

To all members

Please note there are no meetings in July and August

Next Meeting will be

Wednesday 23 September

when Gordon Adams presents

The History of Southampton and its Railways

The photo below is part of Southampton history

Information for this meeting will be in the August
Newsletter



Signalling at the west end of Southampton Central

Picture Alan Workman, courtesy of Lynton & Barnstaple railway, John Barrowdale collection

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

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
Chichester Model Engineers	Chichester Model Engineers	Chichester Model Engineers	
Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway	Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway	Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway	02380612020

Railway	Start Date	End Date	Event
Bluebell Railway	18/07/2026 24/07/2026 25/07/2026 28/07/2026	19/07/2026 24/07/2026 25/07/2026 29/07/2026	Southern at War theme weekend Real Ale Special Railway Toy fair Reptiles at Kingscote Trains running on most days, see website for Afternoon Teas, Fish and Chip runs, etc
IOW-Steam railway	04/07/2026 18/07/2026	04/07/2026 18/07/2026	The 1940s experience Real Ale Train Tuesdays is Fish and Chip evenings Trains running on Sat, Sun, Tues, Thurs
K&ESR	08/07/2026 22/07/2026 28/06/2026 23/07/2026 30/07/2026 24/07/2026 25/07/2026 31/07/2026 31/07/2026	08/07/2026 22/07/2026 28/07/2026 23/07/2026 30/07/2026 24/07/2026 25/07/2026 31/07/2026 31/07/2026	Day photography course The Explorer's Express for children 6-11 The Explorer's Express for children 6-11 Bricks on the Move – Lego/Duplo build Bricks on the Move – Lego/Duplo build The Teddy Express – bring your Teddy The Great Train Mystery – for 7-12 years The Great Train Mystery – for 7-12 years Murder Mystery Night for adults Trains do not run on Mon, Thurs and Fri, see website
Watercress Line	10/07/2026	12/07/2026	Diesel Gala Trains running Wed, Thurs and Weekends.
Amberley Museum	04/07/2026 08/07/2026 12/07/2026 18/07/2026 26/07/2026	05/07/2026 08/07/2026 12/07/2026 19/07/2026 26/07/2026	Midsummer Steam Show Rolls Royce & Bentley Car Club Meet Classic Car Show R6il Gala Rover Sports National Rally outside of these dates normal opening Wednesday to Sunday.
Hayling Light Railway	01/07/2026	28/07/2026	Running Wednesday, weekends and daily during school holidays
Littlehampton Light Railway	04/07/2026 21/07/2026	19/07/2026 31/07/2026	Weekends All days except Monday
South Downs Railway	01/07/2026	29/07/2026	Weekends and Wed on school holidays
Stansted Light Railway	01/07/2026	29/07/2026	Running on Wednesdays and Saturdays
Chichester Model Engineers	12/07/2026	12/07/2026	Public afternoon 1pm to 5pm
Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway	01/07/2026 23/07/2026	22/07/2026 31/07/2026	Week days running, diesel hauled trains These dates & all weekends steam hauled

Southern Engineering Works - July 2026



**Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.**

Start Date	End Date	
05 July	05 July	Buses replace trains between Three Bridges and Horsham Buses replace trains between Southampton Central/Eastleigh and Portsmouth Harbour
06 July	10 July	Buses replace trains late night/early morning between Brighton and Worthing/West Worthing
11 July	13 July	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Three Bridges and Brighton
12 July	12 July	Amended morning Southampton Central to Brighton
18 July	19 July	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis/Chichester and between Havant and Southampton Central
20 July	24 July	Amended late night/early morning Southern service via Three Bridges
25 July	27 July	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Haywards Heath and Brighton
25 July	26 July	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Barnham and Havant
26 July	31 July	Buses replace late night/early morning trains between Barnham and Bognor Regis/Chichester

South Western Railway Engineering Works - July 2026



**Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.**

Start Date	End Date	
05 July	05 July	Buses replace trains between Ascot and Aldershot/Alton/Guildford. Buses replace trains between Southampton Central/Eastleigh and Portsmouth Harbour
19 July	19 July	Buses replace trains between Reading and Basingstoke
26 July	26 July	Buses replace trains between Reading and Basingstoke

Obituary

JOE WHICHER 1932 – 2026

It is with great sadness we have to report on the passing of one of our members, Joe Whicher from Chichester.

Joe was originally from the Bournemouth and Poole area, and worked there for the Ministry of Transport. Later he moved to Brighton where he made a number of friends through membership of the Sussex Transport Interest Group (STIG). Latterly, he moved with his wife Pat to Chichester, where Joe soon took up a great interest in the little known “The Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway “.



I had known Joe for over 20 years first making contact via friends in the SEG’s Brighton later Sussex branch, and more recently at the regular RCTS meetings. Joe had many interests not only in railways, but in Blue Plaques, Railway Pub signs and not least, The Selsey Tramway of which he was truly an expert. These interests spawned a number of magnificent presentations which he gave to numerous groups of enthusiasts scattered along the south coast.

In the time I knew him, I was always in touch through visits to his house but more often than not, via a telephone conversation. I was privileged to be invited to his 90th Birthday celebration at his house

where the attached picture was taken.

I shall certainly, along with many others miss Joe, I’m so pleased I met him, he was one of my best friends, and a true gentleman for which he will be sorely missed.

Our thoughts are with Pat and the family,

Hefin



It is with much sadness we learned of the recent passing on 20 June of our Chichester Branch member and friend Joe Whicher at the age of 94

Joe had been a RCTS member for 10 years and attended our meetings regularly until February this year, health issues preventing him from continuing.

He was a kind, helpful, unassuming man very supportive of our efforts at Chichester Branch. He would have joined the Committee had he not been of advancing years, always willing to help and give advice.

Active until the last few months he loved presenting and having reached 90 provided a full evening show for us about the Selsey Tramway, complete with his expert and knowledgeable commentary. He liked nothing better than to present shows to other groups like the W.I. Not always railway themed he had the art of being able to explain a subject to people who maybe didn't have a deep interest but wanted to learn and understand.

He was a fairly prolific photographer with a passion for not just railways but a wealth of knowledge of blue plaques, bridges and pub signs amongst other fascinating interests.

My own lasting memory of Joe will be a visit to his home with Dorothy as recently as February this year. Into their 90's Joe and his wife Pat still lived in their lovely home in Chichester. They treated us with great dignity, a privilege to spend the afternoon with such a charming couple.

We all at Chichester Branch of RCTS will miss Joe, the smile and harmless banter was always a joy.

In August 2017 the branch visited the South Downs Light Railway at Pulborough. I had the pleasure of sitting next to Joe when we took lunch at the adjacent garden centre. It was always a pleasure to chat with Joe. The picture below was taken on the same day with Joe facing towards the camera.



Photo Copyright - the late Richard Ashby, past Chairman of RCTS Chichester

Roger Sandford

Chairman

RCTS Chichester Branch

Ed note. We have created a Red Plaque for Joe because he was the author of the many Red Plaque articles in the past newsletters and we thought it a fitting tribute to him and his attention to detail in those articles.

Joe Whitcher's funeral will take place on:

Thursday 16th July at 14:00

Saint Paul's Church

Churchside

Saint Paul's Road

Chichester

PO19 6FT

www.stpaulschichester.org

BRANCH NEWS

Romsey Signal Box visit

The visit to Romsey signal box and then on to Romsey Abbey in the afternoon was cancelled due to the extremely high temperatures we were experiencing at the end of June and a new date will be arranged in the first two weeks of October.

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 using the entry form below many times up to the closing date of 31st August.

Please read the rules and regs printed below

2026 RCTS Chichester Branch Photo Comp.

Entry Form – Name: _____

Please remember to put the Category, the Picture ID Number and your Name on all entries.

	Description and date of picture
Steam	(Steam railway pictures taken between 01 Jan 2000 & 31 Aug 2026)
S1	
S2	
S3	
Diesel and Electric	(Diesel, Electric, trams, etc. taken between 1 Jan 2000 & 31 Aug 2026)
DE1	
DE2	
DE3	
Vintage Steam	(Pictures taken on or before 31 Dec 1999)
VS1	
VS2	
VS3	
Vintage Diesel and Electric	(Pictures taken on or before 31 Dec 1999)

VDE1	
VDE2	
VDE3	
Infrastructure	(Pictures taken at any time of railway infrastructure)
IN1	
IN2	
IN3	

RCTS CHICHESTER BRANCH PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2026

Roger Sandford - Organiser

Entries must be received by 31 August 2026. Entry forms and digital images should be emailed to chichester@rcts.org.uk

If you wish to submit 35mm transparencies or prints please first contact the organiser by email chichester@rcts.org.uk or by telephone 07403 885061

Roger Sandford, 52 Knowsley Road, Cosham, Portsmouth. PO6 2PF

All enquires, further questions / clarification to the contact details above.

The rules for the competition are as follows: -

1. All entries must be submitted by current members of the RCTS Chichester Branch. Society Membership for the year 2026 must have been paid prior to submitting entries to the competition.
2. All entries must be solely the entrant's own work.
3. Images submitted for the competition may be used by the RCTS in any current or future publications and in any medium. Entrants are deemed to accept this condition – appropriate credits/copyright will be acknowledged. No monetary rewards will be paid.
4. Images may be submitted only in the following mediums: -
 - a. 35mm transparency
 - b. Digital file in .jpg format.
 - c. Prints
5. Images may be entered in the classes shown in the table below.

Class	Image Subject	Taken on or after Date	Taken on or before Date
Contemporary Steam	Modern day photographs of steam locomotives and steam hauled trains. The steam locomotive/train must be the main subject in the image.	01 Jan 2000	31 Aug 2026
Contemporary Diesel & Electric	As above except with non-steam motive power	01 Jan 2000	31 Aug 2026
Vintage Steam	Vintage photographs of steam locomotives and steam hauled trains. The steam locomotive/train must be the main subject in the image.	N/A	31 Dec 1999
Vintage Diesel & Electric	As above except with non-steam motive power	N/A	31 Dec 1999
Infrastructure	Images of Railway paraphernalia where the main subject is not a motive power source.	Photographs taken at any point in time.	

6. Entrants may submit up to 3 entries per class making a maximum allowed total of 15 images in the competition.
7. Whilst all reasonable care will be taken of entrants' images, entrants must accept that their images are submitted at their own risk. RCTS will not accept any liability for their loss or damage.
8. All images must be labelled as shown on the entry form. An entry form must accompany all submissions
9. The judges' decisions are final.

RCTS Chichester Hayling Island Visit

Wednesday 09 September

Walk the Hayling Billy Trail and visit the Hayling Light Railway

An organised group visit which will include a hosted visit to the Carriage sheds of the Hayling Light Railway at Eastoke.

Timings - subject to final confirmation.

Meet Havant Station 09:45

Walk to The Spring Centre via the original track bed for a short comfort break.

Depart The Spring Centre 10:25

Walk the entire length of the Hayling Billy Trail / track bed, apart from crossing on foot the road bridge between the mainland and the Island. Note there are no toilet facilities once we move on to Hayling Island until we reach West Town, the area close to the former Hayling station. We expect to stop for a photo call at the restored signal on the Hayling side of the original railway bridge.

On arrival at the site of the Hayling station there are facilities, pub, café, supermarket etc. nearby.

We can then walk, or take a short bus ride to Eastoke, for a 14:00 escorted short site tour and ride on the railway.

Buses depart from Eastoke back to Havant bus station, close to the railway station, every 15 minutes

We will ask each participant to donate £5 to the Hayling Light Railway and there will be small charge for travelling on the railway.

If you are interested in joining this day out to Hayling Island or would like further information please email chichester@rcts.org.uk

In the event of a poor weather forecast for 09 September we will move the walk to the following week 16 September.



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

No meetings July and August,

Sept 15th - tba

Oct 20th - Martyn Davies, Mixed Trains

Nov 17th - Ian Wright, Steam on the Southern 1965-7

Dec 15th - Steve Hayward, Video Film show.

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 5

By John Barrowdale

In the noughties Clive Howells decided to call it a day as Train Manager and a new manager was appointed. As happens when a new broom takes over the long-established volunteers did not like the change and slowly, they decided to stop coming. To compensate for this loss, it was decided to reduce the number of wine waiters per coach to one and waiters to two. This resulted in more work for everyone and everything became rushed and I think standards started to slip and more people decided not to volunteer. The new manager was not a people person and never consulted the volunteers working under her about any changes she was proposing to make.

We lost some of our volunteer chefs and had to hire in agency staff which reduced the amount of profit back to the railway.

When I was serving the various parts of the main meal, I usually engaged customers in conversation usually asking them was this the first time they had travelled on the Watercress Belle and how far they had come. Often this would be their first time, but some had been umpteen times and said I had served them before. Obviously, the bulk of our customers came from within a 40 to 50 mile radius of our railway, but I was surprised how many travelled some considerable distance often passing heritage railways nearer to their own homes doing the same sort of dining experiences to get to Alresford. Many customers booked local hotels to avoid drinking and driving afterwards so we helped the local economy.

Being sometimes volunteers from other departments we were often asked questions from customers on other aspects of the railway. I usually got a request from another colleague saying a customer wants to know something about the engine hauling our train etc. Some were surprised when I said on another night, I could be found on the engine firing it rather than serving their food.

The railway books out the Belle to large groups and weddings are a particular favourite. We manage to keep everyone in their seats while we serve the starter and main course but at this point guests start looking for the family member they only see at weddings and want a chat. When we come to serve the dessert course it can be a bit of a lottery as to whether the guest eats what they ordered but everyone is happy and they have a great time. The Bride and Groom get to have their photo taken with the engine and can climb into the cab but most brides see the soot and decline leaving their new husband to explore with the driver.

We were often asked what our day jobs were, which quietened them when I said I worked for HMIT, a real conversation killer. One of my colleagues use to mime their job looking the customer up and down asking them to guess his occupation. Answers would vary some saying policeman, passport officer, but he was an undertaker measuring them for their coffin which he got great pleasure revealing.

Over my 30 years I did every job on the train some much longer than others. The only tasks I never did was the Train Manager Role, chef and assistant chef plus I never worked for the generator coach team.

I rarely ever came across anybody I knew having a meal on the train from outside the railway. I always looked at the seating plans at the start of the evening to see if I recognised any names in both coaches to see if there was anybody from my school days there or from the day job in HMIT. There was nobody from the former, but I did come across about half a dozen from the latter. I once served Pete Waterman on a special hire for the launch of 30925 Cheltenham when he opened the boiler shop/carriage shed in 2012.

Overall, they were enjoyable years for me, and I miss my old colleagues, and several have found work on the Countryman dining trains so I still see some occasionally. Yes, we had our problems but usually overcame them and I recall one evening when Clive Howells the train manager had to be a coach manager due to lack of staff. All he had was one wine waiter and one waiter (me) to serve a full coach all evening. Clive always put a high value to my volunteer Belle services afterwards!

This all came to an end when Covid struck and all trains stopped.

When it was time to start again the MHR management decided that due to the difficulty of recruiting volunteer staff to put the train out to private contract and so my time working on the dining train came to an end.

The new waiting team are mostly youngsters with no knowledge of the Watercress Line and as I said above, we volunteers could answer questions from the customers.

Meanwhile the Countryman lunch time dining train remained volunteer run with the excellent Christine Moseley being in charge and still is today.

July's Miscellany: by Geoff May ©



In its original guise in the preservation era, Class A3 4-6-2 4472 'Flying Scotsman' passes Wandsworth Common with the Victoria-Brighton leg of the 'Flying Scotsman goes South' charter on 17th September 1966.

Haslemere Station Signal Box

The Grade II listed signal box at Haslemere station has been officially handed over to community ownership.

The signal box was in service for more than 130 years and has been restored and will be open to the public on specified days.

The ownership is with the Haslemere Signal Box Trust and hand over took place on June 13th.

The Trust intend to open the box to the public every other Sunday starting on 26th July.



Photos by Haslemere
Signal Box Trust



Great British Railways (GBR) liveried EMU arrives on West Coastway

By Roger Sandford

Ahead of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) being taken into public ownership and coming under the Great British Railways (GBR) umbrella on 31 May Southern Class 387 172 was unveiled at Brighton in the new corporate red, white and blue livery.

This unit began life at GWR, before becoming surplus to requirements, transferring to Great Northern. In 2025 upon reintroduction of the stored class 379s to Great Northern 172 was moved to Southern, whilst still retaining its original GWR livery.

It finally reached West Coastway in its new guise on 15 June commencing with the 05:15 Brighton to Southampton Central. Shuttling between the two South Coast cities it ended the day at Littlehampton. The following morning it ran ECS to Barnham to form the 04:59 service to Southampton. A second day on the route ended that evening, forming the last service from Southampton to Brighton.

The image was taken at Cosham on the 16 June as 172 departed towards Southampton Central with the 08:13 from Brighton.



Heritage Railways and preservation centres that failed or were short lived

Part 1

By John Barrowdale

Our readers will look at the picture below and some will know exactly where it is taken, whilst others may be hard pressed to guess where it is. What everybody will know it is yet another picture of a preservation favourite, 35028 Clan Line.

It was taken between Liss (LMR) station and the Longmoor Military Railway exchange sidings that connected the system with the Waterloo- Portsmouth direct line in late 1970.

After 35028 was withdrawn at the end of BR steam on the Southern Region on the 9/7/67 it soon found a home at the Longmoor Military Railway at their large centre at Longmoor Downs together with several other preserved locomotives thanks to David Shepherd's efforts with the British army to site these engines somewhere where they could be stored in safe surroundings and used again. This arrangement lasted 3 years, but very ambitious plans to operate the LMR after it closed in 1969 as a heritage railway came to nothing as the MOD still needed the land in the area for army training purposes which continues to this day.

Plan B then came along which is really the subject of this short article, which was to move all the preserved locomotives to Liss (LMR) railway station and operate a preserved railway from there to Liss Forest, just under a mile long and would include valuable sidings at the exchange with BR. The area around the station was crowded with locos and stock as by then No 600 Gordon & 196 Errol Lonsdale had joined them plus USA tank 30064 via Salisbury, Droxford and Fareham Goods depot. Occasional open days were operated by those engines still in steam which is when the above picture was obtained. 35028 went up and down light to just before the level crossing at Liss Forest from memory without crossing the road there. It gave footplate rides with up to 10-12 people in the cab plus driver & fireman and I think I had a couple of rides during the afternoon. Some local neighbours were not best pleased with our plans and were very audible with their objections. The MOD decided to auction the land to the highest bidder and a group of local NIMBYs consisting of six well off people outbid the railway preservationists despite having wealthy David Shepherd on our side. The loco owners were given time to relocate to new locations like the Bluebell, K & ESR, Radstock, Severn Valley Railway, while 35028 went off to the steam centre at Ashford in the old steam loco shed joining other locos and stock there including the SECR O1 0-6-0 now on the Bluebell Railway. Clan Line stayed there until 1975 and the Ashford Steam Centre eventually closed becoming yet another failed preservation project. From Ashford it went to the Bulmer's Railway Centre

at Hereford joining No 6000 King George V mainly to be close to the Welsh Marches BR main line which was an authorised main line steam route. She moved to the BR depot and sidings at Marylebone from 1985 to 1988 to be near the steam route between Marylebone and Stratford Upon Avon as by this time cider traffic by rail had finished at Hereford and 6000 would be due another 10-year overhaul which never took place, so yet another closed steam centre. A penultimate move to Southall would see Clan Line move there in 1988 for 11 years. In 1999 it went to its current home at Stewarts Lane and has lived here happily ever since.

Looking back to the Liss preservation centre, had the preservationists won the bid to buy the land I do wonder whether they would have got a light railway order to cross the Liss Forest level crossing and expand northwards over army land. I also doubt whether they could afford to pay for BR to keep the connection with the Portsmouth direct from the exchange sidings open and the crossing from the up line to the down line for main line locos like Clan Line to operate over BR routes. Today you can still walk the track bed from Liss Forest to Liss station as it is a public footpath and there are information signs telling walkers of its previous history.



Following on from above to the present day I took this picture about 09.45 13th June when Clan Line was running about 10 minutes late, just before Roger, Geoff and myself went to attend the RCTS Annual Regional group meeting at Woking United Reform Church.



My days as a Fireman - Part three

by Alan Wallbank

I moved up a link in the late summer of 1963 to what was generally referred to as the 'tank gang' and as the name suggests we mainly did short trip workings with tank locomotives. By this time, the W and M7 classes had all gone, leaving just the 80xxx standard class and the Midland Ivatt 2.6.2 tanks. The last thirty of this class, numbered 41290 – 41319 were built at Crewe and were allocated to the Southern Region from new. The M7's were used on lines such as the Meon Valley, the southern half closing on the day I started work, while the 'W' engines often seen working trains to Fawley, a route I never worked over in the days of steam.

The Ivatt's were nicknamed 'Mickey Mouse Tanks' which even today remains a common phrase when talking about this versatile and popular engine. The work content of each link improved the firemen's experience with Tank Gang being the bottom rung at that time. It was the same for the drivers, with the younger men in the lower links, through to the senior men at the top.

There was one exception, as it seems that drivers who were called up during WW11, had returned to Eastleigh only to find that they had lost their seniority and so found themselves in the lower links. That applied to my first driver David Batten. I am not sure of his age, but he may have been about 40. Round faced with a cheeky toothless grin, he smoked Woodbines, the paper of these tipped cigarettes often sticking to his lips.

He was a happy go lucky driver and this relaxed attitude helped us get on well with each other. He was always larking about and I soon joined in which did not go down to well when I was with other drivers. One particular memory was recalled by Dave when he was a fireman on a circus train. Dave said his driver kept looking out of the cab, so he said to him that if he kept poking his head out, people might think he was one of the animals!!!

Dave's main interest was his Hi-Fi Stereo system and he even invited me to his house on couple of occasions. I am not sure of the name of his equipment, but it encouraged me to buy a combined Klinger turntable and amplifier with separate speakers.

Another driver of a similar age to Dave in the lower links was Pat St John, who had made several crossings on the Arctic convoys, as they steamed through dark nights of the Arctic Ocean to the Soviet ports of Murmansk and Archangel. Besides the constant attack by German submarines and planes, the spray from the high waves would immediately freeze on the ship's upper surfaces, causing a heavy coating of ice and he often recalled how they had to constantly chip the ice away to stop the ship capsizing.

Going back to the young drivers, they were mainly those who were previously on the railway, but had been called up for National Service. They had seen active service in Malaya where 395 men had lost their lives from 1947-1963. They occasionally spoke about life in the steamy jungle, but few mentioned it at all. Of course there were men who had seen action in WW11, yet only Pat St John ever mentioned the hardships of that time. The young drivers were probably ten to fifteen years older than me and their National Service had seen them grow physically in stature. They had hands like dinner plates and could

fire to an engine with one hand tied behind their backs. They had young families and to me they were like father figures who treated me like their own sons and this helped me enormously during those early years. The older drivers in the senior links were difficult to get on with and they hardly spoke to the young firemen. You could go a whole day without hardly a 'grunt' made especially difficult when they would just wander off without saying where they were going, very annoying if you went somewhere that you had not been previously. I feel they couldn't cope with whipper snappers who had seen nothing of life, while they had fought through the horrors of war.

Much of our work in the tank gang consisted of goods trains from Eastleigh to the yards of Bevois Park near St Denys Station and Northam just a hundred yards further away on the opposite side of the track. Then there was Millbrook, Romsey and Woolston and Woolston tip, sited on the left side approaching the station from the Southampton direction, with much of the waste being railway ballast and concrete sleepers. I found this work really boring, just short trips where head codes were constantly changed, often at night in the pouring rain.

I believe Bevois Park to Northam, a distance of only a few hundred yards was top and right smoke box which had to be taken down and a new code put in place when returning to Bevois Park. Up and down, back to front again and again, always waiting ages to cross the mainline from one side to the other. I seem to think we only went to Woolston, Millbrook and Romsey during daylight hours. It was at the latter that I took a photo of Vic Hales my driver that day and he took one of me. On this occasion we had a 76 Standard as we shunted the goods shed on the down side and the yard on the up where the photo was taken.

After shunting work had been completed at some locations, it was common practice for signalmen to let trains go early, instead of waiting for the booked time, but Woolston was generally an exception due to the long sections between signals. So, if we did get away early, we made a special effort to clear St Denys so that the Woolston signalman could let the next train through on time, as any delay would be his fault. We often joked that the one Woolston signalman would not let us go early even if the train he was waiting for had just left Waterloo!!! In general, we always had more than enough time for shunting at places like Bevois Park and Millbrook where we would often play 'Bennies', the card game.

That reminds me of Lawton & Wilson a motorcycle business located in a long shed like building adjacent to the railway just beyond the up side of Millbrook Station. Once a Malt House it was where I took my Triumph T90 after an unrecalled accident that bent the front mudguard backwards. They wanted to replace it with a new one, but managed to repair it like new. After it closed the listed building caught fire, so making way for the new road system that passes the area today. Incidentally, Sydney Lawton was a TT rider in the late 1940's and early 50's.



We also worked local passenger trains with the Ivatts, such as Southampton Terminus to Eastleigh and vice versa and these engines were also used at the Pre Assembly Depot at Eastleigh's East Yard commonly known as the PAD. It was sited to the right of East Yard north of Eastleigh, with both yards being shunted on a rising gradient. Although shunting in East Yard was by a 350-diesel shunter, the PAD remained steam worked to the end. It was where the permanent way trains were loaded up for the weekend engineering works, returning on the Sunday or Monday morning.



Photo of Southampton Terminus – copyright to the late Barry Eagles

If the other shunting work mentioned earlier was boring, this was hair pulling stuff!!! In and out back and forth hour after hour where we seemed to be putting the same wagons back where they had come from and nothing had changed from when we first started! I suppose it's no surprise to learn that it was also called the 'Mad House'. As a fireman we had to constantly relay the shunters hand signal to the driver as the engine faced north, a tedious task that was relieved if the driver gave us a 'go' on the regulator. The middle of the week was usually quieter, so it was 'Benny' time again. On one occasion while at the 'mad house', I decided to photograph a particular Bullied hauled passenger train on the up line as it passed the PAD. This meant hauling myself up through the sliding roof of the 'Ivatt' and quickly snapping the train before my strength gave out. I still have that photo today of what looks like 34100, only one of two I ever took in colour with that camera. I'm not sure if the link included the Locomotive Works, where the Yankee USA tanks were used. Ideal engines for shunting, but again pretty boring work. On one occasion and in complete contrast, we had a Q1 Austerity 0-6-0 known as 'Charlies' due to their 'C' wheel arrangement. The driver on that occasion had the grand name of Tom Featherstone who was close to retirement. I remember him as having rugged features and bulging eyes and wonder now what he had seen of life having being born around 1880. I remember visiting the 'Works' on their open days before joining the railway when we were led through all the stages of engine overhauls including a visit to the foundry where the dangers molten steel seemed too close for comfort.

During these early years, I only rode my scooter to Eastleigh on Saturday nights, as most of the work was on ballast trains. We would get relief on site in the early hours of the morning when there were no trains to get home. My route took me past the Ford Transit factory at Swaythling then left through West End, Fareham High Street and home, a journey of about 25 miles. In general, my daily journey was just to Cosham station and back, a journey of 3 ½ miles each way. That went on for a few months until one day on my way home, I was more interested in the young lady on the other side of the road, than the van

that had stopped in front of me. By the time I looked back, a collision was inevitable. There was a short SCREEEEEECH then THUD as I hit the vans rear doors. I didn't fall off, but felt blood trickling down my chin. The driver was not too bothered about the superficial damage to his van, being more concerned about my wound and suggested I needed to have it stitched up. I didn't bother which left with a scar which I still have today. My Lambretta had definitely come off worse with the front wheel pushed back to the leg shields, which had caused an open fracture of the steering column above the mudguard. I did manage to get home, but scooter was a right off. Dad's comments are unrecorded.

Fortunately, I was soon mobile again with a new steed as I had bought a 197cc Francis Barnett Falcon motorcycle with an AMC engine from Bob Hopkins, a young driver who had recently moved from Salisbury to get his drivers job at Eastleigh. The white and dark green machine was like new, only having a few thousand miles on the clock and fitted with a large handlebar wind screen, a useful item when travelling in poor weather.

This was the machine that I eventually used when taking my motorcycle test, which I failed. The next test was quite challenging as only second and fourth gears would engage, so naturally I stalled a couple of times trying to pull away from a stand in the higher gear. This was followed by the examiner becoming exasperated by my incorrect answer on what I should do when passing a cyclist. Eventually I got it right with the examiner saying that he hoped all the other questions would not take so long to answer!!! Thankfully he passed me, which was such a relief as I really didn't want to go through it all again.

By the time I started firing, nearly all the engines had enclosed cabs, except for the U and N classes that we called Montes, Montgolipers or Woollies, because the latter were built at Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. These were the engines we had when going to Gosport where for some reason I only recall Bedenham Sidings, Lees Lane Crossing and passing the Ashley Wallpaper Works which I believe had a white exterior, on the left side going down. On arrival at Gosport, we shunted the yard and then backed into the station to await departure. The heavy wooden trussed glazed roof that covered the two platforms caught light in a bombing raid in June 1941 and collapsed. It was rebuilt in 1947 with lighter steel trusses, but only the goods side was covered, the result of post war economies. The run-down state of the buildings was relieved by the architecture of the stations magnificent exterior that made any visit to Gosport such a delight. The return journey was tender first, so it was important to use the pep pipe to water down the coal, to stop the coal dust blowing into our faces. Failure to do so meant a right old rollicking from the driver!

Having moved from the ash pan link meant signing on and entering the main building, passing the notice cases and the area where the wages were paid and then into one of two rooms. The first was where the drivers sat at a large rectangular table to the right of the entrance door. Ahead and slightly to the right was an opening that led into the room used by the firemen. It had a similar wooden table and benches as the driver's room on the right-side wall and fireplace directly ahead. On the left two cold taps facing down on two adjacent butler sinks that backed onto windows overlooking Campbell Road. As far as I recall, both rooms had oil and greased ingrained concrete floors.

While the firemen played 'Bennies', the drivers were engaged in the skilful art of Solo Whist, a card game with four people. It was played with a mixture of concentration, memory, bluff and skill and one I found extremely enjoyable to watch. I spent many hours observing the way each player tried to outwit the

others, until one day I was invited to join in. I didn't take me too long to learn the finer arts, made especially exciting as again we played for money. The main drawback, was the higher the bid, the more money you had to pay out if you lost!

Going back to my cleaning days, I was acquainted with a word that I had never heard before, as it was impressed on me that I ought to join a 'Union'?! Naturally I was unsure what to do, but decided to opt for the 'Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen' member, more commonly known as ASLEF, although there was another union the National Union of Railwaymen' NUR. ASLEF was the was the most common union in the south of the country and is still the main union for footplate staff today.

Pensions was another alien word and if I remember correctly there were a few providers mentioned to me so I was unsure as what to do, but fortunately in 1965 the National Railway Pension Scheme was brought in that covered the entire work force. Now in retirement I have a welcome sum each month, a reminder how important it is to have another source of income besides the one provided by the state. There was also a driver who sold Provident Mutual Life Insurances of various year terms, with many of us receiving various lump sums on maturity. His name was Peter Bramble who along with his elder brother Ted, were one of many brothers who worked on the railway at Eastleigh.

If you had Peter as a driver, you knew you would be in for a lively journey, but I was not expecting what happened on a stopper from Bournemouth with a 76 Standard. We started off with the reverser in the full forward position and he left it there all the way to Brockenhurst! That meant every two shovels full of coal that I put on the fire, would see at least one exit the chimney!!! We had plenty of steam though, but it was hard work keeping up with his mad driving.

A lot of our shifts began after midnight to about 3.30am, so it was quite common for a number of us to catch the last train to Eastleigh. As it did not stop at Cosham or Portchester we who travelled from these stations had to catch the preceding Southampton train and change at Fareham and wait for about ten minutes for our onward journey.

To begin with I used to park my motorcycle at Cosham via a side gate and into the rear conservatory of the empty station building a bit of a tight squeeze, but out of sight of prying eyes. When that became unavailable, I would put the bike on the platform, with my crash helmet and gloves on top of the lockers in the porter's room. At this time, I had a terrible failing and that was oversleeping day and night, so it was quite common for me to be accelerating along Cosham platform as my train was arriving on the opposite track. I would be frantically locking the bike up, dumping helmet in the mess room and jumping down on the line, then leaping up onto the opposite platform and boarding the train as it was about to leave. It was not unusual for me to arrive at Cosham too late for the last train, so I had to dash off to Fareham and zoom up the platform there.

At that time, today's 'bay' platform was a through line, so UP trains arrived at platform 2. One night I didn't have enough time to get across to the other platform, so had to clamber up the offside of the passenger coach just as the train was leaving. It's a good job the door wasn't locked! Twice I missed the train altogether, so had to ride all the way to Eastleigh. The journey by train from Fareham was only about 20 minutes, yet we would remove all the light bulbs in the passenger compartment and go to sleep! One night, I was the only one travelling, yet I still removed the light bulbs! The next thing I heard

was someone shouting as they walked down the corridor. Salisbury all change Salisbury. Salisbury!!! Good grief, I had been asleep for about two hours!!!

I was now in panic mode, as my first thought was how would I get back to Eastleigh at around 2 'o' clock in the morning!? I was soon directed to the freight yard where a Southampton bound train via Eastleigh was about to leave. Dashing across the tracks I soon came to the rear brake van of a long goods train where the guard was encouraging me to jump aboard. I quickly hauled myself inside as the engine began to ease out of the yard. In the distance, I could hear the clinking sound of loose couplings becoming taut and with the guard telling me to 'hang on', I quickly grabbed the handbrake just as an invisible force tried to send me from one end of the van to the other! I quickly steadied myself as the train moved quite slowly at first as it negotiated the pointwork out of Salisbury Yard, then through the tunnel and round the 15 mph right curve, before picking up speed as we rounded Milford curve for the steep climb to Winklebury. Once over the crest, the gradient is generally a falling one all the way to Romsey, then a slight rise towards Chandlers Ford before dropping down into Eastleigh.

For those who are not railway minded, it's worth pointing out that goods trains at that time generally had a maximum speed of 45mph and could consist of up to 60 unbraked wagons, this being known as a 'loose coupled' train. This meant that braking was only available on the engine and in the guards van. Sometimes a few wagons at the front had vacuum brakes controlled from the engine, the train being known as having a 'fitted head'. The driver and the guard would have an intimate knowledge of all the gradients en-route, so they work together to control the speed of the train and keep couplings tight by using the brakes available. This helps to prevent the train breaking in two caused by various parts of train travelling at different speeds over undulating lines. On this morning, I watched the guard as he skilfully applied the vans hand brake at various points en-route ensuring we had a smooth journey. It was a bit chilly as the coal burning stove was unlit as it was only a short journey, but it was better than being stuck at Salisbury. I seem to remember that the driver was aware that I wanted to get off at Eastleigh, so as we approached the Locomotive Works Offices near Campbell Road bridge, I stepped down onto the vans running board and made a smooth departure to reach terra firma. The Works clock showed 3.25am and luckily for me, just in time for my 3.30am signing on time! This incident showed how important it was to keep control of the train from a driver's point of view, as the guard was so vulnerable to violent and sudden forces of nature that could cause serious injury.

As mentioned earlier, in general there would be about five of us on that last train and on arrival at Eastleigh we would usually walk down the line, a strictly forbidden route and cross the track under Campbell Road bridge.

After signing on, we would ask the foreman which engine we had so we could get it ready and then depending on what time we left shed, we would either wait for the driver or go back to the mess room and play cards or sleep on one of the wooden benches, especially if it was the 3.30 am start.

The time allowance to prepare large engines was one hour and three quarters for smaller locomotives. At this time there was a shortage of engine equipment known as 'tools', so we had to rob other locos to find everything we needed starting off by searching those that were not in steam. The shed was quite dark, even with the overhead lights, so the first task was to improve the footplate illumination. If it was a Bullied, I would start the generator by moving a large handle in line with a steam pipe, resulting in whole

cab being lit up. Quite often there was not enough steam for the generator to run, so it had to be coaxed into operation by getting down on the ground and locating the generator on the driver's side. It had a bulbous end cover that could be opened by removing a chained securing pin. Inside there was a circular shaft with about three holes around its circumference. The securing pin would be placed in one of these apertures and then moved sharply downwards to encourage the shaft to spin and hence run the generator. If this failed even after several attempts we had to return to the footplate and search the cupboards for a flare lamp. This was a round metal container with a side fingered handle and a shortish wide spout filled with a wick that absorbed the paraffin within and when lit provided a good, but sooty flame. It was generally used by drivers when carrying out their oiling duties around the engine.

Also in cupboards were the thick and thin oil cans and one of paraffin that we took to the stores to be topped up. Once back on the engine some of the thin oil would be put in the feeder, another metal container with a long thin spout. This would be placed on a shelf above the fire hole door to get warm, so allowing the oil to run more freely when used. The thick oil was used in the lubricators. We then had to assess our 'tool' compliment that included four white head round disc boards and four lamps. With the latter, the paraffin container within was removed and filled, while the burner wick tip was 'pinched' as the flame bearing part gets hard with use. The thick glass frontal lens and red shade were cleaned, the lamp lit and the flame adjusted. Generally, three lamps were required for departure, two for the head code showing a white light leaving the shed and the other on the rear exhibiting the red shade. The lamps on the Southern were well bodied, but were in short supply so a Midland type lamp appeared. It had a small frontal lens and a large looped carrying handle.

With the Bullieds, there were six fixed electric lamps front and back powered from the generator, each with their own switch, but paraffin lamps were still required in case of a generator failure. Other tools included a bucket and brush and a coal pick mainly used for breaking up large lumps before shovelling them into the fire. There were two-gauge glass lamps each with its own paraffin container used for observing the boiler water level. They were fitted onto a bracket next to the gauge, although not required on the Bullieds unless the generator stopped working. Next the shovel, with each region having their own design in handle shaft length and blade capacity. Also, a rocker bar, a stout thick shaft about 3 feet in length, mainly used to rock the fire grate back and forth. I will explain its use in more detail when I mention the fire cleaning procedure. Lastly, we had three types of fire implements, known as 'irons'. They consisted of a clinker shovel, a pricker and a dart. The shovel was at the end of a very long rounded steel shaft, that looped at the other end as a hand hold.

The pricker was similar in design, but had an 'L' shaped end, this being a single flat bladed prong with a pointed end. It was used on the mainline to rake through the fire, so encouraging better combustion during periods of poor steaming, which my case was a regular occurrence. It was also used to encourage clinker onto the clinker shovel when cleaning the fire. Lastly, there was a 'dart' a heavy iron bar with a chisel end, used to break up stubborn clinker, usually required on GWR engines as their fires weren't cleaned when relieving these engines at Eastleigh Station.

On open cabled locos these irons were stored on either side of the tender side with the looped handle over an upright shaft and between two similar posts the other end. On enclosed cab locos they were stored in a tunnel each side of the tender. I remember on one occasion searching endlessly for a rocker bar and eventually found one right down the end of the 'iron' tunnel. I spent a considerable time trying

to prise it out with the pricker and after what seemed an age it suddenly came free. As I grabbed my prize, a fireman arrived to prepare that engine, so I had to leave empty handed!

The next job was the one I hated most and that was to fill the sand boxes. Generally, our engines would be nearer the northern end of the shed while the sand furnace was at the extreme southern end. On reaching the furnace, we had to find the sand hod, a longish metal container with an opening at the front and a carrying handle in the centre, with another hand hold at the back. Once filled it was almost too much for my puny muscles, but less sand meant more journeys back to the furnace. It helped if I could find a wheel barrow, but I often found myself struggling back to the engine with the hod in hand. If that was bad enough, I still had to get the hod to the sand boxes. This meant lifting it onto the buffer beam, then lifting it again via steps on the side of the loco and pushing it onto the framing, the walkway above the wheels. There were usually two sand chutes, each one having a lid. I would evenly distribute the contents and if more was needed then it didn't get done as I was all too much for me and I still had to do the other side. The unconverted Bullieds were quite awkward, as I had to seek out the cleaner's trestle and rest it against the inclined sides where two panels half way up the cladded side were slid ways and the hod raised up to release the contents.

If the engine was working a 'Special' train, we had to take one of the disc boards to the stores and ask for something like Spl 125. It came as paper strips that were stuck on the disc board using a pot of glue. Next job was to get up in the tender and trim the coal so it would not fall off when on the move. Nearly everything done now, just check the fire and water, then wipe down the boiler above the fire hole door with an oily rag, clean the windows, then return to the cabin, make a cup of tea and wait for the driver to sign on. Near the end of steam, we would take the tea can back to the engine as other firemen had a habit of pinching the tools we spent ages putting together. All that work took most of the allotted hour and even more when searching for tools.

Once the driver had arrived and oiled up, we would move outside the shed and top up the tender with water. I would now be preparing the fire depending on when and where the train was starting from. Our next stop was the shed exit where I would get down and open a door of a box secured to a post. Inside was a large clock like device with a single hand and numerous white circular discs around its outer face, each one having a destination in black letters. Above each destination discs there was a small lever, so if we were going to 'East Yard', I would pull down the lever above that disc and lock it into position, then push back on the one operated by the previous engine crew. This released the dial hand that rotated clockwise and stopped at the route selected, making a single ring each time it passed a disc. On the other side of the line was Eastleigh West Signal Box that had a similar apparatus that instantly repeated the requested destination. Sometimes, the signalman could be seen gesticulating outside the signal box, because the lever had not been pulled in properly and the dial was going round and round making a constant ringing sound in the 'box'. Incidentally, the Western men called signalmen 'bobbies', as policemen were once used to hand signal trains. Once the ground signal had cleared, we would head up to East Yard where I would couple the engine to the wagons, then place the lamps or disc boards for the correct head code. The fire would now be receiving more attention, as the steam pressure increased for the journey ahead.

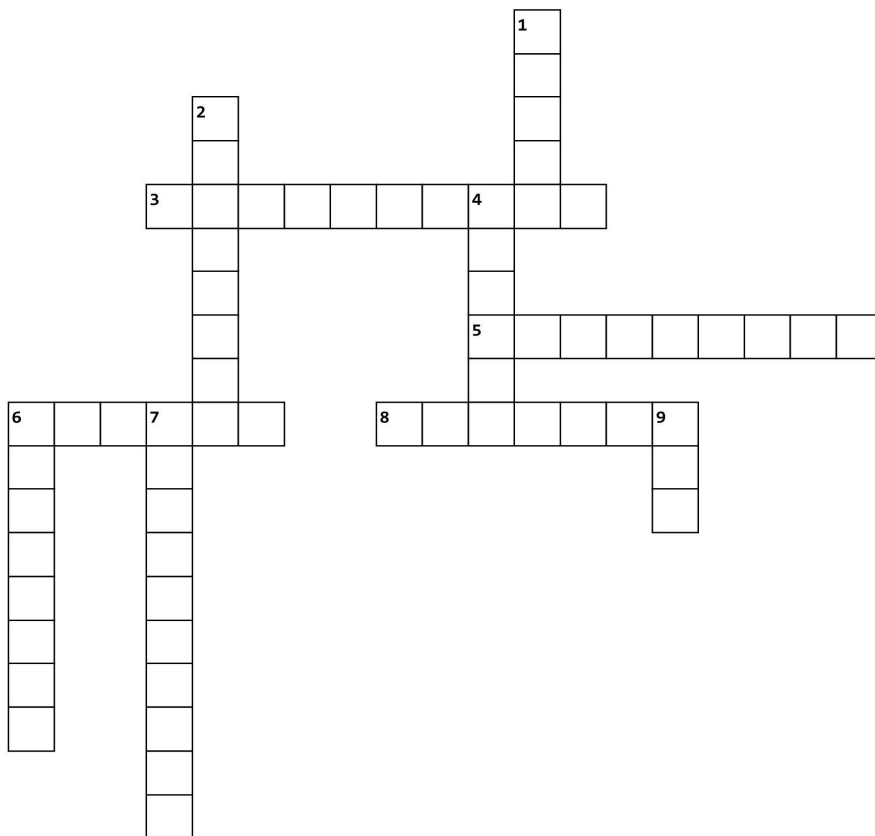
On leaving the yard north or south, I had to exchange hand signals with the guard to confirm that the train was complete. This was done by be waving one of the lit paraffin lamps showing a white flame from

side to side and the guard doing the same showing a green light. In daylight I would just move my arm up and down while the guard displayed a green flag. Most of these journeys were uneventful, but some were more of a challenge than others that I will recall in the next part.

Footplate work was a very dirty job, not helped by being unable to have a proper wash before we went home, as there were only the cold water taps in the cabins. There were no lockers either, so I had to travel home on the train with my dirty overalls soiling the seat cushions. I was aware of this, but all I could do was to sit on a newspaper if one was available. Once home, I would have a bath every day, the water becoming so dirty that refill was necessary. To make sure my dirty overalls were cleaned properly, I took them to Chapman & Sons, a Dry Cleaners in East Street, Havant.

The more they were cleaned the less they retained their colour, with some firemen having near white overalls, with one nick named 'OMO' after a washing powder of the time. This fireman always had brightly polished boots and seemed to end the day's work as clean as when he arrived!

July Crossword



Across

- 3.** In Geoff May's photo 4472 is passing which common
- 5.** According to our last speaker there were 237, now 12
- 6.** A Tramway to the south of Chichester went here
- 8.** The branch are to walk the old line to south of Havant

Down

- 1.** Name the engine type that Alan W took the photo,
- 2.** John B took a photo of this engine at Woking
- 4.** The branch had to cancel a trip to this place
- 6.** 1886-1919 this line went from Fratton to East
- 7.** What was the topic of our last speaker
- 9.**] Initials of the new public body taking over the private

Answers on the last page

Branch Meeting Report
Wednesday 27th May 2026
‘Signalling topics’

Signalling is essential to the operation of a safe and reliable railway but has often been neglected as the main topic of presentations. Chichester Branch went some way towards addressing this when it welcomed Peter Gibbons, a retired railwayman and now a volunteer signaller on the Severn Valley Railway, to give our last presentation of the season before our summer break.

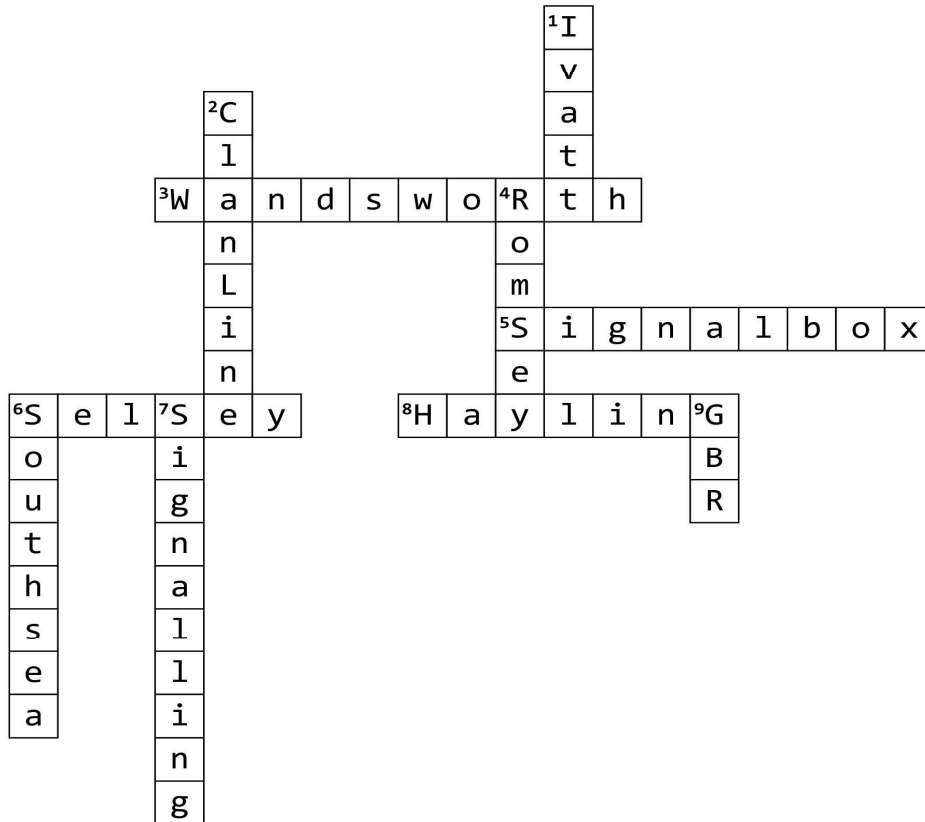
Peter’s original ambition to become a train driver was thwarted by not having the high standard of unaided vision then required and so he embarked on a career path in the signalling grades that took him to several boxes in the Kent, Sussex and Surrey areas. He was able to illustrate his talk with detailed pictures taken inside all the boxes he worked in and backed up by an excellent knowledge of their operation.

Peter covered the development of signalling from the rudimentary rule book of the Eastern Counties Railway - designed for an era of low adult literacy - through to the sophisticated signalling in place today. The impact that modernisation has had on railway signalling was eloquently explained by Peter when he charted the decline of the traditional box. In 1960 there were 237 boxes on the Central Division of BR’s Southern Region; in 2025 just 12 remained together with two signalling centres and the Three Bridges ROC.

A thoroughly absorbing talk from a very knowledgeable presenter who we hope to see again.

Answers to the crossword

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