

The Bassil Shippam Centre

Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester, PO19 7LG

Thurs 19 February 14:00

Lance King in Ulster 1957-1970 The Northern Counties Committee

Leslie McAllister our speaker writes: The NCC (“Northern Counties Committee”) was the Irish arm of the LMS (and the MR before that). The talk is mainly 1958 – 1970 when the NCC ran the last mainline steam in these islands. Using the slides of the late Lance King, I will take you on a trip along the lines still open from Larne Harbour (ship to Scotland) to Belfast, then from Belfast to Londonderry and Portrush. Along the route, a few flashbacks to earlier days in Black and White. A short diversion to show NCC locos on the former Great Northern. We finish with an extensive coverage of “The Spoil Trains”: Thousand ton trains of stone worked by a 2-6-4T at each end – lots of lovely action shots. Steam’s Last Challenge”



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<p>The Monthly Newsletter of RCTS Chichester Branch.</p> <p>Editor: Graham Benzeval</p> <p>Distributor: Roger Sandford</p> <p>Additional Proof Readers: Geoff Adams, Geoff May, Hefin Jones, Ian McKey, John Robbins & John Barrowdale</p>	<p>Front Cover by Roger Sandford ©</p> <p>Contributors: Adrian Willats, Alan Wallbank, Graham Benzeval, Jo Whicher, John Barrowdale, Roger Sandford, Geoff May</p>
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What's on for the Railway Enthusiast in February

Railway Name	Website	Contact Email	Contact Phone
Bluebell Railway	Bluebell Railway Web Site	Bluebell Email contact	01825 720800
Isle of Wight Railway	IOW-SR Website	IOW Steam Railway Email	01983 882204
Kent & East Sussex Railway (K&ESR)	K&ESR Website	K&ESR Email	01580 765155
Watercress Line	Watercress Line Website	Watercress line Email	01962 733810
Amberley Museum	Amberley Museum Website	Amberley Museum Email	01798 831370
Hayling Light Railway	Hayling Island Railway Website	Hayling Island Railway Email	07902 446340
Littlehampton Miniature Railway (LMR)	LMR Website	LMR Email	01903 719876
South Downs Light Railway	South Downs Light Railway Website	South Downs Railway Light Email	07518 753784
Stansted Park Light Railway	Stansted Park Light Railway Website	Stansted Park Light Railway Email	02392 413 324

Railway	Start Date	End Date	Event
Bluebell Railway	14/02/2026	22/02/2026	Trains running for Half Term
K&ESR	14/02/2026	15/02/2026	Trains running for the Weekend
K&ESR	21/02/2026	22/02/2026	Trains running for the Weekend
Watercress Line	14/02/2026	22/02/2026	Trains running for Half Term
Amberley Museum	24/01/2026	14/02/2026	Museum open
Hayling Light Railway			Running weekends and Half Term

Southern Engineering Works - February 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
02 Feb	06 Feb	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Three Bridges and Brighton
08 Feb	08 Feb	Bus replacement between Horsham and Barnham via Arundel
14 Feb	15 Feb	Bus replacement between Barnham and Portsmouth Harbour / Southampton Central
16 Feb	20 Feb	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Brighton and West Worthing
21 Feb	22 Feb	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Redhill and Gatwick Airport/ Three Bridges/Brighton
21 Feb	22 Feb	Buses replace trains between Eastleigh and Southampton Central/ Bournemouth

South Western Railway Engineering Works - February 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
14 Feb	15 Feb	The lines between Petersfield and Portsmouth Harbour will be closed all weekend due to maintenance work.
16 Feb	20 Feb	The lines between Petersfield and Havant will be closed due to maintenance work.
21 Feb	22 Feb	The lines between Guildford and Havant will be closed all weekend due to maintenance work.

Here is another Railway interest group with monthly meetings



Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust, Portsmouth Regional Group

Where

Cosham Community Centre, Wootton Street, Cosham, Portsmouth, PO6 3AP

When

On the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm (Apart from July and August). Admission is by a donation of £4.00. Group funds are used to support the Watercress Line.

Programme 2026

17 February: Railways of South Wales with Steve Bigley

17 March: Isle of Man Transport with Niel Kearns

21 April: Railways of Finland with David Rendell

19 May: The History of Railways within 20 miles of Ropley with Peter Cutler

16 June: AGM/East Southsea Railway and other images of local interest such as trams and the Southsea Miniature Railway with Steve Hayward

Further Information

Meetings start at 7:30pm. They will be held in the small function room which has a separate entrance on the south side of the building. There is a car park at the centre and on street parking as well.

“Some early visits to preserved railways”

Adrian Willats apologises and explains!

Firstly, the apology! I had originally intended to present a short show at the 2025 AGM, showing slides I took of some of my earliest visits to what were then called ‘preserved’ railways; nowadays the term ‘heritage’ seems to be more in vogue. Unfortunately, one of the cold bugs, of which this winter seems to feature many, had other ideas and I thought it prudent *not* to attend! I have therefore scanned six of the slides I had intended to show, and they serve to illustrate this article. Apologies also for any colour imbalance – my scanner is not an expensive one and I have adjusted the images as far as I can!

The Nene Valley Railway.

On Bank Holiday Monday, 30th May 1983, my friend Robert and I visited our first preserved railway since my acquisition of a 35mm camera (an Olympus OM10) for my 21st birthday the previous year. The NVR had opened to visitors in 1977, and my slide shows the locomotive that had hauled the inaugural train. It is Swedish Railways 2-6-2T No. 1178, built by Motala in 1914 and withdrawn from service in 1959. It arrived in the UK for preservation in 1975 but has not been in use since 1992. The train is seen at Wansford station, then one end of the line. The white shape bottom right is not a processing fault but a compositional one – it is part of the level crossing gates!



The Midland Railway.

The first train on what is now an extensive heritage operation ran on just one mile of track in 1981, three years before Robert and I made our first visit on 6th October 1984. By then, as well as steam locomotives, the line was already earning a reputation for preservation and operation of diesel locomotives – now much more common as I write this over forty years later! We saw two main line examples, Class 44 ‘Peak’ D4 “Great Gable” (in service that day) and Class 55 ‘Deltic’ 55.015 Tulyar”, at that time under restoration. My slide shows one of the smaller diesels then resident on the line, an 0-4-0 shunter dating from the late 1950s. It appears to be something of a fiction though, as despite trawling through all my diesel books there did not ever seem to have been a D2959! Ruston and Hornsby built what became D2957 and D2958 in 1956.



The second image from that day shows a vehicle that was then a hundred and ten years old! Sited on the platform not used for service trains at Butterley was the body of the first ever Pullman car to run on a British railway; a sleeping car named “Midland” which entered service in 1874 after assembly from a kit of parts built by the Pullman company in the USA. The car and others which followed were operated by the (original) Midland Railway from St. Pancras to Bradford. After withdrawal, the body of “Midland” spent many years grounded as a carriage &

wagon office, mess room and store near Skipton station, arriving at Butterley in 1981. We didn't return until 2009, by which time it was safely undercover in a new exhibition building. Incidentally, following original American practice, these and later Pullmans in the UK were always referred to by the company as 'cars', never 'coaches' or 'carriages'.



The Great Central Railway.

On 2nd March 1985, we visited the Great Central Railway, then operating only from Loughborough Central to Rothley, where this slide was taken. It is quite typical of the early years on many preserved lines, with an industrial type of locomotive hauling recently acquired

ex-BR Mk.1 coaches. Many of these, like the one seen here, were still in their final BR livery. The loco being admired here by some ‘family traffic’ is “Northiam”, which was on loan from



the Kent & East Sussex Railway. The GCR is now much extended, running all the way to a new station at Leicester North, and stages steam and diesel galas most years.

Peak Rail.

This is the one occasion featured here where I was *not* accompanied by Robert! My wife Wendy and I were on holiday in Derbyshire and fitted in a visit to the then recent Peak Rail operation. Running only from Matlock to Darley Dale, it was but a short ride, but enjoyable, nevertheless! In charge on our visit was a saddle tank named “The Duke”, seen here in a picture perhaps more steam than train!!



The Bodmin & Wenford Railway.

In October 1998, Robert and I had a four-day break in Cornwall to mark twenty years of travelling and enjoying our hobby together. It all began in lunch break when we were both attending Havant Sixth Form College in May 1978, watching Southern Region Mk.1 EMUs from a footbridge between Havant and Bedhampton stations. We are still friends nearly forty-eight years later, with many memories of all our travels to many parts of the UK. On this break, we visited the Bodmin & Wenford Railway. Seen at Bodmin General station are part of a Class 108 DMU, with the loco on service trains that day visible at the platform in the background. It was 0-6-0ST No.62 “Ugly”, built by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns in 1950 for use on the Corby Ironstone railways. Replaced by diesels in the late 1960s, it initially went to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway before arriving at the B & W in 1990.



(Words and pictures copyright Adrian Willats).

May's Miscellany: by Geoff May ©



With Conwy Castle in the background, Stanier Class 5MT 4-6-0 45064 sets out from Llandudno Junction with the 6.14 pm service to Holyhead on 20/8/66. The cars on the A55 trunk road date the scene as much as the steam locomotive! In 1991 a new road tunnel was opened here being the first in the UK to use the 'immersive tube' method where pre-cast tunnel sections were sunk into the river bed.

Model Steam Trains near Ampleforth in Yorkshire – by Graham Benzeval



The Ryedale Society of Model Engineers Limited (RSME) track layout at Gilling East village hall near Ampleforth, Yorkshire – image RSME

Some years ago, we were on holiday in Yorkshire staying near Helmsley and on the August Bank Holiday Sunday morning my younger son and I went to Ampleforth school to play a round of golf. Their small nine-hole course is open to the public. The access to the course is via the village of Gilling East and you park near the village hall.

When we arrived, all was quiet, few people were on the course and we finished about midday and were due to meet with my wife in Helmsley for lunch.

Returning to the car we were surprised by the number of parked cars and looking at the village hall there were a lot of people. We went over to see what was happening and discovered that the Ryedale Society of Model Engineers were having a three-day meeting over the Bank Holiday weekend, they were running mainly 5" gauge steam and diesel engines around a huge multi track circuit.

We decided to meet with my wife, have lunch and return for an afternoon of watching these wonderful models run around the tracks. My wife was happy with the idea as the tea room in the village hall was open and she does like watching the trains.

The whole three days were scheduled to the minute as to who and what train would be running. Some were passenger and others goods trains.

Talking to various people I learnt that the carriages cost around £1000 each and the engines much more depending on size and power.

These engines are so powerful that the owner sits on the modified tender or a specially constructed wagon and controls the engine as it runs around the circuit. This is necessary as there are many signals and a level crossing to traverse.



Above - Merchant Navy Class 4-6-2 **35006 Peninsular & Oriental S. N. Co** – image Graham Benzeval

The model above is based on the Merchant Navy Class 4-6-2 **35006 Peninsular & Oriental S. N. Co.** a Southern Railway unrebuilt steam locomotive. The engine was built at Eastleigh locomotive works in December 1941 and given the Southern Railway number 21C6. Behind on the other track is an owner sitting on a wagon in front of his mainline diesel model and being held at the signal.

In the photo below you can see top left some of the sidings and the work area nearest to the village hall.



Above - Great Western Castle class getting under way having been held at the signal – image Graham Benzeval



Above - Gilling East village hall showing the crossing gates and the twin track – image Graham Benzeval



Above - Two trains passing on the main line with three lanes of sidings in the background with goods trains formed up ready to be scheduled to run on the mainline - image Graham Benzeval



Above – Goods train running on the mainline – image Graham Benzeval

The Ryedale Society of Model Engineers Limited (RSME) is a group of like-minded model railway engineers of wide-ranging ages and experience. Members come from all over the country. Most live within thirty miles of the club, which is in the village of Gilling East, but others come from hundreds of miles away. We have our headquarters in our clubhouse behind the village hall. Our main activity is developing and running our fine miniature railway. Most of our railway is multi gauge (3½", 5" and 7¼") but the emphasis is on 5" gauge. Our track is laid at ground level, and we like to emulate main line practice in the construction and operation of the railway.

For more information on the society follow this link - [Ryedale society of Model Engineers](#)

My railway life – Days of steam by Alan Wallbank

I often find that books about the varied and diverse life of working on the footplate, seems to revolve around the time of the steam engine, as if what happened afterwards was of little consequence. For many it was the boring part, as the modern traction with its soulless environment degraded the driver from a proud engineman to little more than a button pusher.

For many drivers and firemen alike, the modern age also brought the threat of redundancy, as fewer men were required at a time when the Beeching cuts were already slicing through the demoralized work force.

Gone were the days of sweat and achievement, to be replaced by life in an armchair. Where once generations of footplate crews fought their fiery steeds with amazing feats of enginemanship, now it was a case of adjusting seat heights in a cozy cab.

For them it was like being King of the Road one minute to a tin box driver the next. That is such a shame really, because I am sure there are those who would like read about life 'after' the shovel.

With that in mind, I have written about my time from my earliest recollections, that contains a frank, honest and refreshing view, that openly admits my personal failings and achievements. What follows is my personal memory of events, with clarification of some facts being gained from several others who started in the same few months as myself. Although I can remember nearly everyone I worked with, I have only recalled the names of those who I particularly remember in certain situations.

I have used terms that were common at the time and while my recollections may not be recalled by others on the Southern, they are what I remember during my career on the railway.

On the 30th April 1962, at the age of 15 ½, I was running down the road, because I was late for work on the first day of my first job after leaving school. I cannot remember ever being late for school, but somehow, I had managed to oversleep on the most important day of my life. I had ignored my mother's rousing and had just gone back to sleep, more than once. Dad had probably told her not to call me again, until I suddenly woke up with a start, realising my careful laid plans to take the train from Bedhampton to Eastleigh via Fratton were in disarray.

Within minutes, my lungs were bursting for air, as I pounded along the footpath in the hope beyond hope that a bus, now the only option, would come straight away and take me to Cosham Railway Station.

Of course, it didn't, so I had wait frustratingly for what seemed an eternity, before the sight of my transport emerged. Once aboard, I calculated that I could just arrive at the station in time for my train, when suddenly the bus veered off from its usual route. I then realised that I was on the wrong bus so I had no alternative, but to alight at the next stop and start running again for another 1 ½ miles to the station. I could never run far without being short of breath, but that morning I gave it everything and more and arrived at Cosham in a state of collapse. To my utter dismay, I had to wait another 45 minutes for the next train, because my destination only had an hourly service.

I had often caught the train to Eastleigh, a journey of thirty minutes from Cosham when I was a train spotter and like many others had spent numerous Saturdays on Campbell Road overbridge, with its splendid view of trains heading north to Waterloo or south to Bournemouth and Weymouth.

Today was not one for collecting numbers, as I had been employed as an engine cleaner at the Eastleigh Motive Power Depot. Allocated shed number 71A, it was one of several large engine sheds on the Southern Region. My arrival at Eastleigh Station was followed by an allocated thirty-minute walk to the steam shed and although I made an attempt to reduce my lateness, I still arrived nearly an hour after my booking on time.

I had wanted to start my railway career at Fratton as it was relatively close to my home, but they had no vacancies leaving me with Eastleigh some twenty plus miles distance. Now I was passing through the depot entrance gate where just inside was a large rectangular soot blackened brick building that was used by footplate crews and operating personnel at ground level and offices above. On top was a huge water tank that covered the entire upper level of the building.

I cannot recall my feelings as I headed for what can be best described as a `tin shack` with its corrugated sheeted construction on the London end of the imposing structure, its easterly entrance being open to the elements. I sheepishly entered, where inside was the time keeper commonly known as a `checker` who was sat on a stool behind a glass sliding window. His job was to record the arrival of the cleaners, firemen and drivers and inform the foreman of late or non-arrivals. The checker looked down at me from his lofty perch and voiced his displeasure regarding my late arrival after which he handed me a metal disc, stamped with a number, that had to be handed in at the end of the shift. The checker told me to wait outside the entrance to the main building on the airport side where I was eventually greeted rather frostily by the Chief Clerk, a Mr Edward Legge, who part timed as an undertaker. He really took a dim view of my late arrival, especially as I had assured him and the Shed Master, a Mr `I know` Fred Hayles at my interview that I would not have a problem getting to work on time.

It could have been worse, because another lad who I met on the day of my interview was also late and was still not in sight! It seems that everyone starting their first day was issued with a small welcome pack and a Rule Book containing facts and figures about the railway in general, such as the number of locos, carriages and wagons on BR. I presume it was the same in my case.

With no one else to escort me, 'Leggey' reluctantly made one of his very rare excursions from his squeaky-clean office, with its highly polished brown linoleum floor coverings, towards the grimy smoke laden steam shed. Not wanting to venture too far in his shiny black leather shoes, he ordered me to wait outside the first large open doors of the steam engine shed, until I could be handed over to 'Queenie' Aimes the cleaner chargehand. He was often seen pushing an oil saturated cart with two central wheels and a handle at each end containing all that was required for engine cleaning and whatever other duties he did during the day. As I waited for 'Queenie' to arrive, it gave me a few moments to take in my surroundings. Inside the shed were lines of dead engines in roads one to five waiting to have their boilers washed out. This was not virgin ground for me as I had been here before when making an unauthorised visit in my train spotting days. In the open on the far side in road fifteen was an engine with a snow plough, a position it occupied while it waited patiently during the winter months. Otherwise, there were only a few engines here and there, as most were out on the main line at this time of day.

Eventually 'Queenie' arrived, a stocky slow-moving man of about fifty years of age, wearing dark blue overalls and shiny black top engine man's hat slightly pulled down on one side. After a brief introduction I followed him as we crossed all fifteen lines outside the covered shed where he told me not to jump over the inspection pits that ran the full length of all fifteen roads in the shed, but to use the walkways instead. Also, to be aware of crossing road eight as it was a through line and while the speed limit was walking pace it was not always adhered to.

We then turned left and followed the inside far perimeter wall to its half way point, where the metal counter of the 'store room' was situated. This was where the engine crews and fitting staff came for all their requirements and in this case my dark blue overalls consisting of two jean jackets and trousers, although I could have opted for bib and brace instead. This was followed by a shiny black grease top hat as worn by all loco men, but not a Southern badge as they were not supplied until we had passed out as fire men. Also included was black waist length serge jacket made of a rough wool material, a small piece of soap and a small napkin size smooth towel.

We then carried on to almost the sheds end, before stopping outside a filthy battered light green door, which Queenie proceeded to unlock from a large bunch of keys, like a jailer preparing the way for a condemned prisoner. As the portal swung open, I was suddenly hit by the appalling stench of rotting food and before I could recover, Queenie was urging me to enter a rectangular room with an oil covered concrete floor.

Directly ahead was a raised inward opening window, from where a flapping piece cloth covered the glassless frame. Below was a metal table with benches partially extending along both side walls, under which discarded sandwiches and other food remains had decomposed to create the source of the room's dreadful odour. On the right was a large cast iron kettle, gently simmering on a coal burning stove, its long chimney disappearing through a lofty blackened ceiling. Nearer the door on the same side was a dirty white sink with a single cold tap, above which was small shelf and a mirror.

The back top half of the entrance door was covered with a battered sheet of aluminium, which would see a few more dents over the coming months, as moments of disagreement ensued. I seem to think that the brick lined walls were painted cream on the upper part and light green below, a universal colour scheme on the Southern Region, while the room was lit by a single ceiling bulb, its yellow cast doing little to improve the drab interior.

As I took in my new surroundings, Queenie directed me to change into my new apparel and to leave my shoulder bag of refreshments on the benches amongst those of the other cleaners. Suitably attired, I followed Queenie as he led me to an engine just outside the northern end of the shed, where the cleaners were hard at work on a 'Standard' tendered class of locomotive.

Within minutes I felt completely at ease, as my new workmates made me welcome and starting chatting about railways. One asked which region has the best engines? I felt it was a trick question, but answered 'the Western', which was followed by a big cheer. They said that two who were not there that day, Nigel and Malcolm, thought the Midland was the best, so my answer had gone down well with everyone.

So, what were the duties of the cleaner? If there was enough of us, we would be split into two groups known as gangs. Queenie would then tell the senior man of each gang which engines needed cleaning and leave it to him to make sure the work was done that morning.

The man in charge would then send some of the cleaners to the previously mentioned stores, to get buckets containing a mixture of engine oil and paraffin. While they were away, 'Not to be Moved' boards were placed on the outer buffer lamp brackets on both ends of the engine on opposing sides. The oily boards were painted red with white lettering and were rectangular in shape.

By now the bearers of the grease removing liquid had returned and Queenie would greet us with a bundle of napkin sized rough woven cloths we called `rusties`, because of their coloured appearance. I have heard them called brownies, but I cannot recall that term ever being used at Eastleigh.

The cleaners would be paired up and allocated a different part of the engine. Two would do the cab sides, the smoke box and rear tender, another set the wheels and motions or rods as we called them. While doing this task we learnt the names of each one, but only the coupling, connecting rod and radius arm have survived my memory today.

Two more on the boiler and the final pair on the tender sides, with the upper part requiring the use of the trestle, a wooden frame that had steps leading to a platform topped with wooden rail on three sides. It was manoeuvred into position by lifting the step end and urging it into position with the aid of two small cast iron wheels on the front supports. Some may ask 'why so many cleaners for one engine'? It was really down to numbers, as there could be up to sixteen of us and only a few engines to clean throughout the day.

With jacket sleeves up, the rusty would be plunged into the oily liquid with our bare hands, slightly rung out and applied to whatever part we were cleaning. I don't seem to recall cleaning many unconverted Bulleids thankfully, as their flat sided boiler casings could only be reached using the trestle, which wobbled about quite alarmingly as it was deliberately urged inwards to reach the inclined sides. The word 'Bulleid' comes from Oliver Bulleid who designed the locomotives.

I quite enjoyed the work, but not when it came to cleaning the boilers, because the tops could only be reached by jumping up onto the hand rails that ran along their middle length. You might think us youngsters would take it in our stride, but just think about what we had to do.

It was a case of grabbing the rail firmly, then raising a leg onto same, lean forward and urge the body upwards which resulted in a swift rise to our lofty perch. We would then be handed the bucket and the boiler would be cleaned as our feet inched along the hand rails length. That was the easy bit, as I found getting down from such a great height a quite terrifying experience. One slip and it was a long way to the shed floor, so most of the time I walked along the top of the boiler and back to terra firma via steps at the back of the tender as it was forbidden to enter the footplate. Nigel was one of those who liked Midland engines and he would often select me to be part of his gang and deliberately get me to do the boiler as he knew I hated doing them.

Occasionally there were disagreements that resulted in someone being drenched from a newly replenished bucket of 'cleaning oil'. I seem to remember that happening on at least two

occasions. Also, new cleaners like myself were asked to get 'red buffer paint' and 'sky hooks' from the stores, a ruse of course that really annoyed the store personnel.

For some strange reason, I can only remember three people I went to school with, yet I recall the names of most of cleaners, probably because the majority went on to be fireman, although some left the job before reaching that grade. Quite a few went to work at the Dagenham Ford Transit factory just down the road near today's Southampton Airport Railway Station, where the pay was much better. The railway much preferred to employ people who lived locally, but with so many going to Fords, they had no choice, but to employ those from further afield, such as myself.

Due to my late arrival, I was soon reunited with that awful smell in the mess room, as we took our lunch break. The first task was to visit the sink which had a small shelf with soap and a tin of sand. The combined use of both proved to be the ideal hand cleanser, but not recommended on a regular basis. It was suggested to me that I ought to buy a tin of 'Swarfega', a green hand degreaser that had a big screw top.

Another tip was to visit an army surplus store such as Oswald Bailey's in Fratton Road to buy a small khaki shoulder bag for my refreshments, as virtually everyone at that time had something similar. Tea was of course loose and I had a glass bottle for the milk that was always going off in hot weather. We also had what we called a 'Tea Can' for making hot drinks. This was a white enamelled round container with slightly inclined sides, topped with a small round lid that could be used as a cup, as it had a broad finger looped handle. There were two holed lugs, one on each side of the can at the neck, from which a piece of stiff wire ran to form a carrying handle.

The tea was made by placing a measured amount in the can, adding hot water and replacing the lid. After a short while the contents would be agitated by swinging the can several times in a wheel like circular motion from the ground to above head height.

With the lid removed the wired handle would be angled sideways, causing the tea can to become horizontal and allowing the contents to flow into the required container. This method of pouring the tea kept the tea leaves at the bottom of the can. Later cans had a big handle attached the main body and bigger lids, but I don't recall having this type in the steam days.

I remember walking up the station platform one day when I was a fireman and giving the can a good swing, when one of the lugs broke off. I managed to let go of the can, with the scalding contents scattering everywhere. With the tea made I was soon tucking into mum's freshly made sandwiches and an individual apple or black currant pie nearly every day. In the summer we generally spent our lunchtime break outside, quite often larking and doing things that were

pretty stupid, like shutting people in smoke and fire boxes and tenders who had gone there to escape their pursuers.

On one occasion two cleaners decided to move a tank engine, but couldn't stop it so they jumped off leaving it to run towards the eastern shed exit, where it derailed at the catch points blocking the up line into Eastleigh Station. They both lost their jobs, but appealed and were reinstated, a fact recalled by one of the individuals that I met a few of years ago.

Sometimes we just sat on the grassy bank that bordered the airport, which at that time had a grass runway and just a few flights each day. In really hot weather, some would sneak north of the triangle used to turn engines, to take a dip in the crystal-clear waters of the River Itchen that skirted the railway perimeter. This was out of bounds to everyone, but it didn't deter those who wanted the thrill of having a swim to cool off.

I must admit going to the river once, but being a non-swimmer it's doubtful if I went in. Remember, this is not the sea where you could have a paddle. This is a fairly fast water flow and probably waist deep, with no bank as such to dangle one's legs! On one occasion as they left the river, they noticed the clothes of one that was still in the water, so they took them back to the shed, while the unfortunate individual had to find his own way back stark naked!

My late arrival meant that I had not been shown the correct procedure after receiving my numbered disc from the checker. This was done during the lunch break and that meant entering the first door on the left of the large building facing the shed. On the left was a glass sliding window from where you could see through to the checker in the background. This room was where the shed running foreman sat. His job was to organise the day to day working of the shed and to allocate locomotives to drivers.

The room was also used by the list clerks, whose job was many fold, but generally meant allocating men to daily duties, bearing in mind rest day and annual leave and other requirements such as sickness. I believe there was a table in front of the window containing notice books that had to be signed for every week. To the right, were two or three rows of chest height double sided glass fronted cases, that were lengthways on to the opposite side of the room. The first one contained notices of immediate attention to footplate crews, such as emergency speed restrictions that had been put in place at short notice. The cases on the right side had the daily roster sheets, that had to be checked the day before and when signing on duty. They contained short notice changes of duty which were called 'turns'.

These were also lists of drivers and firemen and their turns over a number of weeks. Each list was known as a 'link', with the senior men being in the top link and further links all the way down to the junior men. I believe there were ten links when I started, including one for the

cleaners. Everyone had to check their link information every day, to confirm their booking on time, Rest Day, annual leave and any other change of normal working. Looking at the rosters and pay day, were the only times that cleaners were allowed in the main block.

Then it was back to work. At some point there was a short supply of rusties so we were given 'cotton waste', that is 'good for seat stuffing and insulation'. It is defined as 'short fibre resulting from the processing of raw cotton'. It was multi coloured and had to be pulled off in clumps from the main source. It was not easy to use, with oil dripping everywhere from bucket to the part we were cleaning and bits kept falling off. I seem to recall that we used this horrible waste for quite a long time. A Bob Cartwright, who started a week after me, took a photo of us cleaning 34045 Ottery St Mary (work No. 21C145) with yours truly down by the cab surrounded cotton waste.

There was another cloth, we called a 'whitey'. This was like a large rusty in size, but with a heavier weave and was soft to the touch. These would be used by drivers as they carried out their driving duties on the footplate. I think most took them home to be used as dish cloths and dusters.

When I started, steam was being run down and I feel it's fair to say that Eastleigh was probably about the only shed at that time where the engines were being cleaned on a regular basis. This included four West Countries, Bodmin, Exmoor, Whimple and Yeovil, so those locomotives were always looking their best even if their



class mates were often neglected.

Yet as the months rolled by it was getting harder to find any to clean, as most had left the shed by the time we arrived and few came in during the day. By the year end, there was hardly any work at all, so we were left to our own mischievous devices. One sticks in my mind as if it was just yesterday. It was during the winter months, probably about January. Queenie had given us just one engine for the entire morning, which was duly completed at a leisurely pace. After that we were just messing about round the shed when I decided to put some detonators into a devil. These were made of cast iron with a fire grate at the base that stood on three legs and topped by a long chimney.

They were placed near the shed doors to stop the cold air entering the shed in the winter and were also placed next to water columns to stop them freezing up. In this case, the devil was just inside the shed door and I thought it would be fun to throw some detonators into the fire and watch the aftermath from a distance of course, this being the cab of a not-too-distant locomotive.

A detonator is a small explosive device contained in a metal casing. Each engine carried twelve in a cylindrical container to be used in an emergency situations. They are put on the rail head and kept in place by two thin lead strips attached to the detonator. A loud explosive sound is made when the train wheels pass over them. Initially, three were placed ten yards apart to make sure they were heard by those on the footplate and are still used today. So, there I was with another cleaner, observing the devil and expecting a loud explosion, when all of a sudden Queenie appears and to my horror he heads straight towards the devil. He stopped right next to it, turned round and put his hands to his back and surveyed the shed, probably looking for us. All the time, I am torn between warning him of impending doom or cowering out of sight and hoping he leaves before the expected explosion causes the fire to leap out in all directions.

I chose the latter and to my utter relief Queenie walked away. He had gone some distance when there was a muffled 'crump' sound. He turned around and took another look, then carried on. Thankfully, my moment of expectation had for some unknown reason ended in a whimper and made me realise how a simple act of fun could have had serious consequences. I have to say that we all seemed to get on very well, with only the odd minor disagreement. I do though have a memory of one slightly built Welsh lad who often challenged a number of people into a fight, but only if he was armed with a large spanner or coal pick. Another burly lad would bodily pick someone up and throw them at the door in the cleaner's mess room.

I seem to think we had mid-morning and afternoon short breaks, but not in the mess room. Our day ended at 4pm, where we handed in our numbered token at the checker's office before

going home, unless the disc had been lost down by the river. On that first day, I went home the way I should have arrived. That meant catching one of the hourly trains to Fratton near Portsmouth and then crossing platforms for my ten-minute train journey to Bedhampton.

As I stepped off the train at my destination I clearly remember being self-conscious that the top part of my grease top hat was sticking up, so I did the same as many others and asked my mum to sew the sides down. Some firemen wore cheese cutter caps, usually dark blue or mauve with black stripes, while at least one preferred the handkerchief knotted at each corner.

All the time I travelled to and from Eastleigh, I used a BR railway ticket known as a 'Residential Pass' that entitled the holder to a reduced rate of travel on whatever route it applied to. Our hours each week were 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday, but on Saturday it was to 6am to 2pm, so we wouldn't be entitled to the enhanced rate of time and a quarter after 2pm. The railway had and still does have a 'Rest Day' (RD) system with each employee being entitled to a day or days off each week.

When I started, it was one day a week i.e. Tuesday, followed by Wednesday and so on. A long weekend would be having a Saturday RD one week and Monday the next. We worked a 48-hour week, with a RD each week for three weeks and two hours added to our pay for each RD. On the fourth week, we didn't have a day off and six hours were deducted from our pay. Our weekly pay was £3.17s.6d. On Thursdays, pay day, we would go to a pay office window located at the end of a covered walkway that ran on the outside of the main block from one end to the other. This was constructed in 1959, the same year that the water columns were changed from fixed to the swing arm type.

From here we would collect our payslip and a token and at lunchtime we would enter the main building via the roster room and turn right past the notice cases, through a doorway and right again. I seem to remember facing a wood panelled wall with a central small grilled opening, behind which sat the cashier.

On the left were two or three very stern looking men sat at a table. These were drivers who were also union officials and were waiting to receive union dues from their members. The main union was the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) (which had a lot more members than the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR)).

We cleaners had to queue up like everyone else and on reaching the window, the cashier would take our token and pay us in cash that just had enough room to slide beneath the metal grill. I found the union officials very intimidating and they scared me to death, so I made a conscious effort not to make eye contact and to leave the room as quickly as possible. Having to queue for my wages, meant missing precious break time, so it was a case of hot footing it

back to the mess room, where by now I had got used to the smell. If we were off on pay day, we could get our wages from the ticket office on the up side island platform at Eastleigh Station.

Extra money could be earned by working on Sundays, but this was only on special circumstances, such as cleaning the standby Royal Train engine, should the one on the train need replacing. For those that lived further afield like me, it meant catching the last train to Eastleigh on the Saturday night and heading for a brake van behind the shed on the airport side. This would be our overnight accommodation, as the mess room was locked up.

We would light the fire and sleep on the seats or the floor, but if there were too many of us, we had to find somewhere else for the night. I remember trying to sleep in the sand furnace, that was to the left of the cleaner's mess room towards the end of the shed. The sand was kept in a large tray above the furnace, so I climbed up and laid on the sand, but after a while it got too hot so I sought out a loco and spent the night in the driver's seat with my feet up on the reverser.

I'm not too sure about this, but I think the coal fired furnace was kept alight 24/7.

Before starting at 8 or 9am, we would have a fry up on the brake van stove and then clean an already clean Royal Train engine and others to complete a full day's work to 4 or 5pm. We were paid time and three quarters as it was a Sunday, a rate of pay that would exist unchanged for the following 50 years and more!

During this time, there were quite a number cleaners that travelled up from Portsmouth to Eastleigh with several more getting on en-route, especially at Fareham. If the train was on time, we would head for the coffee bar opposite the station where I can clearly recall having a creamy coffee on a regular basis. There was also a Juke Box playing the latest hits.

Every Thursday, two cleaners were picked at random and went by taxi with a British Transport Police Sergeant to Lloyds Bank opposite the station to pick up the shed's wages. The bank staff I'm told, were never too pleased to have men in dirty overalls and oily boots, soiling their polished floors. I have a distant memory of going to the bank on one occasion. I do though remember having visions of being attacked by bank robbers, but I was told not worry as I would be only be carrying the coins! No danger in that then!!!

Shortly afterwards, the pay office under the covered walkway was closed, with the money being brought in by a security firm and paid out at the same place, but in brown packets which had to be opened straight away to confirm the correct payment.

The system for holidays still remains today, but at that time it was known as summer holidays and they began in April and ended I believe in early October, as we had only two weeks leave a year. The year is broken down to 'periods' of two weeks and given a number. A set number of names were added to each period throughout the year, with the holiday dates moving about each year, e.g. April first two weeks would be number 1 then 2 for the next two weeks. That would carry on until the last period in September/October. You would be allocated a period say number 5, with the rotation then being something like 9, 4, 8, 1, 10 etc. This meant that you always knew what period you had years in advance. I never had much luck weather-wise which ranged from snow in April to rain on every one of my holidays until 1996.

I seem to recall that I started my fireman's course in November, the month of my 16th birthday which is the next part of my story.



West Country Class 34045 Ottery St Mary (work No. 21C145) was a 4-6-2 "Light Pacific" steam Locomotive built at Brighton Works in 1946 and rebuilt at Eastleigh Works in October 1958. Known for its air-cooled smoothed casing and reduced weight design.

Here it is shown being cleaned by the team at Eastleigh Works – image Bob Cartwright

National Transport Trust Red Plaque - by Joe Whicher

1847 CAMDEN ROUNDHOUSE

The London & Birmingham Railway Company paid Stephenson £1,500 a year to build the railway into London. The 112-mile-long line took 20,000 men and nearly five years to build. The total cost was £5,500,000. The railway was finally completed in September 1838 from Birmingham's Curzon Street Station and finished at Euston Station in London

In 1846 the L&BR merged with the Grand Junction Railway and the Manchester and Birmingham Railway to form the London and North Western Railway, which was later absorbed into the London Midland and Scottish Railway, before finally passing to the nationalised British Rail in 1948 to become part of the West Coast Main Line as it is known today. The major change during this period was electrification, carried out in the mid 1960s.

Neither of the L&BR's original termini, both designed by Philip Hardwick, has survived in its original form. Curzon Street station in Birmingham closed to passenger traffic in 1854 (the original entrance building remains) when it was replaced by New Street station and the original Euston station in London was demolished in 1962 to make way for the present structure which opened in 1968. However, the roundhouse at Camden has survived intact and is one of the first examples of such structures in the world, it was built in 1847 as a turntable engine shed. The architects were Robert Stephenson and Robert B Dockray; the builder was Branson & Gwyther. A turntable allowed a locomotive to be turned around for the return journey. The design also allowed engines to be kept under cover in a number of radial sidings within the shed for servicing and storage..

The Grade II listed building is regarded as a notable example of mid-19th century railway architecture. It is 157 ft in diameter is distinctive for its unusual circular shape and pointed roof. The conical slate roof has a central smoke louver (now glazed) and is supported by twenty four cast-iron Doric columns - arranged around the original locomotive spaces. A central 41.ft turntable served 23 stalls for locomotives.

Within twenty years, locomotives became too large for the facilities, and the Roundhouse underwent a number of changes of use. The renovation was supported with funding from English Heritage and with grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council England. The project included the roof and re-instating the glazed roof-lights to the building.





Here is a picture I took at Shanklin in November 1966 of Adams built O2 tank No 16 Ventnor running round its train to return to Ryde. – Image John Barrowdale.

Chichester Branch Meeting Report - Thursday 15 January 2026

A Dawlish Adventure – Phil Haines

Our speaker Phil Haines provided a four-part presentation covering the route around Dawlish. Initially a short cab ride film to demonstrate the areas infrastructure. The early years from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s followed, brought to life by a series of photos. In the early years steam prevailed, a variety of GWR locomotives, Halls, Granges and Castles a familiar memory, before moving on to the Diesel Hydraulic age, Westerns, Warships, Class 47s, HSTs and more. Video film brought the area to life in 1998 by a multitude of different loco and rolling stock liveries, in the age of privatisation, including from as far away as Anglia Railways. Finally, the 2020s, the digital age film bringing crystal clear views of the modern era, the sights and sounds of the new Hitachi Class 800s, Castle Class HSTs and various DMUs. Every conceivable vantage point had been used to produce an interesting and varied photo and film collection, which included the inevitable image of waves buffeting against the Dawlish Sea wall. The long-distance views in particular, demonstrating why this picturesque coastline is many people's favourite area, bringing back memories of warm and sunny holidays on what was actually a very wet January afternoon.

RCTS Chichester Branch Meetings

2025/6 Season

RCTS Chichester 2025-2026 Monthly Meetings

Bassil Shippam Centre
Tozer Way Chichester, PO19 7LG



Illustrated talks on a range
of railway related subjects
Everybody Welcome

Dates and Times Overleaf

Wednesday 24th September 19:15
1125 & DEMU's over the Alps (Watercross Line)
Richard Bentley

Wednesday 22nd October 19:15
The Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway
Richard Coghlan

Wednesday 26th November 19:15
Rail Freight Trains around the UK - Steve Bigley

Wednesday 17th December 19:15
AGM plus Local Heroes - Members Photos

Thursday 15th January 1400

A Dawlish Adventure, Afternoon Meeting
By Phil Haines

Wednesday 28th January 19:15
Railways Remembered: Lake District and
North Lancashire - Charles Roberts
ZOOM MEETING ONLY - See Below

Thursday 19th February 14:00
Lance King in Ulster 1957-1970, The Northern
Counties Committee - Leslie McAllister
Afternoon Meeting

Wednesday 25th February 19:15
Stratford Upon Avon to Cheltenham 1904-1979
Tony Bowles
ZOOM MEETING ONLY - See below

Wednesday 25th March 19:15
Chasing Steam in Western Europe 1970-1974
John Barrowdale

Wednesday 22nd April 19:15
Lines to Midhurst, via Petworth, Petersfield
and Chichester - Bill Gage

Wednesday 27th May 19:15
Signalling Topics - Peter Gibbons

Zoom meeting tickets at £2 must be purchased in advance at
www.rcts.org.uk/branches/branch-chr-chichester

No advance booking required at Bassil Shippam Centre Meetings
Suggested small donation on the door - Guests £4, Members £3
Interval Refreshments - Meeting duration 2.5 hours approx.

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E-mail chichester@rcts.org.uk

We Look Forward to seeing you