. It's also a busy junction with ICEs traveling north via Hannover, south via Göttingen and east via Braunschweig. Local services operate via Hameln to Bünde with NordWestBahn and to Wolfsburg with ENNO as well as the Erix services to Goslar and Bad Harzburg.



Left: NordWestBahn DMUs resting up at Hildesheim Hbf.

An S Bahn train for Hannover: below.



Braunschweig was also extensively damaged and has been rebuilt into a pleasant, modern city with a smattering of interesting historic buildings. We travelled there in February 2017, changing at Salzgitter-Ringelheim. This junction is pretty much in the middle of nowhere and my wife used to regard it as the most desolate station she'd ever seen. It's been rebuilt now, with new platforms and shelters, and is a bit better if still somewhat bleak. (Ed. I would agree with that—a strange station for a junction station).



Above: Our train for Braunschweig, arriving from Seesen.

Left: A service from Braunschweig to Seesen.

Below: Erix trains crossing at Vienenburg.



Some of the outside exhibits at the museum.

The junction station of Vienenburg lies north-east of Goslar, and connects the lines from Braunschweig, Halberstadt, Bad Harzburg and Goslar. Trains from Bad Harzburg and Goslar join here, before traveling north to Braunschweig, and split here on the return journey. Vienenburg claims to have one of the oldest, still used, station buildings in Germany and boasts a charming little railway museum.

And inside the museum (right) it all felt wonderfully Epoch 3.

Goslar is my favourite town anywhere, and is UNESCO listed in its entirety because apparently it has more half-timbered houses than anywhere else in Germany (which is saying something!). Wernigerode runs it close and, of course, has the added attraction of being the main base for the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen! We didn't manage to get there in 2018, but here are some photos I took on a February trip a couple of years ago.



Left: The HSB railcar known as "The Fischstübchen", or "Fish Finger". (Ed input): Officially class 187, HSB has three of these vehicles 011/012/013. They were built by Talbot in Aachen in the 1950's for standard as well as narrow gauge. In 2012-2014, two railcars were extensively overhauled and received a Voith T211r3 flow-type transmission with converter and clutch as well as a MAN D0836 diesel engine. The designation Br187 is also given to the latest Bombardier Traxx loco (dual powered electric and diesel version: below) so don't get the two confused!



The three photo's above and one to the right were all taken at Wernigerode station with 99 256 in action and heading off for The Brocken which in the picture above can be seen behind the lighting post on the right.



Right: A HEX (Harz Elbe Express) service from Halberstadt via Wernigerode to Goslar.

A feature of many German trains is that the driver's compartment is separated from the passenger compartment by a glass panel/door which on ICE 3s the driver can render opaque and which on LINT DMUs has a curtain which the driver can pull across. I always try to travel right behind the driver and hope that he or she is a believer in transparency! My luck was in on our return trip from Goslar to Hannover. Seeing me peering through the glass door, the driver opened it and kept it open for the entire journey.



I spent a very happy hour stood in the doorway, chatting to the driver and taking photos! A friend of mine, ex BR and Southwest Trains, tells me that this would not be allowed in the UK!

Left: Leaving Hildesheim. One of DB's rescue trains can be seen on the right.



Whilst waiting for our ICE2 to Berlin, we saw two ICs setting off ahead of our train. A class 101, heading east from Hannover (right).



Left: One of the new twin-deck ICs, heading for Berlin from Hannover. I rather wished I'd booked us onto this train!

Below: Our ICE almost catches a pigeon napping!



That's all for this particular Harz trip.

Part Four—The Extertalbahn

Even when compared with the eclectic railways described in previous articles, the Extertalbahn arguably is the one that steals the show. Still in operation, motive power on the line today comprises diesel, steam (hopefully again), electric (at 1500V DC) and pedal power! I rest my case!

The northern terminus of the line was in Rinteln, where the Extertalbahn had its own little platform and run-round loop, just across from the Rinteln and Stadthagen Eisenbahn (RStE) station at Rinteln Nord (pictured in Part Two) and from the DB station. There was a connection, via the RStE's tracks, to the docks on the Weser and to the main DB network.

The line headed due south from there, across the Weser and through the town of Rinteln, before meandering through the delightful Exter Valley to Barntrup where it joined the then secondary line from Lemgo to Hameln.

Sadly, the section from the original terminus to the southern outskirts of Rinteln is no more. Yet, as recently as the 60s, heavy freight trains, topped and tailed by the Extertalbahn's distinctive, boxy electric locos could be seen threading their way through the traffic as they made their way along Rinteln's cobblestoned high street! The passenger services, which had been operated with electric vehicles which looked more like trams than railcars, ceased at the end of the 60s. Beyond Rinteln itself, electric hauled goods services continued right up to the millennium.

Today the northern terminus of the line is at Rinteln Süd, formerly Extern. This is next to a large industrial estate and, following the closure of the route through the town, lines were run through the estate to serve the firms there. I could see no sign of these lines when I visited.

Rinteln Süd Station (right), is today an Italian restaurant.

Just beyond Rinteln Süd station is an unremarkable looking industrial building which houses a fleet of draisines (four-person cycles which travel on railway lines). These seem to have become surprisingly popular! From the end of March to early November you can hire one of these and set off along the 18km route to Alverdisen. The outbound, southward journey is uphill and is estimated to take around three hours at a comfortable pace. An hour and a half is allowed for the downhill return journey.



Southbound departures have to take place between 09.00 and 11.30, and, regardless of where you are, you have to turn round at 14.00. The draisines have transponders, which activate the signals at level crossings to give them priority over road traffic. Since my visit I've read that all the draisines have been equipped with electric assistance and one can even take a wheelchair.

Left: The "engine shed" for the Draisines.

Fancy pedalling one of these uphill for three hours? At least they have electric assistance now!

Heading south, the line runs alongside the Exter river passing through various villages until it reaches the small town of Bösingfeld which is also the base for Landeseisenbahn Lippe. Landeseisenbahn Lippe operates museum trains once or twice a month, from April to November, and at Christmas, from Bösingfeld southwards to Barntrop, the original terminus of the line and then westwards to Dörentrup.



The VBE's depot at Bösingfeld:

The impressive depot at Bösingfeld, and the railway infrastructure, are owned by Verkehrsbetriebe Extertal (VBE), a bus and logistics company jointly owned by the local authorities and private interests. VBE also owns the two historic electric locos, operates the draisines and clearly provides enormous help to Landeseisenbahn Lippe. The stretch to Barntrop is known as the Extertalbahn, and is electrified; the non-electrified line on to Dörentrup follows the route of the

former secondary line from Hameln to Lemgo and is known as the Begatalbahn.

The sole operational electric loco, E22 tucked away in its shed. (Its sister is on static display in Barntrop.) The loco was built in 1927 and, after a four year overhaul, it and the overhead electric supply from Bösingfeld to Barntrop were brought back into service in 2013.



The obligatory Köf shutter, with E22 in the shed behind.



Landeseisenbahn Lippe has a diesel loco, V2.004, built by MAK in 1954. Because the overhead goes only as far as Barntrup this loco takes over the trains on the non-electrified section to Dörentrup.

*Below:
Part of the wagon park at Bösingfeld.*

In addition, the Landeseisenbahn Lippe has a Turmwagen, a railcar with a platform for maintaining the catenary and is restoring its Austrian built 2-8-2 tank loco.

Continuing south, the next halt is at the delightful station of Alverdissen. This is as far as the draisines are allowed to go.

The Bahnhof Gaststätte is no doubt very welcome if you've pedalled uphill for three hours to get here!



Barntrup is the final station on the Extertalbahn. From here the trains continue with diesel traction along the Begatalbahn to Dörentrup.

If you'd like to read more about Landeseisenbahn Lippe and the VBE, and see some pictures of rolling stock past and present, the websites are <http://www.landeseisenbahn-lippe.de> and <http://www.vbe-extertal.de>.

The photo's above and right are of Alverdissen Bf.

This concludes my three articles about some of the more esoteric railways around Schaumburg-Lippe, to use the historic term for the region. I hope they've been of interest and perhaps have even encouraged some folk to visit the area themselves? It's a charming part of the world, with lots of railway interest! My next articles will look at some of the lesser known railways in and around the Harz mountains.



Part Five—The Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn and the Wipperliese

For some reason, I'm fascinated by the former East Germany. Our home in the Harz mountains is in a village in what was West Germany but only about 30 km from what was the border, so when we're out and about we're as often in the former east as in the former west.

It's been interesting to see how the old DDR has changed, or not as the case may be. Cities like Dresden and Leipzig are flourishing, and many towns and villages have been renovated to the point where they look like something out of a Faller catalogue. Other places look sad and forlorn, as though the tide of progress has completely passed them by.



The Wipperliese, as seen from the convenient car wash!



Klostermansfeld station, with a DB Regio service about to depart towards Magdeburg

Driving due east from Hahnenklee, I enjoyed the changing scenery as the mountains of the western Harz gave way to the gentler hills of the eastern Harz and then to the flat plain of the Mansfelder Land.

Arriving in Klostermansfeld, I took a wrong turning and pulled into a car wash to check my bearings. Glancing up, I saw a railway viaduct above me. And then the Wipperliese's Esslinger Triebwagen rumbled into view. Sometimes your luck is just in!



The Wipperliese, with the smell of Bratwurst on the air



The beautifully restored Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn carriages

The Wipperliese's fleet apparently comprises four Esslinger Triebwagen with normal seating and one with TV, bistro and a wheelchair lift and which I guess is the railcar of choice for special events. As far as I could see, all are in a blue and grey livery which, in my view, does them no favours at all compared to, say, the more traditional red and cream.



Heading out through the flat, agricultural countryside

However, I was about to set off on the Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn for the ninety minute round trip. This operates regularly on alternate Saturdays, from March to October, with steam on one weekend and diesel on the other. There are additional services throughout the year, including at Christmas and a goods train too. The Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn claims to be the oldest operational narrow gauge railway in Germany. The current line is all that's left of a 95km network which serviced the copper industry.

Driving on, I found the station at Klostermansfeld a little further down the road and could immediately see that this was going to be a very good day! Klostermansfeld is on the secondary north-south line from Magdeburg to Erfurt and Halle and is served by DB Regio. It's also the junction for the 20 km standard gauge branch line to Wippra, the Wipperliese, and for the 11 km 75cm gauge line to Hettstedt, the Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn. It still has a railway works. Clearly there was going to be plenty to see!

The Wipperliese has struggled to survive. The extensive structures on the line and the modest traffic have led to repeated threats to close it. However, the Wipperliese has a loyal following and that, together with the need to maintain tourist attractions in this area of high unemployment have led the local authority to support the service for another five years, albeit only at weekends and on public holidays.



The view backwards from the balcony, as we depart Klostermansfeld

The "Komforttriebwagen" seemed to be the one which was in use on the day of my visit, and had been hired by a private party. They were clearly making a day of it, with plenty of crates of beer and a barbecue on the platform. I was already peckish, and the smell of Bratwurst soon had me wishing I could join them!



Running round at Hettstedt.

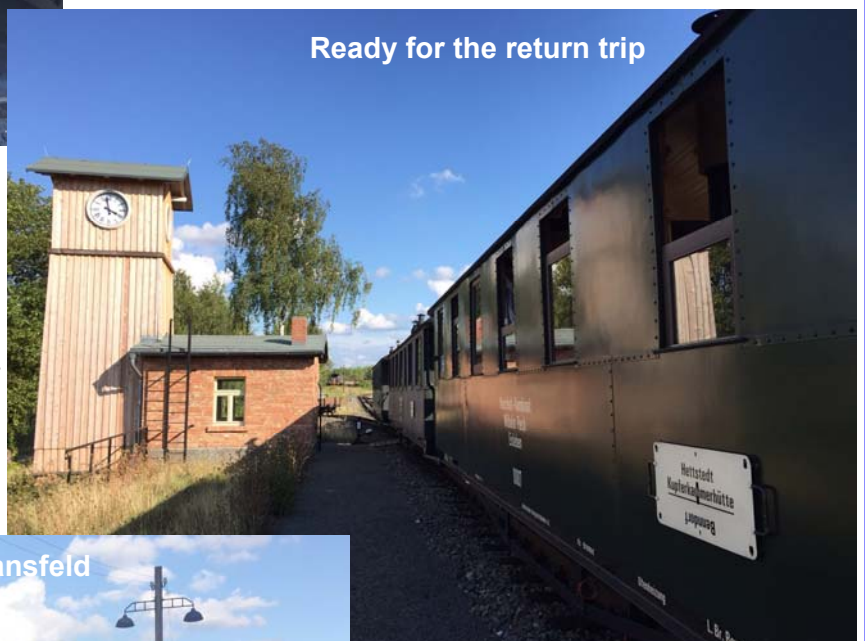


The loco shed at Hettstedt

Initially heading east out of Klostermansfeld, the line soon crosses the DB line before swinging north and setting out through open country. It crosses the DB line again and then comes to rest in its terminus outside the little town of Hettstedt. The scenery is unremarkable, being flat agricultural country, but for me there's nothing quite like standing on the open balcony of a narrow gauge train and I thought the line had a real charm. Even the fact that this service was diesel hauled didn't dampen my spirits!

There was time to browse around Hettstedt, which is home to the Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn's shed and to catch a tantalising glimpse of loco 11, an Orenstein and Koppel 0-8-0 tank engine built in 1939. I gather this is currently having a major overhaul. It has a sister loco, no 10, which is also out of service but no 20, the 0-8-0 tender loco, built at the Karl-Marx works in 1951 is operational. As is the diesel loco, no 33, also built at the Karl-Marx works but in 1962, which was our motive power for the day.

Returning to Klostermansfeld, I had time to wander around the pretty extensive railway works. This is now in the hands of a company called MaLoWa-Bahnwerkstatt which offers a range of maintenance and repair work for steam and diesel locos and rolling stock.



Ready for the return trip



Journey's End back in Klostermansfeld

Although it was a Saturday when I visited and the works were closed, there were plenty of interesting things to see rusting gently in the overgrown sidings as well as the rolling stock still being used by the Mansfelder Bergwerksbahn and the Wipperliese, which use the works for storage.



Plenty to see looking around the MaLoWa Bahnwerkstatt



It's a shame that Klostermansfeld is off the beaten track, because there are some fascinating things there for the railway enthusiast, and I think they could do with the tourists. A visit might be combined with a trip to Dresden or Leipzig, or a visit to the delightful state of Thüringen, home to the beautiful cities of Erfurt, Weimar and Gotha, and, of course, to the loco works at Meiningen. Or to the fabulous Harz mountains!

If you'd like to find out more, the websites are:

<http://www.wipperliese.de>

<http://bergwerksbahn.de>

<http://www.malowa-bahnwerkstatt.de>



*Top three pictures:
There's plenty to see
looking around the
MaLoWa Bahnwerkstatt*

*A farewell glance back
along the tracks leading
out of Klostermansfeld.*



Part Six—The Clausthal-Zellerfeld Tagesförderbahn

Having had our home in the Harz mountains for over ten years, I thought I knew pretty much everything there was to know about the area. I was therefore somewhat surprised, and not a little embarrassed, when, in a moment of random googling, I discovered what seemed to be a heritage railway in neighbouring Clausthal-Zellerfeld, just 10 km. away.



The plinthed loco outside Clausthal-Zellerfeld station—should have been a clue!



Inside one of the the miners' carriages.
I'm glad I went first class!

Clausthal-Zellerfeld is the main town actually in the mountains and, although mining has largely ceased, the heritage lives on in the technical university (which offers courses in mining engineering) and in various museums and preserved mines. It was served by a standard gauge railway from Goslar, which continued to Altenau, but sadly this was closed in the seventies. The (not especially pretty) station has been preserved though, and according to the website this is the departure point for the heritage railway.

Mining in the Harz mountains began around 1100 AD and by the Middle Ages the region was, apparently, the biggest mining area in Europe. Pretty much everything was mined, including coal, zinc, lead, copper and iron ore but the real wealth came from silver. The underground workings were extensive, running from village to village, and an ingenious water system was developed which simultaneously drained the mines, supplied power through water wheels, and provided a transport network. This system ran throughout the mountains, with over 500 km. of ditches, and has been listed in its entirety by UNESCO because of its significance as a pre-industrial power system.

The wealth being traded out of the mountains also led to the development of fairy-tale market towns like Goslar, Wernigerode and Quedlinburg, which are absolute jewels and which happily have escaped the ravages of war.



Rattling and swaying over the fields.



At the terminus at Ottilae-Schacht.

Closer inspection revealed a set of 60cm. tracks buried in the grass and, shortly before the appointed hour, a yellow battery powered mine loco appeared propelling a "rake" of miners' carriages. We clambered aboard, a very reasonable 7.00 Euro was handed over and then we were off - rattling and swaying as the little train climbed out of the town and made its way up across a plateau to a preserved mine, the Ottilae-Schacht, on the outskirts of the town. The distance is about 2km, and the rollercoaster ride took around twenty minutes.

This puzzled me, because I'd driven past the station umpteen times and had never seen any sign of tracks. However, I made my way there in good time for the scheduled 11.00 departure (the railway runs on Saturdays and Sundays, from May to October, departing at 11.00 and 14.30) and before long a little throng had gathered around the plinthed mine loco, which was a bit of a clue.



The preserved workings at Ottilae-Schacht. No great concerns about 'Elf and Safety'!



Loco and rolling stock from the original surface, overhead electric line.

Although we were traveling in a classic underground miners' train, the line was actually a surface line used for transporting ore from a mine in the centre of the town to the Ottilae-Schacht, where it could be processed and then transported by water. Ottilae-Schacht is the main base for the railway, with an engine shed and various sidings and with the remnants of some of the original surface overhead electric locos and rolling stock.

The ticket included a guided tour of the mine buildings, including some the underground workings. Yet again, I marvelled at the robust German attitude to health and safety, as children happily clambered up and down various ladders without a single hi-viz jacket to be seen!

After half an hour or so we set off on the return journey, bumping across the fields and through the forests. Back in the town, I fortified myself with Kaffee und (very substantial!) Kuchen, before spending the rest of the afternoon in the excellent mining museum.

Glück Auf, as the miners used to say!



Loco from the original surface overhead electric line.



Storage shed and engine shed (with the green door) at Ottilae-Schacht.



The power supply - the loco has two of these.



Above: The cab - not too complicated!



Returning to Clausthal-Zellerfeld.

Right: Journey's End outside the original standard gauge station at Clausthal-Zellerfeld.



Part Seven—The Rübelandbahn

Location, they say, is everything. And that's Blankenburg's problem. It's not actually that bad a place with a cobble-stoned square, winding side streets, half-timbered houses and a medieval castle perched above it. Its great misfortune is that it lies pretty much mid-way between the tourist hot-spots of Wernigerode and Quedlinburg, and so gets generally overlooked.

Looking towards the junction at the approach to Blankenburg. The line to Halberstadt peels away to the right, and that to Rübeland to the left. A couple of the old E251/171 locos are stored outside the sheds on the left



Blankenburg is on the secondary line which runs south-west from Halberstadt. Nowadays, passenger trains operated by HEX, soon to be taken over by Abellio terminate there, but they used to go on to serve Rübeland, Elbingerode and Königshütte. There also used to be an extension from Königshütte to Tanne, with a connection to the narrow gauge South Harz Railway and a spur from near Elbingerode to Drei Annen Hohne, providing a connection to the narrow gauge Harzquerbahn from Wernigerode to Nordhausen. The station at Rübeland, which serves as the destination for the heritage trains (see below), has been renovated and is both smart and distinctive.

Just part of the Kehrschleife



Passenger services from Halberstadt now terminate at Blankenburg



Not by railway enthusiasts, however! For us, Blankenburg is famous as the base camp for the notorious Rübelandbahn, the standard gauge line which climbs steeply from Blankenburg up through Rübeland to the massive limestone quarries and works beyond. The line is the steepest, adhesion-only, standard gauge railway operating in Germany and has a unique (for Germany) "Kehrschleife" - where the trains reverse - at Michaelstein.

The Kehrschleife at Michaelstein. The line on the left goes down to Blankenburg; that on the right goes up to Rübeland



By contrast, the station at Elbingerode, a very seventies, East German affair is a bit run down, and is privately owned. I chatted to the owner, whose main concern seemed to be that with so many people taking and posting photos of it, it would become listed and he wouldn't be able to rebuild it as he wanted! So I've kept my promise to him, and have not included a photo of it here! Sadly, despite the fact that it had been listed, DB arrived out of the blue one weekend and flattened the charming and traditional station at Königshütte.

Nowadays, though, the mainstay of the line and the reason for its continued existence is the freight traffic from the limestone quarries and associated works. Rail's share of the total traffic has grown in recent years and is projected to grow still further which should augur well for the future.

The steepness of the line, and the weight of the freight trains led the Deutsche Reichsbahn to electrify the line in the 60s with its own, unique 25,000V AC power supply. After reunification, Deutsche Bahn realised that the former DR Class E251/171 locos built especially for this line could not operate with coaches with automatically closing doors, and passenger services were taken over by tried and trusted Class 218 locos with push-pull N-Wagen.



The notorious climb from Michaelstein to Hüttenrode



The viaduct at Kreuztal

DB sold the line and its infrastructure off in 2006, and today the line beyond Blankenburg is owned and maintained by Fels Netz GmbH, a subsidiary of the lime works. With DB abandoning the E251/171 electric locos, freight trains were put in the charge of "Blue Tiger" diesel locos but the noise, vibration and pollution of these outraged the local population, leading Fels Netz eventually to re-activate the catenary. Since 2009 HVLE (Havelländische Eisenbahn) operates the freight traffic on their behalf, with class 185 locos which usually top and tail the heavy trains.

There is also a heritage operation provided by Arbeitsgemeinschaft-Rübelandbahn where the star role is played by 95 027 "Die Bergkönigin", although use is also made of former East German diesels, such as the 118 class. Two of the E251/171 locos are in store outside the shed at Blankenburg, and there has been talk of bringing them back into service. The heritage trains usually run on the first weekend in the month, with extra seasonal trains, for example in the run-up to Christmas.



The very neat engine shed/museum outside Rübeland, which houses 95 6676 "Mammut".



The recently restored station at Rübeland, with a classic DDR era signal box in the foreground

The website is <https://arbeitsgemeinschaft-ruebelandbahn.de>. Another heavy tank loco, acquired for the line from Borsig in 1920, "Mammut" 95 6676, is stored in the very neat shed/museum at Rübeland and is brought out for viewing on days when the Bergkönigin is running, and also on the last Saturday of the month from March to October.



Just a very small part of the quarries and limestone works beyond Rübeland



I have to apologise for the lack of action in my photos for this article. I did see a number of freight trains but always when I was driving and couldn't stop. Whenever I parked up beside the line, nothing appeared! I've promised myself that I'll try to return and do better. I'll also try to track down the Bergkönigin. A helpful local subsequently told me that it is possible to get access to its shed at Blankenburg. Better still would be a visit on a day when it's running, and poses alongside Mammut!

Despite the lack of (recorded) action, I enjoyed my visit to the Rübelandbahn. It's an interesting and unusual line, with a distinct history and I have a bit of a soft spot for the old East Germany (the country, not the regime!). There was something appealing, too, about the contrast between the massive quarries and heavy freight trains on the one hand, and the stunningly beautiful landscape and picture perfect villages on the other. I do hope I get the chance to visit it again.



According to the wording on the front, this shunter is remotely operated

Part Eight—Die Größte unter den Kleinen

Die Größte unter den Kleinen - the biggest one amongst the little ones, as it likes to call itself - needs little introduction to railway fans, for it is of course the magnificent Harzer Schmalspurbahnen - the 140 route-kilometre metre-gauge network which threads it's way through the Harz mountains.



Thundering Up The Brocken



The view from the Wurmberg to the Brocken - the railway is in there somewhere!

For me, the Harzquerbahn - running from Wernigerode via Drei Annen Hohne to Nordhausen, and the Selketalbahn - running from Eislefelder Talmühle to Quedlinburg, have a very different, but no less compelling charm.

Here the lines meander through a gentler landscape, passing forests, meadows, lakes and streams. There are far fewer passengers and they are as likely to be locals as tourists, using the trains for transport rather than just for fun.



The neat station at Hasselfelde, at the end of the branch from Stiege



An old snow plough on display at Hasselfelde

Some of the stations, and the villages they serve have a neglected, forgotten air. It all feels authentic and you could easily imagine that you are back in the old days of East Germany when the railway was the lifeline for these isolated communities.

Heading south from Hahnenklee, I picked up Bundesstraße 242 in Clausthal-Zellerfeld and headed east. The 242 (dubbed the Harz High Road) is the main east-west artery through the Harz, and one of my favourite roads. The Harz, with its impeccably surfaced roads, twisting and turning through the mountains is, along with mid-Wales, one of the few places where I still enjoy driving!



Stiege - the Wendeschleife is to the west (left).



A service for Nordhausen, approaching the halt at Albrechtshaus

Shortly after crossing the former "inner German border", as the signs proclaim, the road ran alongside the Harzquerbahn for a little way, before the railway peeled off to the south while I pressed on eastwards to pick up the Selketalbahn at Hasselfelde following its route through Stiege, with its Wendeschleife, or turning circle, Albrechtshaus, Friedrichshöhe, Güntersberge, Harzgerode and Alexisbad, until I reached Mägdesprung.

I had a copy of the HSB timetable with me and tried to time my arrival at the stations to coincide with the arrival of a train. Mostly this worked, and the trains were impressively punctual. On the return journey westwards I called in at Drahtzug, Alexisbad (again), Silberhütte, Straßberg-Glasebach and Straßberg, before diverting to Sorge on the Harzquerbahn for my final call.



Above: A service heading in the other direction towards Quedlinburg, at Güntersberge.

Left: West bound at Alexisbad.

Below: The slightly dilapidated station Mägdesprung.



Below: The Fischstübchen (fish finger) picking up a couple at the halt at Drahtzug. They'd walked there from Alexisbad, hoping for Kaffee und Kuchen at the cafe next to the station but they were disappointed - it was closed!





Sorge means worry or anxiety in German (and it's just down the road from Elend, which means wretchedness, or misery!) which didn't really seem appropriate for this charming little station with its neat border museum. I'd hoped to coincide my arrival there with that of the evening service south to Eisfelder-Talmühle and I was in luck as a Halberstädter Triebwagen pulled in a few minutes after I did.

Above: Fifties elegance meets 90s style at Alexisbad.

Right: Silberhütte, with the old silver ore processing works in the background.



Below: The (main) station at Sträßberg.



Below: Sorge, on the Harzquerbahn, with its little border museum



Conclusion

I do hope anyone who is planning to visit the HSB, or to spend time in this part of Germany, will include the Harzquerbahn or the Selketalbahn in their itinerary. Perhaps I romanticise it too much but for me it's a trip back in time and a far cry from the more usual polished and pristine heritage railways, great though they are too. The timetable is on the website, and shows which services are steam hauled and which are operated with railcars: <https://www.hsb-wr.de/startseite/>

This concludes, for now, my little series of articles about some of the more esoteric railways in my corner of Germany.

For as long as we have a home there, I'll be seeking out anything and everything I can about the railways in the area, and trying to find an excuse to write about them!



*The Esslinger Triebwagen crossing the magnificent viaduct on the Wipperliese line at Klostermansfeld.
Photograph by Peter Collis*