

Railway Ramblings

Issue 115

February 2020

The monthly newsletter of the Hitchin Branch of the RCTS

Meetings This Month

At Hitchin (19:30-22:00, doors open 19:00)

11 February: **More Thrills and Spills** "Stories from an ex-railwayman" Chris Blackman

At Welwyn Garden City (14:00-16:30, doors open 13:30)

25 February: **The 1829 Ordeal 'The Rainhill Trials'** "The very early historic event" Dr Rudi Newman

From the Photo Album



The last LNER HST passes through Hitchin, on 21 Dec 2019, on its way to Kings Cross. (See report on page 2.)

Photo: John Scorer

If you have photos (old or new) that you are willing to share with other members please supply them, with a suitable caption, to the Editor (John.Dossett@btinternet.com). They should be your own photographs!

Chairman's Platform

By the time you read this the evenings will be drawing out and it's nearly that time of year again – the branch AGM which will be held on 10 March at Hitchin. As usual the formal business will be followed by the opportunity for members to give a presentation - I look forward to these and if this is something you would be prepared to do then please let Dave Elsdon, or me, know in advance.

The AGM is of course the time to let you all know formally how the branch has fared over the past year and to give members the chance to elect or re-elect their branch officers and committee. Reports will be with members well before the meeting date and if there are matters you want to raise at the meeting then I would appreciate notice of these.

I am old enough to remember the replacement of the Deltics with that flagship of the modern railway - the HST. Although missing the Deltics and their sound on the night air, as I lay in bed, the increase in comfort and style could not be denied. It is therefore with some sadness that we have to report the departure of the HSTs from our part of the network. This issue of Railway Ramblings carries a nice photo of the farewell tour passing through Hitchin and some accompanying notes, all provided by John Scorer – thanks John. The HST has been such a feature of our mainline for many years and it seems appropriate to bid them a proper farewell.

Finally, although it is now well behind us, I feel I should comment on how delighted I was with the number of members who attended the Christmas meetings – especially the one at WGC where I gave a presentation about the love of my life, 92 Squadron; or perhaps it was really due to the allure of Adrian & Martin's festive nibbles?

Farewell to the LNER HSTs

Sadly, the HST (the best express passenger train ever in national GB service, despite the claims made for its successors by the various TOCs) has made its last run whilst in LNER ownership. To celebrate this, UK Railtours arranged the *LNER HST Farewell* rail tour, operated by LNER. This rail tour was as follows.

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS – Wednesday 18 December 2019 - Edinburgh to Inverness via Aberdeen

The HIGHLAND CHIEFTAIN – Thursday 19 December 2019 - Inverness to Edinburgh via Stirling

THE NORTHUMBRIAN – Friday 20 December 2019 - Edinburgh to Leeds

THE WEST RIDING LIMITED – Saturday 21 December 2019 - Leeds to London Kings Cross.

The photo on the first page shows the train, superbly externally restored to its original BR Inter-City 125 livery, passing through Hitchin on the up slow line, on the last part of its final journey. The train was running about two minutes late, having been slightly held up earlier.

This is not the end of HST running in GB. Some trains are still in use by East Midlands Trains and Cross Country. Refitted HSTs are also now working in Scotland. There is also some interest in using the trains for future rail tour operations.

But the HST (in another form) is still in use in another part of the world – in New South Wales. The HST design was modified to suit local conditions and introduced as the New South Wales XPT, and is expected to be in service until 2023. Those of you who have been watching the Michael Portillo series on Great Australian Railway Journeys may have noticed, on his journey from Canberra to Melbourne, that he travelled part of the way on an XPT, but this was simply commented on as such, without any mention of its pedigree.
(From notes kindly provided by John Scorer)

More from the Photo Album



Probably self-explanatory. This is an exhibit at the Ironbridge museums, a fascinating group of museums close to Telford.

Photos: John Dossett



At the other end of the scale?

Sept 2011 Shanghai – “Flying” to the airport on this maglev which accelerated to 350kph in just 2 minutes and topped out at 431 kph (the service max operating speed).

photo: John Dossett

Exhibitions

The annual Chiltern Model Railway exhibition took place at Stevenage on 11th & 12th January. Our branch had a stand there and we sold books & photos, as well as recruiting new members – due to the popularity of this show many of the new recruits are from other areas so will not, unfortunately, be likely to come to our meetings. But we hope they will become involved with their local branches.

On the other hand, some are “local” people and we hope to see them soon at our meetings.

Looking ahead, the following exhibitions take place locally this month:

Sat 15th - East Beds Model Railway Society

Venue: Stratton School, Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8JB

Opening times: 10:00 – 16:30

Admission: Adults £5.50, Concessions £4.50, Children £3.00, Family £14.00

Annual Model Railway Exhibition presented by East Beds MRS with a variety of layouts in most scales, with supporting trade and society stands. Wheel chair access to all areas except raised stage in main hall. Free parking is available at the school. Light refreshments available all day in the large school dining area. Layouts and traders are arranged in separate areas.

Sat 15th & Sun 16th - Milton Keynes Model Railway Society

Venue: Stantonbury Leisure Centre, Purbeck, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6BN

Opening times: Saturday 10:00 – 17:00, Sunday 10:00 -16:30

Admission: Adults £8.00, Children £1.00

Following the success of their 50th anniversary show in 2019, and the positive feedback received, the 2020 show will again be a two-day event. Layouts will cover a wide range of scales and gauges, modelling eras and locations, and combined with local rail organisation involvement they aim to provide an exhibition which is enjoyable, informative and entertaining. Free parking at venue and free vintage bus every 30 mins from Milton Keynes Central station if travelling by train. A great family day out.

There will not be a Hitchin branch RCTS stand at either of these, but there will be a Milton Keynes branch stand at the Milton Keynes exhibition.

Book Sales

The book-sales table remains popular at branch meetings and the revenue helps towards our running costs. If you can contribute any books to the branch they would be most welcome.

Contributions to Railway Ramblings

If you would like to make contributions – photos and/or text – to this newsletter then please contact the editor: John.Dossett@btinternet.com

Newsletter Distribution

This e-newsletter is distributed by the Branch Chairman (Steve Lacey). If you do not currently receive a copy directly but would like to do so, provide him with your email address and you will be added to the list. Conversely, if you currently receive a copy but wish to be taken off the distribution list then please advise him accordingly. Steve's email address is gricersteve@hotmail.com

Membership

Welcome to Chris Nicoll who has recently become a "Hitchin" member.

The branch also welcomes those who joined very recently as a result of visiting our stand at the Chiltern Model Railway exhibition at Stevenage: Jim Adams, Mike Biss, Alexander Darroch-Bartley, Bradley Harris, Jim Jones, Oliver Kew and Mark Porter.

Forthcoming Branch Events

During March 2020

At Hitchin (19:30-22:00, doors open 19:00)

10 March: **Branch AGM and Members' Presentation Evening**

At Welwyn Garden City (14:00-16:30, doors open 13:30)

31 March: **The varying fortunes of the Hatfield to St Albans Railway** "How much do you know about this?" Alistair Cameron

A reminder that the suggested donation rates for Hitchin branch meetings are £2 for members and £3.50 for non-members. All attendees are entered into a free book draw and admission also includes refreshments at the mid-meeting interval.

All members are welcome at all meetings, at any branch of the society.

Railway Ramblings is published by the committee of the Hitchin Branch of The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society. Such committee does not endorse any personal opinions expressed in this publication. The committee comprises Steve Lacey (Chairman), David Elsdon (Secretary), Paul Holloway (Treasurer), Chris Alton, John Dossett (Newsletter Editor), Martin Elms, Roger Moulden and Adrian Scrutton. The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered with the Charities Commission