

Railway Ramblings

Issue 128

March 2021

The monthly newsletter of the Hitchin Branch of the RCTS

Forthcoming Meetings

This month it's a continuation of our virtual (Zoom) meetings: On 9th March we have the branch AGM and following on from the business of the AGM we have a presentation from Mike Bunn. For details see "Forthcoming Events".

Unfortunately the prospect of physical meetings still seems far away - but if the situation suddenly changes then we will immediately let you know.

On the RCTS website you will find details of the many Zoom presentations now being provided by branches the length and breadth of the country. As an RCTS member, you will be welcome to attend as many of these as you wish.

From the Photo Album



Gresley V2 Class 60911 on a Kings Cross to Glasgow Niddrie goods train at Welwyn Tunnels – 1953.
This loco was built in 1940 and scrapped in 1962.

Photo: Doug White

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 photographs you own!

Chairman's Platform



I am so looking forward to the warmer weather and more hours of daylight as we move towards Springtime.

March 2020 and the arrival of the first Covid-19 lockdown now seems a long time ago and we have "endured" numerous restriction regimes ever since. These have also prevented us from being able to meet up, but now with the vaccination programme well under way we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and, hopefully, the day cannot be too far ahead when life resumes more as it used to be.

However, let's not get ahead of ourselves. We are not yet back to "normal" and so this month we continue, as we have been doing recently, with a Zoom presentation. I must say that "attendances" have been really good and I hope that you are not getting so used to sitting in the comfort of your own home that, when the time comes, you will not be prepared to travel to a real meeting! Time will tell. Just remember the tea, coffee and biscuits served up by Adrian & Martin, plus of course the opportunity to browse the book table and avail yourself of some additional publications to grace your bookcase.

This month's virtual meeting will start with the Hitchin Branch AGM and then move on to a presentation from Mike Bunn. For the AGM section, although all are welcome to attend, I do ask that only Hitchin Branch members raise questions and vote. Anyone else should "observe" and, if they wish to raise anything as a result, then I am more than happy for that to happen after the formal business of the AGM has finished. All of the paperwork for the AGM was issued as a supplement to the February issue of this newsletter – if anyone can't find their copy then contact me and I will send it to them again. Can I also remind branch members that if they can let me know of questions in advance of the AGM then they are more likely to get a properly considered response.

As usual, I will try to dispatch the AGM as fast as possible, so that we can get on to the "interesting stuff" quickly. So, log-on by 19:30 as usual, or you may miss the beginning of Mike's presentation!

You may have noticed that *Railway Ramblings* has featured quite a few photographs taken by Doug White. Doug was one of the original RCTS members and in this issue of *Railway Ramblings* we have an interesting article about him penned by our own Tom Gladwin. Tom is also a regular contributor of photos, particularly those of historical interest.

Finally, I would appreciate some feedback from you about this newsletter. Our Editor has been busy cajoling various individuals (including me) and putting together a fairly substantial newsletter for quite a few months and it would be nice to know what you think of it. I am not too keen on structured surveys, as they never seem to ask the right questions, so perhaps you could simply email me your thoughts. gricersteve@hotmail.com

Steve Lacey

Local Observations

All reports as seen at Welwyn North and the local area

On **Monday 18 January** 56105/56113 worked a Doncaster to Belle Isle infra-structure train passing here at 23:43. This train returned to Doncaster the following morning at 05:15. Also on **Tuesday 19 January** 66720 (in Rainbow livery) passed on a driver training exercise from Peterborough to Kings Cross at 10:33, returning at 11:50.

This same training exercise took place again on **Wednesday 20 January** with 66749, working up at 10:54, returning to Peterborough at 11:52. On the same day 56105/56113 passed with an engineer's

train from Doncaster to Belle Isle at 23:31. This train returned to Doncaster the following morning **Thursday 21 January** at 05:34. 66750 then operated two more driver training runs from Peterborough to Kings Cross passing here at 11:15 and 14:40 up returning at 12:08 & 15:34. Also, presumably on a training exercise, Hull Trains unit 802305 passed at 11:28.

After a quiet weekend, **Monday 25 January** saw light engine 66701 pass at 11:29 travelling towards London. In late evening on the same day 56090/56113 with another Doncaster to Belle Isle engineer's train came through at 22:40.

There was considerable activity during the next three days starting **Tuesday 26 January** with 56090/56113 returning to Doncaster at 05:47. Then 91101 with a Mk 4 set transferring from Bounds Green to Doncaster for scrap passed at 09:16. A similar move occurred on **Wednesday 27 January** with 91114 and a Mk 4 set passing at 09:16. Also the day saw 66740/66758 come through with an engineer's train at 05:40 returning to Doncaster from Holloway. 60055 ran from Harringay to Cambridge to collect empty stock at 17:40. This was followed again later that evening (22:28) with another Doncaster to Belle Isle engineers train hauled again by 56090/56113.

Thursday 28 January running via Hertford North at 10:34 a convoy of Class 91's 91106/91119/91130 loco's, 82205 DVT and a Mk 4 coach transferring from Bounds Green to Neville Hill again for scrap or restoration. The Class 56's, 56090/56113, returned to Doncaster at 05:43 through Welwyn North. Shortly after that at 07:53 66760 passed with empty stock from Doncaster to Slade Green.

A very busy day on **Friday 29 January**, starting with 745006 Norwich to Hornsey at 00:08, this unit returned to Norwich passing here at 20:42. 66774 passed at 11:31 on a driver training run from Doncaster to Kings Cross. This loco returned to Doncaster at 12:42. We then had four sightings (all light engine movements) between Willesden to Cambridge, Cambridge to Harringay and back to Cambridge then returning to Willesden, this loco passed here at the following times 10:37, 12:50, 13:37 and 16:25.

We had a couple of ballast trains turning in WGC on **Sunday 31 January** after working on the track in the Biggleswade area. These were 66133 at 08:52 returning to Whitmore at 09:31. Similarly, 66539 preformed exactly the same movement passing at 09:31 and 10:15.



Welwyn North Station, looking northwards.

700007 departing

Photo: John Dossett

Monday 1 February saw 66703 on another training run from Doncaster to Kings Cross & return passing here at 11:30 and 12:42. Then on **Tuesday 2 February**, both movements via Hertford North, we had 37884 travelling light engine from Chaddesden Sidings to Ilford to collect units 317651/317653 before towing them via Cheshunt to Papworth Sidings in Ely for storage.

Also today, 67001 towed 91109/82223 plus a Mk 4 set from Bounds Green to Doncaster for scrap or storage, through Hertford North at 10:34. 66781 passed light engine with another route learning exercise from Doncaster to Kings Cross 11:32 and 12:31 on **Wednesday 3 February**.

Then on **Friday 5 February** another similar route movement occurred with 66789 timed at 11:40 and 12:51. Also that day, a Derby to Cambridge via Kings Cross test train ran, topped & tailed with 67023 & 67027, passing Welwyn North at 11:43. This train then went via Hertford North from Kings Cross to Cambridge.

Tuesday 9 February turned out to be quite busy. Firstly, an overnight working from Whitemoor yard to Holloway returned to Peterborough hauled by pink class 66, 66587, coupled with 66551 at 06:40. Another route learning run from Doncaster to Kings Cross with 66705 at 14:25, returning at 15:25. This move was approx. 80 mins late in both directions. Also, at 15:25 a pair of class 37's, 37226/37418 worked a test train from Derby to WGC, where it stabled overnight. These were followed by 755416 (18:42) returning from Hornsey to Norwich. This must have worked to Hornsey overnight on Monday. Similarly, an overnight working to Finsbury Park was 56078/56094 with an engineer's train that ran back to Doncaster passing at 05:36 on **Wednesday 10 February**. Also today, 60055 light engine worked via Hertford North (12:34) from Willesden to Cambridge. We had two rather more unusual workings on **Saturday 13 February** when Caledonian Sleeper loco 92038 passed with on-route learning move from Euston to Peterborough at 11:17.

This was followed, at 14:24, by 37175 pushing five test coaches (4 x yellow & 1 blue ex-Caledonian sleeper) working from Dollands Moor to Derby. An engineering freight passed by at 10:04 hauled by 66748/66792 from Willesden to Whitemoor Yard on **Sunday 14 February**. We were back with driver route learning on **Monday 15 February** from Peterborough to Kings Cross worked by light engine by 66790 passing at 09:33 returning at 10:20 and a second run at 13:30 returning at 14:33.

A very busy day was **Tuesday 16 February** with another set of route learning turns starting with 66753 working light engine from Peterborough to Kings Cross passing at 09:24, returning at 10:12, then a second run at 13:27, returning at 14:32. At 12:54 37421 came through pushing an inspection coach from Derby to Grantham & on to Temple Mills returning to Grantham 15:35. 66712 was the next route learning light engine from Doncaster to Kings Cross at 13:50 returning at 15:10. Finally today, an unidentified Greater Anglia Flirt unit returned to Norwich via Cambridge from Hornsey at 19:38.

Wednesday 17 February saw another similar day, with 66751 working the route learner from Peterborough to Kings Cross passing here at the following times 09:43 (up) 10:12 (down) 13:27 (up) & 14:22 (down). Then at 11:51 321334 passed running from Clacton to Doncaster for storage. 37421 with inspection coach Caroline came through from Grantham to Temple Mills at 12:50 returning at 15:40. Finally today, 66712 on another route learner from Doncaster to Kings Cross passed at 13:49 returning at 15:13.

Thursday 18 February saw a very similar pattern of movements as yesterday with 66769 working the Peterborough to Kings Cross route learner passing here at 09:34 returning at 10:28, repeated in the afternoon at 13:26 & 14:21. Then, with scrap MK 3 coaches & barrier vehicles, 37510/37611 passed at 11:31, working from Ely to Newport. This was almost 2hrs late due to a loco failure near Cambridge. Again 37421 ran with its inspection coach from Grantham to Temple Mills and back passing at 12:30 & 15:39. **Friday 19 February** was planned to be similar to the last two days but two of the movements were cancelled. Only 66769 ran in the morning from Peterborough to Kings Cross through here at 09:24, returning at 10:33. The planned afternoon journey was one of those cancelled, as was the Doncaster to Kings Cross route learner. 37412 and the inspection coach ran again over the same route but today, returning to Derby, passing at 12:50 and 15:31. It is thought these route learning diagrams are in preparation for forthcoming engineering works in the London area.

(Observations courtesy of our Branch Secretary, Dave Elsdon)

New Members

We have three more people that we are very pleased to welcome as new members of the RCTS and especially to our local branch. They are George Whitchurch of Welwyn, Nick Morgan of Hitchin and Peter Sutton of Sandy.

George tells us that he had been attending meetings before the Covid-19 first lockdown and has also "attended" Zoom presentations. He has now decided it is time to enrol as a full member.

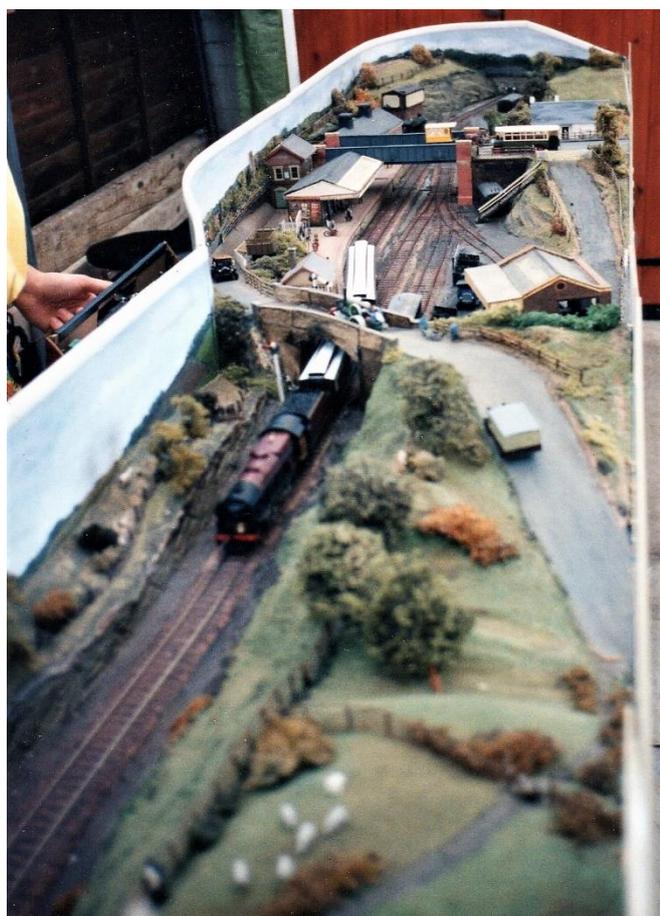
Contributions to Railway Ramblings

Our readers have a diverse range of railway interests and the editor is always looking for new contributors. If you are happy to share your experiences or knowledge please contact the editor.

Railway Ramblings editor: John.Dossett@btinternet.com

A Tale of Two Layouts : Part 2 – Paul Holloway

In Part 1, published in the February issue of Railway Ramblings, Paul related how his father had started building and exhibiting model railway layouts – to the point where his father had made a “trip to the tip” and disposed of the “Stoneleigh” GWR OO-gauge layout.



Did anything arise from the ashes? Yes, my father started work on yet another layout with the name *Toddingbury* – my parents lived in Toddington, Bedfordshire and the layout was supposed to be based somewhere near Toddington, Gloucestershire. Due to family issues progress was not as quick as anticipated and my father decided that this layout should only be for his and the family’s enjoyment, with exhibitions limited to local fetes. I did persuade him to do one final Luton Model Railway exhibition (in 1989) so that a wider public could appreciate his efforts. The picture (left) shows *Toddingbury*.

Model railways took a back seat for a while until in 1992/93 I was ill for almost a year. My parents decided that to motivate me we should start building a new layout that fitted in my garage. We agreed that we would spend each Monday doing the layout and see how we got on. Much measuring, sawing, drilling, hammering and occasional cursing later we had a layout that ran around the garage with a main station, named *Snorlbans* (a bad pronunciation of St Albans), two ovals of track, storage yards and a high level

branch-line going to a station named *Orfell End*. It could also be dismantled and put on shelving so that the garage could be used properly. Once the track was in place my father got wiring started - the diagrams for this got me lost. Before long we had a working layout and my father started taking a baseboard or two home with him to make a start on the scenery. Some of this came from either *Stoneleigh* or *Toddingbury* so recycling was being practiced 28 years ago. Then came the decision that my family and I needed to move house to something smaller. Unfortunately, there was nowhere for the partly completed layout to go other than in the loft. The position of the rafters meant that there was no way the layout could be erected and it went into mothball for the next 20 or so years.

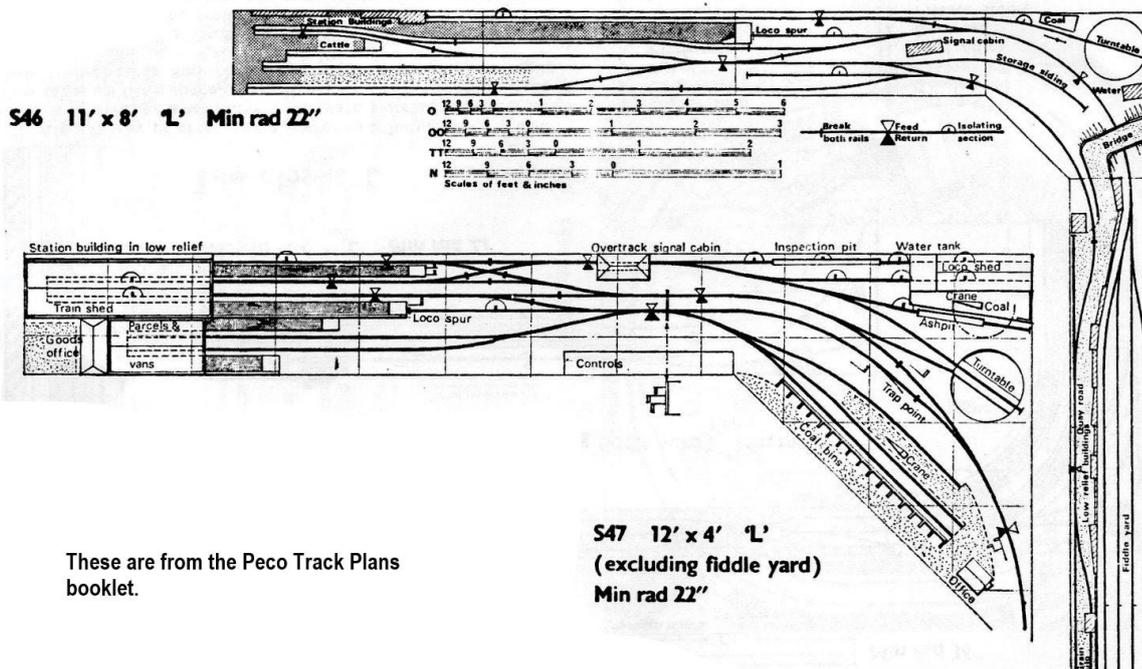
When my father died in February 2016 I inherited his model railway bits and pieces. I had taken the majority of the rolling stock sometime earlier so I could store it in the dry. My wife and I then decided that our existing dilapidated garage should be replaced with a purpose-built railway room. This was done with the proviso that the existing layout fitted in it. The room was built during the late autumn/early winter despite the weather – it cost a small fortune in electricity in drying out the plaster.



Finally, the weekend before the first anniversary of my father's death all the baseboards were removed from the loft cabin and assembled on the trestles for the first time in 23 years. Clearance along the back edge was about an inch – I'm not sure what would have happened if it didn't fit. I then joined up the wiring between each board and cleaned a section of track. Lo and behold the loco ran first time - miracles do happen!! A family friend commented that my father was watching us.

Among my railway inheritance were two baseboards with scenery on. One contained a viaduct over a river valley and the other had a loco depot with operating turntable. The viaduct is now in place on my own layout but the other one went to the local tip as I found that the mice had chewed the wiring on the turntable and a few parts were missing. The viaduct was first added to one side of the original layout and layout used in its original form for a while before I attempted to make it end to end so that I didn't have to duck under it. The revised version was not a success and I got fed up with it.

In the end my son-in-law said why not start again from scratch. I thought that a bit drastic but decided to give it a go. I started with an L-shaped layout based on a couple of plans in one of the Peco booklets – S47 with amendments and the addition of S46 for a fiddle yard and branch station.



The stations were named *Orfell End* from the original layout and *Dougdale* (from S47) – named after my father. I then added the viaduct to one end but all trains simply stopped on the viaduct. This worked and, although nowhere near finished, got me back with some enthusiasm. During the first Covid-19 lockdown period, one major alteration was decided upon and that was to extend the layout right around the room with the addition of a double-track section, although access from the viaduct and the original branch station remains single track. One end of the new double section has a 3-way point on it with one line going nowhere - and I like to think this could have joined to my father's *Toddingbury* layout. The additional options for running now are numerous. My next task is hopefully to get the wiring completed and then tackle the scenery. I seem to have been here before - many years ago!



Dougdale Station – work in progress



Dougdale viaduct

I know that many of you are also modellers and I hope you have found my article of interest - and will perhaps endeavour to write an article of your own for inclusion in *Railway Ramblings*.

Paul Holloway

A Love Affair (Part 10) – Steve Lacey

When I started writing this article, it never occurred to me that it would run to 10 parts and we would still be in the midst of a pandemic when I got to the final part! Having said that, it must seem like Christmas to our readers, to hear the words “final part”.

With the boiler on and the tender reattached, we were now on the home straight. The huge side-sheets are attached to a frame made out of “U” section steel tube. The individual sheets are either secured with copper rivets, or where access is required, bolted to the frame with hundreds of 3/8” Whitworth bolts screwed into tapped holes in the framework. (Being built in 1948, all the fixings on the locomotive are to the now obsolete British Whitworth pattern standard thread.) As the locomotive was dismantled, all the bolts were put aside for reuse, a considerable saving over new 3/8” bolts (new ones, *if* you can source them, cost at least £1 each!). One of my jobs was to collect all the salvageable nuts and bolts removed from the locomotive. I would then clean them on a bench-grinder fitted with a wire wheel, measure them, run a tap or die down them all, prime the heads ready to accept paint (where visible) and finally oil the threads, to prevent corrosion in storage. They were then sorted into bins ready for the engineers to reuse.



My “work station”

Having cleaned the side-sheets back to bare metal, any dents were filled, rubbed down, given a coat of primer, two coats of undercoat, then three coats of top coat (the last being applied on the outside after craning into position), rubbing down between each coat. The tendency for the casing to dent was due to a shortage of steel in 1948 and a need to save weight, both resulting in a thinner gauge of sheet being used. Unfortunately, the supporting frame was not redesigned to take account of this change. Together with the need to lean a ladder against the casing, when the fireman filled the sandboxes (the sliding rectangular filler ports seen either side of the badge) this resulted in the dents. It was hard to get at the dents from inside the casing to knock the dents out, so nobody bothered!

The two side-sheets are bolted at the bottom to a length of angle iron, fixed to the frame by “flying buttresses”, running the length of the locomotive and, at the top, to each other forming an inverted “U” shaped cover to the boiler. Bearing in mind the sheets are 30-foot long by 8-foot tall curving over the top for another 4-foot: in decorating terms that is an average sized room! It needs 6 coats of paint and of course there are 2 side-sheets, not to mention the cab, tender and smokebox deflectors! Of course, you can double that figure as they are painted inside and out! It all adds up to quite a lot of labour and paint and each 5 litre can cost £70, due to its high pigment content.



Inside of side-sheet, here in undercoat, showing the supporting frame.

Having finished the basic paint job, the sides were lifted into position, any removable panels fitted, using bolts whose heads had already been painted and then the whole given a final top coat. The coats of paint were applied with a roller then “laid off” (smoothed out) with a Purdey. Before my involvement with 92 Squadron, I thought Purdey was Joanna Lumley’s character in the New Avengers, or a shotgun! It turns out a Purdey, in painters terminology, refers to an expensive brush, originally of sable hair. Now that the sheets were vertical, every rivet and bolt head were carefully painted, ensuring no dribbles to spoil the final finish. We then employed a signwriter to letter and number the locomotive and apply the yellow stripes down the side. This was at a cost of £2000. Although he did a great job of the letters and numbers, he was not so good at the stripes, making one error, which is obvious if you know where to look! A bit like Terence Cuneo’s mouse, I will leave it as a mystery, for you to solve next time you see the loco.

Now looking resplendent in her final livery, but lacking nameplates or squadron badge, she was wheeled out into the winter sunshine on 16th January 2016 and fired up for her insurance “fitness to run” examination (boiler ticket). Much to everyone’s relief, this was granted and we all had a chance to ride the footplate from the yard to the tunnel. Unusually for January there were a large number of old blokes suffering acute hay fever on that day! We were then able to enter traffic and start earning money, ready for our next overhaul!

We have always considered our locomotive a memorial to all those who have served with RAF 92 Squadron and have kept in contact with the squadron over the years. It was therefore felt appropriate, to have the locomotive rededicated when we refitted her nameplates and squadron badge. This

happened on the 6th Of May 2017, when the current Padre and the commanding officer of 92 Squadron joined us at Wansford for the rededication. As I explained in previous articles, we run in service with replica nameplates and squadron badge, the originals being far too valuable to leave around a locomotive yard. It was therefore a great pleasure to present an original set, to the Battle of Britain Museum at Capel le Ferne, on the same day. These will now be displayed in a secure public setting for all to admire and remind us of sacrifices of many who served with the squadron over the years, including while the squadron was stationed at Biggin Hill, throughout the Battle of Britain.



*Rededication day: Signing the loan agreement for the nameplate and badge.
(The padre and 92 CO's faces are pixellated at the request of the MOD)*

Disappointingly, bad weather at Biggin Hill, had prevented a spitfire from taking off to overfly Wansford. However, the weather was marginally better at RAF Coningsby, the home of the Battle of Britain Memorial flight. Much to everyone's delight, they were able to dispatch a Spitfire to salute our locomotive at Wansford. The aircraft had just come out of winter maintenance and was still in undercoat, a unique end, to a very special day.



The Battle of Britain Memorial flight Spitfire overflies Wansford after our rededication.



34081 92 Squadron in service on the Nene Valley Railway on 11th November 2018. Marking the Centenary of the end of the First World War.

Although this concludes my story about the restoration, our Newsletter editor has asked me to write more about 92 Squadron in future issues of Railway Ramblings – giving an insight into visits to other heritage lines, the perpetual need for fundraising, and some of the mechanical problems experienced in traffic. No problem!

Steve Lacey

Doug White



Doug White was an eminent member of our society (RCTS). Born in 1912, his boyhood home in Ealing was within sight of the Great Western Railway. There, from an early age, he developed a love of railways that became his lifelong interest.

One of the youngest ever to qualify as a Chartered Surveyor, his working life was in the employ of Alfred Saville & Sons, for whom he became a London Partner. It was a profession, involving much travel and visits to many large estates, that enabled and informed his interests.

A founder member of RCTS (Member No. 23), he was editor of *The Railway Observer* for 25 years. He was also co-author of *The Locomotives of the Great Western Railway* published by the society in 13 parts over a period of 20 years.

Doug and his wife Kath moved to Digswell in 1946 bringing his Jowett car which became a village feature. He bought his first car, an Austin 7 Open Tourer, for £11-10s in 1952, after which he owned a series of Jowetts for over 20 years. Significantly, claiming it was a simple stroke of good fortune, he eventually acquired the telephone number 4498!!

From times collecting train numbers in the late 1940's, I recognised him, bowler hatted and with furled umbrella, among those boarding, and alighting from, the morning and evening *Cambridge Buffet Expresses*, which then stopped at Welwyn North. However, it wasn't until soon after Janet and I married and moved into our Digswell bungalow, that we became close friends with them.

Thereafter, for most of 30 years, we regularly travelled the network together. A quick scan of my diaries found that we made well over 500 trips, reaching such distant points as Thurso and Penzance. Amongst these were several RCTS rail tours and many *Merrymaker* outings on which, in later years, we were accompanied by our wives. Packed lunches on these latter occasions were quite something special. Thus, for example, I recall a *Merrymaker* trip to Cumbria when Kath came equipped with a table cloth and silver cutlery, and served smoked salmon, then a luxury, and duck paté. Many of our trips were in the company of two other veteran RCTS members, Bill Clark and Charles Gordon Stuart, the latter in his esteemed plus-fours. Charles enthusiastic welcome on our gathering, “ah, I see synod has assembled for the day”, would have been heard far down the train. We always returned tired but very happy.

In 1983 (?) we started an annual mid-summer 24-hour survey of all movements through Welwyn North. This involved producing schedules from the working timetables, recording passing times and the numbers of locomotives and units in service, checking time-keeping, and determining the causes of any detected changes in the diagrams for the day. Eric Neve, another RCTS veteran, and Great Northern Railway historian, joined us on these occasions and in 1985 summarised our efforts in *The Railway Observer*. With tables and chairs, and provisions for the day, occupying several parking spaces in the downside car park we should, perhaps, have not been surprised when two officials arrived to find out what we were doing. In the event our activity received official approval, and for several years thereafter Doug or I received a telephone call each year enquiring if we would be repeating our survey. The idea caught on, and others starting carrying out simultaneous surveys along the East Coast Main Line at key stations such as Peterborough, Doncaster and York. In the absence of desk-top computer facilities such as we enjoy today, co-ordinating and analysing all the data eventually proved too demanding and the surveys ceased.

Doug applied the same high standards he had set in his professional career, and as a railway historian, to his last major project, *Welwyn's Railways* (1986) which he co-authored with Peter Neville and myself. He died in August 1990.

The picture of Doug was taken in January 1986 at Welwyn North Station.

Revd. Tom Gladwin.

When I moved into Digswell in 1984, I joined both Doug & Tom with the surveys, days out etc. and became a member of the RCTS. Doug also did a great deal for Digswell being a member of the Village Hall committee for many years and helping organise the annual Village Fete on the playing fields, as well as being Chairman for very many years of the Jowett Car Club.

Dave Elsdon

East West Railway – from their PR material (unedited)

New environmental surveys are being carried out by East West Railway Company to help inform planning and design work for the East West Rail line connecting Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Oxford. We've written to over 600 landowners in and around the area to ask for access to their land in order to help understand local environmental conditions.

The surveys – which will be carried out throughout 2021 - will gather data on plant and animal life, environmental features like rivers and streams, and historical features. This activity is part of our continued commitment to put environmental considerations at the heart of proposals for the new East West Rail connection. The timing of the surveys is key as certain species can only be monitored at specific times of year.

We've also taken the unusual step of publishing an expansive set of initial baseline maps in a new interactive feature on our [Community Hub](#). These maps have been developed using open-source data from national and local government agencies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and local authorities, as well as from sources such as the Woodland Trust and outline some of the complex factors which our team has been taking into consideration as we progress early designs for

East West Rail. We believe this is the first time such data has been shared by an infrastructure project in this way.

The initial baseline maps have been released ahead of a non-statutory public consultation planned for early 2021, when we will again ask people for their views on the railway. Together, the environmental surveying and the feedback from the consultation, combined with other data and research, will help us to develop potential designs for this critical rail connection in a way which protects and supports the local environment.

Ian Parker, Programme Delivery Director, said: *“Most of these digital maps are only available to organisations with the resources and technical tools to read them. However, we’d like to make sure that local communities have access to the same baseline data as the team here. We hope that taking the unusual step of publishing this data will help strengthen conversations with residents and their representatives – who have been incredibly generous with their time and expertise throughout the process. We are grateful to landowners and their representatives – including the National Farmers Union – for allowing us to gather the new surveying data and help create the right connections for their communities and the local environment.”*

Following the planned consultation in early 2021, there will be further opportunities for members of the public to have their say in the design of East West Rail – once through a formal public consultation and finally when the plans are submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Somewhere to visit later this year?



The Seaton Tramway is a 2 ft 9 in narrow gauge electric tramway. The 3-mile route runs through East Devon's Axe Valley, between the coastal resort of Seaton, the village of Colyford, and the ancient town of Colyton. It operates over part of the former Seaton Branch Line, which closed in March 1966.

Photo: Jean Dossett

The March Puzzle Page – Martin Elms

Fairly similar to last month's, but this time all of the answers are a class or type of locomotive or other traction.

Perhaps a little more difficult than the previous one?

<i>Nickname</i>	<i>Locomotive</i>
Austin Seven	
Black Bess	
Blue Streak	
Dog Kennel	
Dub Dees	
Greenhouse	
Gunboat	
Hush-Hush	
Jocko	
Knee Knockers	
McRats	
Mini Gronk	
Pug	
Shoebox	
Skoda	
Spaceship	
U-Boat	
Stealth Bomber	
Slim Jim	
Bloomer	

Solution to Puzzle in the February issue:

<i>Nickname</i>	<i>Railway term, location or Person</i>
The Long Drag	Settle to Carlisle Line
Top Shed	Kings Cross loco depot
A Swinger	Unbraked loose coupled freight
The Railway King	George Hudson
Charlies	Bullied Class Q1 steam loco
The Withered Arm	LSWR lines west of Exeter
Bungitts (in)	Peterborough depot loco crews
Bobby	Signalman
The Four Foot	Space between running rails
Politicians (you can see through them)	Class 60 diesel locos
The Kremlin	BR Headquarters
Slow and Dirty	Somerset & Dorset Railway
The Clockwork Orange	Glasgow subway
A Consolidation	A 2-8-0 steam loco
Estate Agents	Diesel loco second men

Forthcoming Branch Events

Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions continue to prevent us from holding traditional meetings so, once again, we are offering "Zoom" presentations/virtual meetings. These are accessible from almost any PC/Tablet/Smartphone. To participate you will need to register, in advance, and the link for that presentation will then be sent to you. Presentations are open to members and guests.

Our Chairman, Steve Lacey, will introduce the presenter and aim to start promptly at the time indicated. During the presentation there will be a short interval about half-way through. For those with a camera/microphone there will be the opportunity to ask questions.

We look forward to seeing you.

During March 2021

Tuesday 9th March at 19:30

Branch AGM

followed by

The Baie de Somme Railway Steam Festivals

Mike Bunn

To register in advance for this presentation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ocemgrTMvHteQoNjpVyWu6M6VfnwA6BoT>

There is no charge, but donations towards the running of the branch are welcome. Please go to:

<https://rcts.org.uk/branches/product/donation-hitchin/>

During April 2021

Tuesday 13th April at 19:30

Railway Cameramen

John Hillier

To register in advance for this presentation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYod-CoqzljHN2-vOkwMfeGckPptfP4s6Ux>

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Other Branch Virtual Presentations

Many other RCTS branches are also offering Zoom virtual presentations.

Details of these can be found on the RCTS website (and in the Railway Observer). You will find details of these virtual meetings listed under the "Branches" drop-down menu.

Members of Hitchin Branch will be very welcome at other branches' Zoom meetings.

Zoom – Simple Meeting Instructions

A comprehensive guide (“Simple Meeting Instructions”) to using Zoom, kindly provided by Jeremy Harrison, was distributed with the November 2020 issue. If you have mislaid your copy please contact Steve Lacey gricersteve@hotmail.com and he will happily send it to you again.

More from the Photo Album



Class 800 “Azuma” 800113 near Ashwell & Morden on 11th January 2020

Photo: Tony Turner

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

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