

Peter Gray's Travels

Volume 3:

across Northern Spain in 1960

Volume 4: Spanish narrow gauge in the 1960s

Compiled by Andrew Fox

Totem Publishing

Transport Treasury Publishing,

16, Highworth Close, High Wycombe, HP13 7PJ.

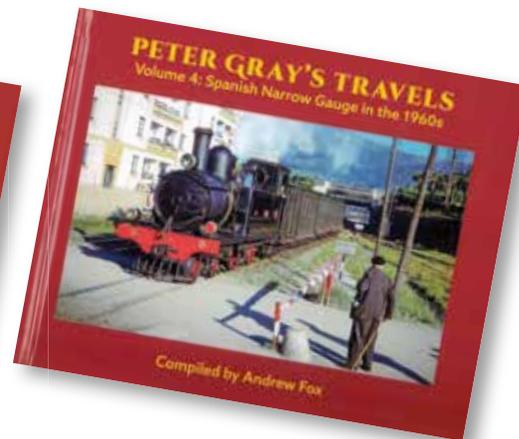
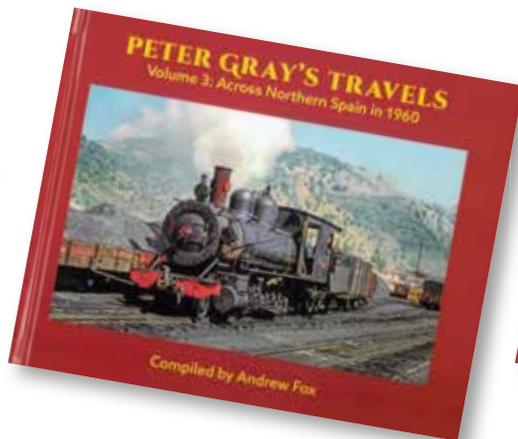
www.ttpublishing.co.uk

192mm x 245mm 96pp

Hardback each £17.50 + £3.00 p&p

3 – ISBN 978-1-913893-76-7

4 – ISBN 978-1-913893-75-0



Totem Publishing is an imprint of The Transport Treasury photographic archive specialising in short run photographic albums, using images from the collection accompanied by interesting and informative captions.

These two albums are the next to feature slides from noted railway photographer Peter Gray.

He visited Spain several times between 1960 and 1968, recording the country's railways before the demise of steam and the advent of modernisation.

Each collection opens with a brief biography and an introduction to set the scene.

Northern Spain was at the time a fascinating destination for railway enthusiasts, dominated by a large network of metre gauge lines and countless smaller industrial systems on several gauges, which were worked by a rich variety of steam power. By the start of the 1960s some resembled working museums, operating veteran locos supplied by builders in many countries, including Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, and America, as well as Spain itself.

While the area along the north coast was metre gauge territory, the RENFE broad gauge did serve the region south of the Cantabrian mountains and reached the major ports and industrial centres, with a combination of vintage locos and powerful modern classes.

Peter took part in a Railway Correspondence and Travel Society tour of this region in May 1960.

The material is presented in nineteen sections: Engerths, FC Vascongados, FC de Santander a Bilbao, FC del Cantábrico, FC de la Orconera, FC de Solía a Obregón y El Astillero, FC de Castro-Urdiales a Traslaviña, FC de La Robla, FC Económicos de Asturias, FC Vasco Asturiano, FC de Langreo, Junta de Obras del Puerto de Gijón, El Musel, Fábrica de Mieres, Tranvía a Vapor de Santullano a Cabañaquinta, Hulleras de Turón, Hulleras de Sabero, FC de Ponferrada a Villablino, FC de Haro a Ezcaray, and RENFE. The features range from a couple of pages to the twenty devoted to La Robla.

Many narrow gauge lines were built in various parts of the country from the late 19th century, to open up less affluent and geographically challenging areas, supporting the growth of new industries, in particular extensive iron and coal mining operations. A remarkable variety was still extant at the start of the 1960s, still largely operated by steam. Peter visited Spain several times, travelling widely to record many of these lines shortly before they were transformed by modernisation or swept away entirely. By the early 1970s, many of the railways featured here had closed and the survivors had been changed dramatically. Peter's photos are thus something of a time machine.

The book is arranged in five regional sections: the north-east, the Mediterranean coast, the far south, the north, and the centre.

In all twenty-seven lines are featured: FC Catalanes, FC de Olot a Gerona, FC de San Feliu de Guixols a Gerona, FC Cremallera de Monistrol a Monserrat (already inactive), FC de Onda al Grao de Castellón, FC de Carcagente a Dénia, FC de Alcoy a Gandia y Puerto de Gandia, FC de Villena a Alcoy y Yecla, FC Minero de Sierra Menara, FC de Buitrón a San Juan de Puerto, FC de Rio Tinto a Huelva, FC de Aznalcóllar al Rio Guadalquivir, FC de Cartagena a Los Blancos, FC de Santander a Bilbao, FC de Astillero a Ontaneda, FC del Cantábrico, FC de La Robla, FC de Amorebieta a Guernica y Pedernales, FC de Sestao a Galdames, FC de Bilbao a Lezama, Compañía Asturiana de Minas, FC de Ponferrada a Villablino, FC Secundarios de Castilla, FC de Peñarroya a Puertollano, FC de Utrillas a Zaragoza, and FC de Sábada a Gallur.

There is no duplication between the two books – where the same line appears in each, there are different pictures.

A high proportion of the images are loco portraits, taken at stations during halts and around loco depots, but we are also treated to a number of wider scenic views.

Most of the motive power is steam, from diminutive 0-4-0T to impressive Garratts and Mallets, but there are some early diesels and electrics.

Some of the journeys were as part of organised excursions, including notably with the RCTS, so there are some staged scenes and often other tour participants in view.

The pictures were taken on Kodachrome, so the grain is excellent and the colours have generally lasted well, but the relatively 'slow' film was great in bright sunshine but could be awkward in poorer light – and Peter was not always lucky with the weather! This particularly noted in northern Spain; the narrow gauge exploits seem to have enjoyed generally better conditions.

Most are presented large, one to page, with some instances of two smaller, one above the other. They are all well reproduced, a testament to the quality of the original slides. In our opinion a few might have had a little more processing to restore shadows or optimised the colour balance for publication.

The captions are generally brief and to the point, giving location and date, and a wealth of loco information. Having enjoyed the privilege of seeing many of these images at Peter's own presentations, the only things missing are the accompanying anecdotes!

It appears that some trips were meticulously organised with a tight timetable and proceeded at quite a pace, though sometimes re-scheduling was necessary when things did not go quite to plan!

A marvellous reminder of trips to lines that were then not well-known to railway enthusiasts, and have since closed or been radically transformed by modernisation. Sections of some lines have been preserved, but here we see them as working railways, albeit providing a special train.

Both collections are fitting tributes to a fine railway photographer and early adventurous traveller. Strongly recommended.