

The Bassil Shippam Centre

Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester, PO19 7LG

Weds 22 April 19:15

Rails to Midhurst

An illustrated talk given by former Assistant County Archivist Bill Gage of West Sussex Record Office. The presentation is not a technical one and can be enjoyed by both railway enthusiasts and those interested in social history. The presentation will include the funeral train to Midhurst of a major national figure, the runaway engine at Petworth, Royal Trains at Singelton & Midhurst, Sir Edward Elgar at Fittleworth, and bombs and washout on the Chichester-Midhurst line. Film footage of the last train over the Pulborough- Petersfield line will also be shown.



**Suggested
donation
on the door
£3 Members
£4 Guests**

Join us - No Membership or Advance Booking Required

<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: Alan Wallbank, Joe Whicher, John Barrowdale, Roger Sandford, Graham Benzeval, Geoff May</p>
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What's on for the Railway Enthusiast in April

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	3/04/2026	06/04/2026	Mobile Zoo at Kingscote , normal running for other weekends, also special trains for Fish and Chips and afternoon Teas, see website for details.
IOW-Steam railway	29/03/2026 18/04/2026	12/04/2026 18/04/2026	Special Easter event. Walk the line, Shanklin to Ventnor

IOW-Steam railway			Trains running on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays
K&ESR	10/04/2026	10/04/2026	Paddington Visits , Trains running most other days, see website
Watercress Line	02/04/2026 24/04/2026	06/04/2026 26/04/2026	Easter Bunny train , Spring Gala , Wednesday to Sunday outside these dates normal two train operation.
Amberley Museum	01/04/2026 12/04/2026 19/04/2026 26/04/2026	12/04/2026 12/04/2026 19/04/2026 26/04/2026	Easter Holiday events , Vintage Car Show , Industrial Trains Bus Show , outside of these dates normal opening Wednesday to Sunday.
Hayling Light Railway	04/04/2026	26/04/2026	Running weekends.
Littlehampton Light Railway	01/04/2026	12/04/2026	Easter running and weekends
South Downs Railway	04/04/2026	06/04/2026	Easter Egg Hunt , normal running on other weekend dates
Stansted Light Railway	04/03/2026	29/03/2026	Running on Wednesdays and Weekends

Southern Engineering Works - April 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
01 Apr	02 Apr	Track renewal, buses replace trains to/from Portsmouth Harbour Buses replace early/late trains between Three Bridges and Brighton
05 Apr	05 Apr	Buses replace trains between Littlehampton/Ford and Barnham/Bognor Regis/Chichester
11 Apr	12 Apr	Buses replace trains to/from Southampton Central
13 Apr	16 Apr	Buses replace late night trains between Brighton and Worthing
19 Apr	19 Apr	Buses replace trains between Barnham/Petersfield and Chichester/Portsmouth Harbour/Southampton Central
25 Apr	26 Apr	Amended service from Portsmouth Harbour/Bognor Regis towards London
26 Apr	26 Apr	Buses replace trains between Brighton and Worthing/Littlehampton
27 Apr	01 May	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between three Bridges and Brighton

South Western Railway Engineering Works - April 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
01 Apr	02 Apr	Track replacement, no trains to/from Portsmouth Harbour, will affect Cardiff, Bristol, Southampton and London trains
03 Apr	06 Apr	Buses replace trains between Winchester and Southampton Central / Fareham / Romsey
11 Apr	12 Apr	Buses replace trains to/from Southampton Central
12 Apr	12 Apr	Buses replace trains between Haslemere and Havant
18 Apr	18 Apr	Buses replace trains between Petersfield and Havant
19 Apr	19 Apr	Buses replace trains between Barnham / Petersfield and Chichester / Portsmouth Harbour / Southampton Central

BRANCH NEWS

RCTS Chichester have announced a Photographic Competition

This competition is only for members of the Chichester Branch

As a member you will have received an email telling you about the competition with entry form attached.

Entries can be made many times up to the closing date of 31st August

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

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.

30 Years of working as part of the Watercress Belle Team Part 2

By John Barrowdale

My next duty was as a wine waiter which as I explained in Part 1 was quite a busy job in the earlier part of the evening. At this point I should explain the staffing of the whole train was completely volunteers, from the loco crew through to the guard and all the catering & generator maintenance staff in between. By the noughties sometimes we had to hire contract staff, usually a chef and occasionally waiters, but never more than two and usually one of the latter. I will explain in a later article why this happened.

Train Manager who oversaw all the catering staff, (the guard of course overseeing the train) 1 person

Coach managers who oversaw catering staff in each coach 2 people. He/she also served food

Wine waiters 4 people

Waiters 6 people

Chef 1 person

Assistant Chef 1 person (sometimes a third trainee making a narrow kitchen very crowded)

Pantry staff 2 people

Tea Towel Technicians (TTT) 3 to 4 people.

Generator coach staff 3 to 4 people

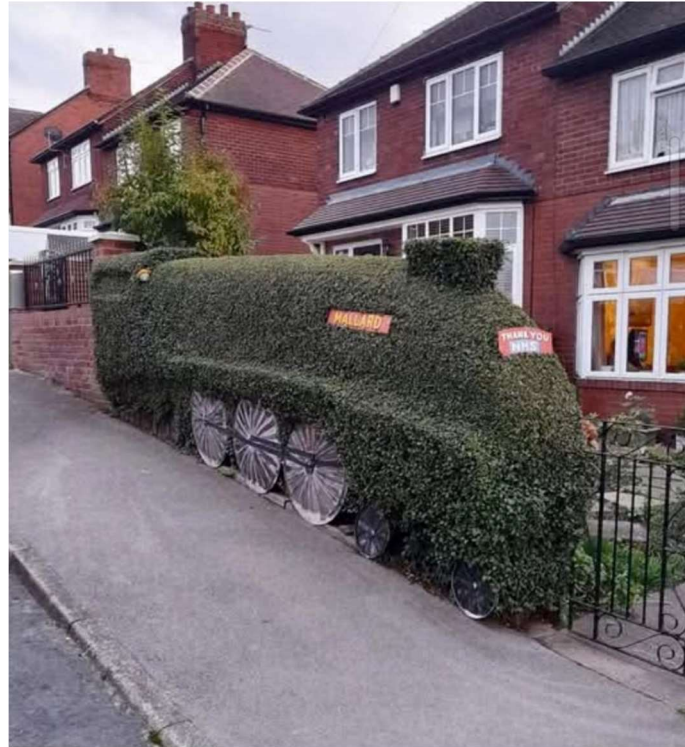
The train manager, chefs and some preparation staff would arrive in the early afternoon to get things ready and would be helped by the waiters/wine waiters as they arrived around about 17.00. We would be used to prepare the second course, Hoover the coaches, add supplementary electric heaters to warm up the coaches in the autumn and early spring, put the flower arrangement and butter out on each table plus find half an hour to have our staff meal in the kitchen car which had been prepared by the chefs in addition to the dinners they were preparing for the customers. I do not think the customers and for that matter the MHR management and other department volunteers realised how much preparation went into these trains. Soon after 18.00 equipment like hoovers and heaters were packed away plus the runners over the coach carpets to keep the latter clean. We would then retire to the corridor brake car to change into our uniforms and smart clothing in the compartments, one for women and one for men. The other two compartments were used for freezers and fridges to keep food cold/cool and a mess room for the generator staff. Customers often arrived before we were ready, but

would stay on the platform to await the locomotive to join the train. Many people were offered a chance to step onto the footplate and get their photo taken. The blokes usually were keen to take this offer up, but the women were usually less so being dressed to the nines for the evening, however that did not always put them off. At 18.45 they were allowed to come onto the train, either to go into the bar for a pre meal drink or find their seats in either coach. The latter were assisted by the waiting staff, when we asked to see their tickets which had the seat numbers on. We would indicate the rack over the seats to put their coats on, hold onto the table cloths when it was a group for a four-seater table otherwise there was a risk of taking all the cutlery and glasses over towards the window! We would indicate the arm rests to pull down for the four seat tables as well. This might seem a bit too obvious to readers, but bear in mind many people rarely travelled on trains. A customer would often say this is the first train I travelled on for over 35 years and some younger people the first time they ever travelled on a train. We also assisted disabled people onto the train and into their seats as well.

You may wonder how we were all trained to undertake our roles. When the Watercress Belle was about to start services, the initial volunteers were trained by the catering department of Highbury Technical college in Cosham, Portsmouth who were highly regarded in this speciality and they used to open to customers for nice meals once a week so the students could practice their skills. Many of my work colleges in HMIT, Norway Road, Hilsea used to treat themselves there a couple of times a year and always came back singing their praises. Funny enough I never tried it myself despite only living about a 5-minute walk from the college. Although the college is still operating, I do not think they have a catering department now, but I could be wrong. Not being part of the Belle until 7 years after it started, I am also not sure whether our initial volunteers went to Cosham to train or their teachers came to Alresford to train them. The duration with Highbury College was not long anyway and the first volunteers passed on their skills to new recruits. There was an annual training day every year with a train open for other volunteers around the railway to try our meals & for us to practice on during an early special train in March each year at half the cost that members of the public paid. After doing this a couple of years, I started to avail myself to a cheaper meal for my wife and usually a couple of friends often colleagues and their partners from the loco department or sometimes my relatives. We were taught how to do silver service serving and how to serve wine, champagne, and hot drinks etc. One good thing about volunteering on the Belle was meeting people around the railway who volunteered in other departments as not many volunteers did just work on the Belle only. We had PW staff, building group, traffic department, office, shop, loco dept volunteers albeit not very many of the latter as

I can only recall about 5 over my 30 years on this train including the late Rosie Jacob known to many of you in this society. By the time this train ceased to run as a volunteer operation in 2019, due to covid breaking out before the start of the 2020 season we were down to less than ten volunteers who started volunteering in the 1980s, with all the other volunteers starting in subsequent years. The overall look of the train was very impressive to the onlooker and customers which was proved time and time again with the wonderful feedback received in the office at Alresford. The volunteer staff looked the part and were smartly turned out and ran an efficient service. On several occasions some customers were surprised they had been served by volunteers all evening. I heard about four times a customer saying our service was better than the paid staff on the Orient Express; praise indeed!

Graham Benzeval saw this image on Facebook and thought you would like to see it. Not sure how long it has taken to get to this state of perfection.



Somewhere in Castleford, West Yorkshire

Roger Sandford took this photo on his travels –



It might be more appropriate to direct the elephants towards the Zoo rather than the railway! This signage is located between Colchester railway station and the city centre.

John Barrowdale has taken these photos during the recent visit of Flying Scotsman to the Watercress Line



The above photo is of the latest acquisition by the Mid Hants.

It is a Class 150 Sprinter train, a second-generation 'Sprinter' Diesel Multiple Unit.

The unit will now plug a vital gap in the Watercress Line service, offering an earlier departure from Alton than the current 11.50 steam service.

May's Miscellany: by Geoff May ©



The hobby of trainspotting was at the height of its popularity in the 1950's and 60's. Stanier Class 5MT 4-6-0 45255, pausing at Lancaster Castle with a down WCML service on 22/7/67, may well have been a 'cop' for these young lads and duly underlined in an Ian Allan ABC.


Postcard Corner by Roger Sandford

Many of us come from an era when sending a postcard to friends and relatives whilst on holiday was taken for granted. We were also very often collectors, schoolboy stamp collections from the 1950s / 60s commonplace. Postcards also became very collectable often scenic views and themed subjects much in demand in later years

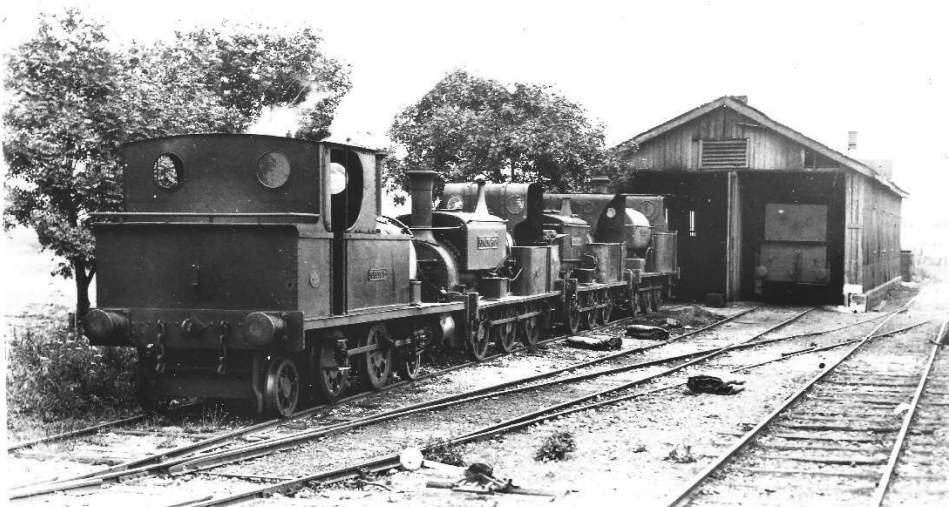
During the years up to 1990 there was a large series of vintage transport photographs on postcards produced by Pamlin Prints based in Croydon. Railways tended to dominate.


Two of local interest are reproduced here.



M987 34077 on West Drayton-Bognor Regis Excn. at Dorking North 14.6.1958
(Photo: John Scrace Esq. Horsham) Pamlin Prints Croydon 

Whilst electric train services commenced from Bognor Regis on 02 July 1938, some 20 years later main line steam locomotives still occasionally visited. 34077 passing through Dorking North on a summer Saturday 14 June 1958 excursion to Bognor Regis carries an unusual headcode.



M858 WEST SUSSEX RAILWAYS - SELSEY TRAMWAY LOCOS AT SELSEY 16.7.1927
L to R - 'Selsey', 'Ringing Rock', 'Sidlesham', & 'Chichester'
(Photograph: H.C. Casserley) Pamlin Prints, Croydon 

The Selsey tramway is still of much interest, a collection of locos at Selsey almost 100 years ago bringing the line back to life.

Look out for more postcard memories.

This is Part 2 of Alan Wallbank's life on the railway

Cleaner to Fireman

In 1962, I began my two-week fireman's tuition. At this point I would like to apologise to all my school teachers over the years, for my total grasp of anything educational. Except for being able to read and write, I had learnt absolutely nothing, so being an engine cleaner seemed to sum up my capabilities. Now though, for the first time in my life I had to 'pass' an exam! We were located in a small brick building adjacent to Campbell Road, just inside the shed's waist high black spiked railings, with the tank side disposal road on the other side.

The room was also used by the Mutual Improvement Class (MIC) where men freely gave up their time to explain and refresh the memory of the inner workings of locomotives and discuss rules and regulations to anyone who wanted to attend and were especially helpful to fireman approaching their driver's exam. In fact, competitions were held between different sheds on the 'Southern' and nationally with the winner holding the MIC trophy.

Our instructor this day was footplate inspector William 'Bill' Brabham, who after the initial introduction, issued each of us with a small black covered pocket-sized tome of a 280 pages, titled 'British Railways' Rule Book 1950 (Reprint including amendments authorised up to 1st October 1961), the inscription being in gold lettering.

It contained 239 rules applicable to the safe running of the railway. We were also issued with a light blue A4 sized General Appendix dated 1st October 1960 and an A4 sized maroon covered 151 paged Sectional Appendix. This contained specific information appertaining to the South Western Section of the railway and supplements to both appendices. Our instruction included;

- a) Parts and functions of locomotives
- b) Lighting, making up, cleaning & disposing of fires
- c) Working of injectors and function of fusible plugs
- d) Rules and regulations
- e) Prevention of accidents
- f) Coupling & uncoupling and general duties & responsibilities of Fireman

There were also wooden cutaways with moving parts to explain the inner workings of the locomotive. Bill began with the 'Rule Book', that had to be inwardly digested

and would be the focal point of the fireman's exam. The Rule Book has been revised several times over the years, yet ask any footplate crew which one they recall and Rule 55 will instantly come to mind. It was a ten-page instruction of what to do when detained at a danger signal. It also applied to guards, shunters and signalmen, so we all knew who was responsible in every given situation. The fireman would often carry out parts of this rule, so its understanding was very important. It's worth mentioning at this point, that when amendments to the Rule Book were issued, everyone had to cut out each rule with scissors and stick it into the Rule Book next to the rule it applied to. Most people didn't bother to do this, nor did I mainly because generally there was no real change to the rule. Naturally, we had to do it while on the fireman's course.

The other parts of the course were soon digested and I was then sent to the carriage and wagon works located east of the station where I had my medical before starting on the railway. This time it was to continue my fireman's training, a two-day footplate familiarisation and instruction on the works shunting locomotive. This was a large complex of sheds and tracks opened in 1891 and it was where they built several classes of electric units including the Nelson stock, electric trains for the Portsmouth to Waterloo line when it was first electrified in 1937. Now it was a shadow of its former self and would close within a few weeks after I left its confines.

On the third day, I was out on the mainline, working under instruction on a 76 Standard hauling a passenger train to Bournemouth. Up to this point I had not engaged in any manual activity during my short life, other than a Sunday paper round on Hayling Island, yet here I was a 9½ stone weakling about to embark on the physical activities required of a fireman. The first task was to master the art of shovelling coal from the tender to the firebox in one fluid motion, where foot movement is kept to a minimum. This takes quite a bit of practice, as to begin with it's not unusual to hit the fire hole outer rim or door with the shovel and see the coal fly in all directions much to the driver's disapproval. It also causes a jarring effect that resonates through the hands and wrists, so it's important to quickly learn the correct technique. I was then shown how to read the fire so that the coal landed where it was needed. To do this the shovel is turned from one side to the other just inside the fire hole door. This had the effect of shielding the fire glare so being able to see how the fire is burning, the lightest and brightest areas obviously being the thinnest part of the fire. I have to say that my firing capabilities from this early stage were not promising and they hardly improved as the days went by.

On the driver's side, there is a waist high hand operated wheel that increases the draught on the fire. This is the 'blower' quite often used by fireman to intensify the fire burning when steam pressure is falling. It is also used just before entering a tunnel to prevent the flames blowing back into the cab.

A really important task was the regular operation of the injectors that fills the boiler with water. Two upright long clear glass tubes known as gauge glasses are mounted each side of the boiler above the fire hole door. They provide a visual indication of the boiler water level, each one being surrounded by thick glass, which helps to protect the crew from the scalding steam that engulfs the footplate if the glass tube breaks.

There are two injectors on most locomotives, each having a separate water and steam valve. The water valve, usually under the fireman's seat, is turned on first and flows from a pipe beneath the cab and is followed by the opening of the steam valve above the boiler. Looking out of the cab window, the fireman slackens off the water until neither steam or water can be seen. A 'singing' sound confirms that the water is entering the boiler with its rate of inflow showing in the footplate gauge glass. It is important to maintain a vigorous fire so that the steam pressure does not fall when the injectors put cold water into the hot boiler, so the fireman will try to achieve a constant three-quarter water level.

The footplate was kept clean with a hand brush that resided in a non-metallic bucket and there was what we called a 'pep' pipe, a flexible rubber hose that ejected a forceful jet of steam and water that acted like a pressure washer. It was used quite a lot to keep the footplate clean and to dampen down coal in open tenders, especially when travelling tender first. We also had to observe signals on right hand curves with a thumbs up or down to relay their position. So, the fireman is constantly on the move and that's why you are more likely to see him just leaning out of the window rather than sitting down. In my case, I was struggling with the art of firing and seemed to lack the natural ability of knowing when to add coal to the fire.

On arrival it was the fireman's job to uncouple from the train, as the engine went to its next destination. After the passenger work, we had a couple more days in the classroom before my fireman's exam which I promptly failed, although in this situation cleaners are allowed two more attempts.

I was put in another class with Bournemouth cleaners at their shed in what was then Hampshire. This meant travelling down there by train with Bill, who was not too pleased with my failure. The classroom seemed to be close to or surrounded by locomotives moving around the shed, so it was quite noisy at times. Even after

all this time, I can still remember a question from Bill. He asked me what should I clean first when the engine was on shed, was it the smoke box or fire? Without hesitation I said the smoke box! Bill then went round the rest of the class and they all said the fire! My immediate thought was that I had messed up once again, when Bill said that I was right, but no praise as he just rubbed in the fact that I knew the answer from the previous course which I had failed! In fact, it was an educated guess, as I had seen firemen doing it that way and assumed that was the correct procedure. This time I managed to pass, so returned to Eastleigh now promoted to Passed Cleaner. This higher grade did not include a pay rise, unless I was called upon for firing duties.

In the early winter months of 1963, I gained my Southern Region green enamel cap badge as I had been promoted to fireman, with my weekly earnings rising to £16, a very good wage for anyone of my age even for those who did not work on the railway.

On my daily trek to work as a cleaner, I couldn't help but notice the 'Bullied Pacific' name plates propped up against the outer wall of the Locomotive Works shed nearest the steam shed. I made an enquiry of their availability and believe that I was quoted about £30-£60 for each one, far too much for my cleaner wage of £3.17s.6d and what would dad say? He would have probably have given me a right old rollicking for wasting my money on a bit of old metal. Even though I was now earning a higher wage, I had to give £4 to mum, so any thoughts of getting my hands on a name plate were still out of reach and by this time most had been accounted for anyway. My promotion meant that there was no need to pick up a 'check' when signing on, so I could now go home early without the worry of handing it in.

My next port of call was the roster room mentioned earlier, where I examined any notices that needed my attention and to make sure of my duty content that day, as I was now in the 'Ash Pan' gang a very enjoyable introduction to my firing days. The link consisted of about eight drivers who were either medically unfit for mainline duties such as failing eyesight and hearing, or had been demoted after making serious errors of judgement. Drivers and firemen 'links' ran in tandem, so drivers had the same fireman. My driver or 'mate' a term generally used, was William 'Bill' Kraymer, who was only a few months from retirement. I recall him as being a fairly tall, portly man with a pencil moustache and wearing a full-length black BR overcoat.

On leaving the main building, I would turn left and walk beneath a glazed covered walkway (that was erected in 1959) to its end and then carry on a further 100

yards over open ground to the 'ash pan cabin'. This was a four-door rectangular construction built of prefabricated concrete with a flat roof, located at the far pit end next to the engines coaling point. All the doors faced the shed with ours being the first one, while the next two were store rooms with a further cabin at the end for the men who coaled the engines. Up to this time, I had hardly done anything or gone anywhere in my life, so working with men much older than myself was a completely new experience. In fact, later on when I had younger mates, they became father figures that helped me enormously during those early years on the railway. This was also my introduction to a range of unheard expletives that shocked my sheltered upbringing, with them being uttered by nearly everyone all the time. I found the remarks by the married men even more embarrassing as they often boasted about the sex lives, but that's the way it was in those days.

At this point I would like to add that railway 'booking on times' were probably the most unsocial hours on the 'planet'. We seemed to start at every conceivable minute from late afternoon until the early hours in the morning, causing great strain on sleeping patterns and family life. Fortunately, my starting link had reasonably standard hours, although getting to and from work posed its difficulties. The ash pan gang duties were 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm, 6pm-2am, 10pm-6am. There were also shed duties, which I will describe later and one where we prepared and disposed locos, generally referred to as P&D. I'm told for this duty we signed on at 6.45pm and the last job was to prepare the engine, usually a West Country, for the 6.18am from Southampton Terminus to Waterloo. In the winter the engine left the shed an hour early, so that it could provide on extra hours steam heating for the passengers.

The ash pan duties were to wait for engines to come 'on shed' and stop over the servicing pit. At this time, they were few and far between during the day, but was very busy from late afternoon until about 3am. As they arrived over the pit, my first job was to 'rake out' the ash pans on the Southern engines. To do this, I first had to enter the engines footplate and lift up damper levers that opened up flaps each end of the ash pan tray beneath the fire grate. I would then get down into the pit with a long handled half-moon rake and walk in a crouched position under the engine over piles of ash with oil and water dripping everywhere, until I came to the ash pan that was raked out from both ends. This was a frightening experience at night with engines moving about all the time and although I had confirmed with my driver what I was about to do, there was always the thought that he would forget I

was there. The wind was also a problem, as it blew the ash in all directions, so it was best to start at the end with the wind at ones back.

Next job was to climb up on the tender or side tank as the driver swung the water column arm into position with a chain. I would then place the long rubber bag in the tender's now open hatch as the water was turned on by the driver and wait until it was full to the brim when the reverse procedure would take place. Prior to 1959, the two water columns had fixed leather bags that had to be manually hauled into position, a procedure that I found exhausting just thinking about it. The driver would then take the engine forward to the coaling area where a jibbed steam crane swung large loaded tubs of coal over the tender or bunker on tank engines, its contents being released with the aid of a long hand-held rod that released the bottom door of the tub. Later on, a steam crane was replaced with a Ruston Bucyrus diesel digger with a clam shell grab.

Prior to the arrival of the steam crane, engines were coaled from tubs that were pushed out onto ramps above the tender, from a building alongside the pit. I don't recall this method being used, although fellow colleagues do. More about this later. Once the tender was fully coaled, I would accompany the driver as the engine was taken round to the shed or first turned on the triangle. The hand brake would be applied once in the shed, then we would go back and do it all over again until the pit was clear of engines.

As can be seen by our hours, two shifts overlapped at six pm to cope with the busy workload as the engines queued up to be serviced. To add to the frantic activity, firemen were cleaning smoke boxes and fires, so we had to wait for them to finish before we could complete our servicing duties.

I mentioned earlier that our cabin was the first room of the concrete block, where inside was a small table and two or three chairs, a coal burning stove and a sink with a cold tap. The highlight of the day or night was to play 'Bennies' a seven-hand card game that would go on for hours. We always played for money, but it was only pennies which could mount up if you were on a losing run. It got really heated at times when one player kept winning, but it was more in frustration than being physical. I also learnt to play cribbage, another card game with pegs on a holed wooden board. This was very beneficial to me as it is today, as the game required a rapid level of mental arithmetic that eluded me in my schooling years. I often wonder if 'crib' or indeed darts should be taught in schools to those who struggle with simple addition.

After a few ash pan turns, Nigel said he would show me how to drive the engines, mainly Bullieds, Standards, S15's, U's, N's and Ivatts. Driving was not permitted

of course, but once the office staff had gone home, the drivers were quite happy for us to do everything while they disappeared to do their own thing. The drivers would reappear as the night progressed, as it got really busy which meant we all mucked in with firemen moving the engine for water and coaling and the driver taking the engines round to the shed. By about 3am things had calmed down, so it was back to the cabin for a game of Bennies until relief came at 6am. Anyway, back to Nigel who gently eased all classes of engines into position, just slightly opening and closing the regulator which was enough to get the engine moving. He would then apply the engines steam brake to stop opposite time honoured bits of metal acting as markers for the water columns. That was fine until an engine came in that Nigel had not driven before. It was from the south eastern division which had a different braking system. Nigel moved the engine along the pit towards another engine that was waiting there to be coaled. He began to apply the brake, but nothing happened, nor did a full application so with a collision looming yours truly abandoned ship with Nigel close behind. This was followed by an almighty 'clang' as buffers collided.

Today there would have been reports, enquiries and suspensions, but then it was just one of those things and we just carried on as if nothing had happened. Personally, I felt that Nigel had got his comeuppance after getting me to clean all those boilers!

I mentioned that there were times when firemen were left to get on with it, but this caused its own problems. Taking water single handed was quite easy, but when it was windy the water column arm would move about causing the water bag to catch on the hatch edge and become ram rod solid and/or shower water everywhere. Fortunately, this didn't happen to me, but some firemen would wrap the column chain around the tender ladder which kept the arm stationary. I remember coming to work on two occasions to find one of the two water columns lying on the ground where the fireman had forgotten to release the chain as he moved down the pit line. The water column was not replaced after it happened on the second occasion, so helping date photos of the time.

Of course, the best part of doing it all by yourself, was taking engines over to the shed or better still first via the triangle to be turned. These were always tendered locos, as tank engines used the turntable located just before the main building. So, there we were just sixteen-year-old plus teenagers, illegally driving all classes of locos mainly in the complete darkness with hardly any steam or brakes! A recipe for disaster if things went wrong and it did! To start with all the engines that we drove had had their fires cleaned and therefore were low on steam. Enough

coal had been added to keep the fire alight, so the loco would be quiet while it waited for its next turn of duty. Some had no fire at all as they were destined to have their boilers washed out. After being coaled, my driver would tell me which road to put the engine in the shed, so I would take the engine a short distance to the points man's hut and inform the shunter which shed line we had to enter, so it was just up and over a set of spring points and back in the shed which generally went without problems. I do though recall one instance when on an unconverted Bullied heading for a shed road. Instead of slowing down, the engine speed was increasing, even though the regulator was closed. There are two choices when in this situation, one is to apply the steam brake and jump off before the inevitable collision or two, open and close the regulator until it shuts properly, then put the brake on. I chose the latter and was successful after two attempts, but there wasn't enough room to stop so I still had to jump off!

There was naturally a loud 'bang' as the engine collided with the one in front, but a quick check revealed nothing amiss, thankfully, as it could have been the end of my railway career. I would like to add that I don't recall us ever using the term 'Bullied' or 'Pacifics' with only the engines number being mentioned, but I will use it here to describe this class of engine. By now drivers were allowing me to take engines around the triangle alone. I found this a very exciting experience, but quite frightening as we were told that the ghost of 'Mad Jack' would change the points and send us back where we came from or he would appear when we were least expecting him. Also, the white sludge on the ground on the last side of triangle was where his cremated remains! Of course, we knew it was a load of rubbish', but it's surprising what tricks it plays on young minds at night.

We would set off in all weathers driving mainly 'Standards and Bullieds' with the first stop being adjacent to the carriage washing machine that was near to the sheds east exit. I wasted no time in getting down on the opposite side to pull the point lever over for the next leg of the triangle. There was some illumination flickering though the engines wheels from a single light bulb on the washer, but quite often it didn't work so with trees rustling and my nerves on edge and hardly drawing breath, I would race back to the footplate with my heart pounding like mad and quickly open the regulator to negotiate the next part of the triangle, all the time straining my eyes through the inky darkness as I headed towards a large lump of concrete that denoted the extreme edge of the sheds boundary. The points here were spring loaded, which meant that they automatically reset themselves for movements back to the shed, but we still had check that they had indeed returned to the correct position.

As we got down, there would suddenly be an almighty
AAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH
HHHHH, enough to send the most placid lad into orbit! Of course, it was one of
the firemen who had hidden on the engine as we left the pit, a common prank we
inflicted on each other. If I spotted someone getting on as I left the pit, I would
sneak up behind them as they waited for me to appear and giving them the same
shrieking treatment! Some lads really played up the old drivers, such as standing
on the cabin roof and blocking up the chimney or dropping several detonators
down it. Being a small fire compared with the devil mentioned earlier, the
explosion had the desired effect and caused a furious reaction from their victims.

On the lighter side, if you can call it that, one lad hauled an old drivers bicycle up
to the top of a lamp post! The driver in question could hardly walk, so it was an
unkind jape to someone who relied on his bike. On a different note, I recall a
fireman saying he had an unbreakable cup, so I dropped it on the cabins concrete
floor and sure enough it remained intact. He was a bit reluctant for me to do it
again, but said it was okay which proved fatal, as it broke into several pieces! The
most physical turn was shunting the shed of dead locos, usually in what we called
the 'washout' roads 1-5, where clean water was used to remove sediment from
the inside surfaces of the engine boilers.

The driver would have a list of engines that needed to be removed, replaced or
shunted about. We always worked from the southern end of the shed with any
loco that was available. My job was several fold, as I had to make sure there were
no wooden scotches against the wheels that the fitters use to stop the engine from
moving. Then stand astride the pit, (all 15 roads had pits from one end of the shed
to the other, although there was a central wooden walkway) and lift the heavy
couplings to join the engines together, after which I had to get up on the footplate
and release the hand brake, then if necessary hand signal the driver to move
forward to couple up the next engine and so on, then pull them all out of the shed.
The next move would be back in another road, uncouple some engines and back
where we had come from. In and out, space out the engines, uncouple shunt,
couple, hand brake on, hand brake off for about two hours. Then a short break
then do it all over again, by which time I'd had enough!

I believe that South Western Division was the only one where footplate crews did
everything themselves on shed, except light fires of engines that had come back
into service after repairs or from the wash out roads. As firemen, we nearly always
attached and detached from trains in stations and goods yards, which again was
carried out by shunters elsewhere. I mentioned that my regular driver was Bill

Kraymer. Apart from him disappearing for most of the day or night leaving me to do everything, he did help me to get home when we finished on the 6pm to 2am turn. At that time hardly anyone had their own transport, so getting about in the early hours of the morning usually meant cycling or walking.

Between 1-2am there were three trains to Portsmouth, the 1.15am vans, the 1.35am passenger that stopped at Fareham, Fratton and Portsmouth & Southsea and the 1.52 am van train. Normally finishing at 2am meant waiting for the first train which was about 5.20am, but on that first morning to my surprise, Bill and I left the shed early and on arrival at the station he asked the driver on the 1.52am van train for a lift. It was common practice then and it was for many years, to ask drivers to pick up and drop off staff during periods when there was no train service. Of course it was not permitted, but it was tolerated and there was nothing better when everyone worked together for a common cause. Some drivers would refuse lifts, but the majority were only too pleased to help out.

Back to that first morning, Bill asked the driver to drop us off at Fratton which he did. That meant six ½ mile hike to Bedhampton with Bill walking with me for part of the way as I had no knowledge of the road system in Portsmouth. In those days, traffic lights were activated by vehicles passing over a strip of rubber across the road. I distinctly remember him stamping on them to activate the lights and if that failed both of us would be jumping on them together. So, there we were, a sixteen-year-old lad and a pensioner skylarking about in the early hours of the morning, a light hearted moment that has lived with me all these years.

We would part company near the old Portsmouth 'Kingston' prison, from where I was directed down the fairly long Langstone Road towards the 'Eastern Road', the main thoroughfare from Fratton to the A27 coast road. Built in 1942, it is an almost straight four lane carriageway that is exposed to the easterly seaward elements. I remember it being a very cold and all I had on was my railway overalls and a serge jacket which was not at all suitable on a freezing morning in the middle of winter. I was hoping to thumb a lift, but nothing came past as I trudged the four desolate unlit miles to the roads end. Then another 1 ½ miles home. The next morning Bill arranged for the driver to drop me off at Cosham as I would only have to walk 3 ½ miles, but Bill didn't like asking the driver to stop for me and him, so the following night and the one after we got off at Fratton. I managed to get a lift for a good part of the journey home on the first of those two mornings, but not the following one which proved to my last as I became quite ill from the cold and was off work for a week.

Shortly afterwards, my father decided I needed transport, so he took me to E W Burnett & Sons, a motorcycle dealer at 5 Eldon Street, Southsea. After spending an hour in a non-moving queue, we gave up that idea and went home. A few days later dad surprised me with PRV 457, a mid-blue LD 150 Lambretta scooter which I believe was manufactured in 1957 and I recall that it had a large handle bar mounted screen. Soon afterwards, I was in possession of a Provisional Licence, but dad would not let me leave the house until I was able to get into second gear along our short driveway. Once I had managed to do as requested and dad was at work, I plucked up courage and donned my crash helmet, although they were not compulsory to wear them until 1st June 1973. I distinctly remember turning right outside the house with the intention of riding the three miles to Waterlooville. The feeling of moving forward was just like my first attempt to ride a bicycle, except I was going much quicker and I was barely conscious of the where the controls were located.

After a heart stopping short distance I braked to a stand, then got going again for a few hundred yards before stopping again. Then with a deep breath I regained my composure and set off again, as I was now more familiar with the right handle bar operated gears. Then after about a mile where I used to collect firewood for the November 5th bonfires, my maiden journey was suddenly interrupted by a violent shaking of the handlebars. It caught me by total surprise, so in novice panic I grabbed the front brake and before I could say 'oh dear' I found myself sliding along the tarmac with the lovely front screen disintegrating around me.

Fortunately, I stopped pretty quick and soon other motorists were coming to my aid as I struggled up uninjured. As I surveyed the damaged screen, I also noted that the handlebar mounted mirror had snapped off, while various scrapes had made their mark. So it was with dented pride that I made my way home to face the music. Dad said nothing, but I presume he was not too pleased! At least I had transport, so I rode it to Cosham each day, a journey taking just ten minutes. It was about this time that Bill retired, but I didn't have another 'mate', just any driver who was available on a day-to-day basis. During the spring and summer, there was hardly anything to do in the daytime, so we performed various other tasks around the shed to occupy our time. One I remember well was to clear out all the coal from the coaling stage, the long covered shed adjacent to the pits. At one time, engines arrived and were coaled on both sides, the one nearest to the Campbell Road for tank engines, with mainline being the side I worked on.

Each side had three coaling outlets, where tubs were pushed out onto ramps, while at the southern end of the stage there was also an additional conveyor

system which I believe was only on the mainline side. When I started, the tank side was not used for coaling at all, but locos did occasionally arrive that side. I recall pushing out a tub onto one of the ramps as we removed all the old coal from the stage. On another occasion, I was asked to operate the stop signal that was located at the top of the main building next to the water tank. It was activated by a lever at ground level and was used to test the eyesight of footplate crews.

With the lack of work during the day, it was no surprise to find that we were under the watchful eye of the 'Time and Motion' person commonly referred to as the 'Razor Gang'. Their job was to time each task to see if men were actually needed to be there at all. That meant doing everything by the book, so taking as long as possible to do everything, a bit difficult if there was nothing to do in the first place. Within a few weeks, I moved up a link and although I had really enjoyed the ash pan's, it was time to be out on the mainline. To end this part, I would like to mention my earlier remark about being a train spotter before I joined the railway. Besides numerous visits to Eastleigh, even cycling there on one occasion, my other favourite locations included Woking where I and my friends had an excellent view of the trains from the road adjacent to the up side tracks at the London end of the station.

With our home-made sandwiches, Wagon Wheel biscuits and bottles of Tizer, we would spend many a Saturday hour pressed up against the waist high perimeter fence, hoping to see that elusive engine that always seemed to escape our 'cop', a term used when a particular engine was sighted and underlined in our Ian Allen book of Southern Region Locomotive numbers. I also went to London Waterloo Station, which had a dedicated platform for spotters as did Kings X and Reading where I was often found on Saturdays. At some point when I was still cleaning, the Midland engine lads Nigel and Malcolm asked me to join them on their next journey to London. After a certain amount of railway service, we were entitled to free and privilege rates of travel. We were only allowed about three free tickets a year that had to be applied for in advance, while the privilege tickets were unlimited and could be bought on the day from the ticket office.

There was a different system when travelling on the London Underground, as we were required to fill out a white slip with the departure and arrival stations and the number of our railway pass. This paper was then presented at the ticket office and exchanged for the appropriate ticket. With good supply of white slips, the three of us headed for Camden Shed where I saw my first Coronation Class engine in blue livery. I cannot recall the name, but it was one of the Cities. We then went on to Willesden and Old Oak Common sheds. I think we did this twice although my

enthusiasm for spotting was beginning to wane, but I do recall going to Swindon Works and seeing the first ten Western 1000 hydraulics diesels under construction.

I was soon to acquire my first camera, an Instamatic 50 with the film being held in a cartridge. Sadly, I took very few photos, although my first one was from the old coaling stage of 75079 on the pit at Eastleigh and 34023 and a GWR at the southern end of the shed. They may have been taken just before I left Ash Pan link, as by this time my interest in railways had gone, so there didn't seem much point in taking the camera to work.

National Transport Trust Red Plaque (23)

1851 OXFORD REWLEY ROAD STATION

The line from Bletchley to Oxford was opened by the Buckinghamshire Railway (later owned by the L.& N.W.R.) in 1851. The Oxford station was built on the site of Rewley Abbey, a 13th century Cistercian monastery.

The contractors for the main building were Fox, Henderson who were completing The Crystal Palace at the same time, and they used similar - but not identical - prefabricated cast iron main structural components. The historic importance of this feature led to a Grade II* Listing. There were two platform faces partly under a glass-roofed train shed; the latter was replaced to a different design in 1888.

The Great Western Railway had opened its station in 1852 on an adjacent site, the location of the current Oxford railway station, and the two stations came under joint management in 1933.

Rewley Road was closed to passengers by the London Midland Region of British Railways in 1951 and services transferred to the ex-G.W.R. station. The goods yard remained available for use until 1984 and was cleared in 1998. After the station closed to passengers the main building was put to commercial use.

Construction of a new building for Oxford University's Said Business School required the dismantling of the station building in 1999, with the financial support of the University. Parts of the goods yard were developed for housing. The station building components were moved to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton Road railway station, operated by the Quainton Railway Society Ltd.

The station lies in the far depths of "Metro-land", about 5 miles (8 km) west of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The site is divided into two halves which are joined by two foot-bridges, one of which provides wheelchair access. Each side has a demonstration line with various workshop buildings as well as museum buildings. Separating the two halves is a Network Rail goods line, formerly the mainline used by the Great Central Railway and the Metropolitan Railway via the Metropolitan and Great Central Railways Joint Committee.

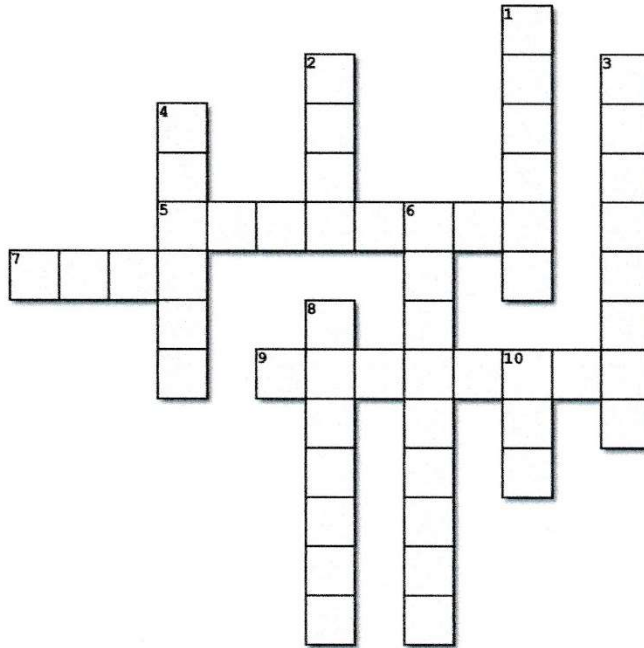
Oxford Rewley Road railway station now stands at the north-west corner of the site and serves as reception, visitor centre and display building. It is the sole surviving example of Sir Joseph Paxton's pioneering use of glass, iron and timber.



Thought I would try something new this month so below is a crossword to solve, it won't tax the brain.

April Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

- 5. Name of our railway franchise
- 7. Our society initials
- 9. London destination of our local railway

Down

- 1. First name of engine visiting Mid Hants
- 2. Compass point of our railway franchise
- 3. Last name of engine visiting Mid Hants
- 4. First name of our meeting room
- 6. Alan's training depot
- 8. John's job on the Mid Hants
- 10. Colour of the Trust Plaque


Answers on the last page

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



RCTS
THE RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE
AND TRAVEL SOCIETY

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charities Commission. Registered number 1169995

- 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.

www.facebook.com/chichesterrailrcts
E-mail chichester@rcts.org.uk

We Look Forward to seeing you

Answers to the crossword

ACROSS		DOWN	
5	Southern	1	Flying
7	RCTS	2	West
9	Victoria	3	Scotsman
		4	Bassil
		6	Eastleigh
		8	Fireman
		10	Red