

Railway Ramblings

Issue 129

April 2021

The monthly newsletter of the Hitchin Branch of the RCTS

Forthcoming Meetings

This month, once again, it's a continuation of our virtual meetings. Although the government is now implementing a planned staged relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions we will be continuing with the one-meeting-per-month programme of Zoom presentations until it is absolutely clear that circumstances allow us to safely resume traditional branch meetings.

*Our next virtual meeting is **13th April**: for details see "Forthcoming Events". Put the date in your diary and register now. Even if you've not "attended" one before, do join in this month.*

From the Photo Album



34053 Sir Keith Park on the Spa Valley Railway on 17 October 2020

Photo: Mike Bunn

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



Now the daylight hours are longer, the clocks have changed and so many have been vaccinated against Covid-19, the world seems a better place. As the restrictions get reduced, I am eternally hopeful that it will not be too long before we can resume “normal” meetings. However, like many of you, I have become quite used to Zoom meetings and, as these allow a wider participation, I am sure they will still have a place in the future of our Society. I have even taken to giving Zoom presentations, not surprisingly on my favourite subject!

During March we had our AGM, as a Zoom virtual meeting, and I am pleased that this was well attended. Financially the Branch is sound, although we incurred a small loss last year we are fortunate in having a considerable amount “in the bank”. We now have our “new” committee – actually the same as the old one – and, to help you put faces to names, our Editor has provided a rogues’ gallery in this issue.

Those with long memories may recall my plea (March 2020 issue of *Railway Ramblings*) for ideas to commemorate the centenary of the RCTS, which will occur in 2028. Now, as a member of the newly formed RCTS Strategy Governance Group, with specific responsibility for Exhibitions & Events, I would particularly welcome any ideas for how the Society might celebrate the occasion. No idea is “too crazy” to put forward for consideration by the group. (These days it’s usually called brain storming.) At present 2028 is still a long way off but don’t hold back – I hope to be inundated with ideas! Do drop me an email at hitchin.chairman@rcts.org.uk

You may recall that, in last month’s *Railway Ramblings*, I requested feedback about this newsletter. Although I have not been exactly deluged with comments, I am pleased to say that everyone who has responded has been very positive and this is most encouraging. Needless to say, the Editor can only continue to produce fairly substantial newsletters if you, the readers, continue to write articles. I think we all recognise that, with a very diverse range of interests, not everyone is enthralled by every topic but that should not deter even the “specialists” amongst you – so don’t be shy!

Steve Lacey



Specialist wagon for use in hump shunting yards.

Pictured here on the Nene Valley Railway on 11th November 2018, it had been saved from the hump yard at Whitemoor, near March, on closure of the down yard on 27th January 1972.

Photo: Steve Lacey

(Thought I could squeeze this photo in! – Editor)

Local Observations

All reports as seen at Welwyn North and the local area

Sunday 21 February, Buses replaced trains all day due to engineering works near Stevenage & the work in north London. **Monday 22 February** 37421 with inspection coach, Grantham to Temple Mills & return, passed here at 11:58 & 15:17. Later 20118/132 working Worksop to West Ealing with empty coaching stock via Hertford North 17:51. 755337 ran from Norwich to Hornsey for maintenance through here at 20:59. On **Tuesday 23 February** 66789 Peterborough to Kings Cross route learner

passed here 09:42 & 10:13. Again 37421 with inspection coach *Caroline* ran from Grantham to Temple Mills & return at 11:58 & 15:17. Later that day 92006 came through with a diverted Caledonian Sleeper Euston to Inverness 22:45. **Wednesday 24 February** 37421 with the inspection coach Grantham to Temple Mills 11:58, returning at 15:17. Unidentified postal 365 units from Willesden to Low Fell ran past at 23:20. **Thursday 25 February** 66774 Peterborough to Kings Cross route learner came by at 09:24, returning at 14:41. 47813 hauling Great Central Mk4 stock (with branding removed) for storage from Eastleigh to Worksop came past at 09:58. Again, 37421 with inspection coach came through with the Grantham to Temple Mills passing at 12:00 & 15:17. **Friday 26 February** seemed quiet as all the route learners etc. were cancelled, then in the evening six civil freights came south for weekend engineering work at Kings Cross these were 66726 (17:49), 66740 (18:15), 66742/750 (21:24), 66783 (21:37), 66751 (22:27) & 66773 (22:49).

Saturday 27 February, we had some of the freights returning to Doncaster, these were 66766 (13:46), 66774 (15:38) & 66774 (16:56). All other services were replaced by buses all weekend. **Sunday 28 February** more freight services were seen returning to Doncaster, 66056 (11:03) from Willesden, 66735 (11:24), 66726/740 (11:58), 66742/777 (13:50) & 66750 (14:13). An early start on **Monday 1 March** with 66708/774 working a civil engineers train from Doncaster to Holloway South passing here at 06:01. Then at 09:30 an unidentified Class 66 on a Peterborough to Hitchin freight ran through to Welwyn Garden City to reverse, returning to Peterborough at 09:51. At 11:42 66014/090 passed as a coupled pair of light engines working Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe. These were followed by two more engineers' trains, again from Doncaster to Holloway through at 12:03 with 66749/780 in charge, followed at 12:31 by 66750. The 365 postal units worked again from Willesden to Low Fell passing Welwyn North at 23:28. These engineers' trains seem never ending. On **Tuesday 2 March**, at 09:43 717001/002 were being trialled for 100 mph running from Hornsey to Peterborough, returning at 13:03. This was followed at 13:14 by 66774 working from Holloway to Doncaster, then at 18:00 working in the opposite direction from Doncaster, 66783 passed. Later still was busy, when 66773/790 came through at 22:55 with a Hoo Junction to Whitemoor train, followed by 66731/774 at 23:05 with a Doncaster to Holloway engineers' train & 66750 working back from Holloway to Whitemoor at 23:10. To complete the day we finally saw another mail train formed of 365 units at 23:22 from Willesden to Low Fell. **Wednesday 3 March** today started with 66735 engineers' train at 08:33 working from Holloway to Doncaster, followed by another run from Hornsey to Peterborough with 71701/002 at 09:42, this pair returned at 13:03. Then 60046 passed at 10:00 hauling four HST power cars from storage at Ely to Eastleigh, a similar move also went via Hertford North with 60028 at 13:22. Another engineers' train came through at 10:29 from Whitemoor Yard to Holloway with 66750. At 14:05 66777/66783 (Biffa livery) returned from Holloway to Doncaster. Another busy evening followed as at 20:15 66731/774 worked back from Holloway to Doncaster, at 21:01 66759/735 worked back from Doncaster to Holloway, followed by 66749 at 21:22, Holloway to Doncaster, and the final engineers' working today was 66713 at 22:39 running from Hoo Junction to Whitemoor Yard. The diverted Willesden to Low Fell Class 365's on the mail at 23:27. Following a fatality around lunchtime on **Thursday 4 March** at Welwyn Garden City many services were cancelled or diverted via the Hertford loop. Those that did pass here were 66750/780 Holloway to Whitemoor at 06:48. Another test run for 717001/002 from Hornsey to Peterborough passed at 09:12. These did not return today due to the disruption. A very noisy pairing of 56094/302 at 09:22 working from Hadley Wood via Hornsey to Doncaster, running very late, followed on. More preparation for the weekend engineering works saw the following on **Friday 5 March** - there were also many cancellations today & late running as the engineers damaged the OHL at Hadley Wood - 37025 pushing the test train from Welwyn Garden City to Heaton passed at 11:09 followed by 717001 returning from Peterborough to Hornsey at 13:15 (leaving 717002 at Peterborough), 66750 was next through at 15:37 with a Whitemoor to Holloway engineers train, something other than Class 66's were 60044/055 running light from Wembley to Chaddesden. Then 66727 at 17:56 from Doncaster to Holloway, next was 66759 at 20:35 from Holloway to Whitemoor and 66726 at 22:04 Whitemoor to Holloway. At 22:40 an unidentified loco working from Hoo Junction to Whitemoor came past, followed by another Doncaster to Holloway engineers train at 23:01 hauled by 66729/769, the final one tonight was at 02:18 Holloway to Doncaster with 66731.

Saturday 6 March started a weekend of buses replacing trains, we did have two very long unidentified trains of Network Rail large hopper wagons pass at 14:52 & 15:48, both heading south. A very early start on **Monday 8 March** when 66725/750 ran through with a Whitemoor to Holloway engineers' train at 04:33, followed almost immediately at 05:25 by 66713 also working the same route. At 11:30

something different when 57312 worked south with eight scrap Mk4 coaches from Worksop to Newport. Blue "Maritime No 6" 66090 worked past at 11:54 from Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe with the steel empties, immediately followed by 66701/774 at 11:58, with another Doncaster to Holloway train. At 13:14, via Hertford North, ran coupled light engines 66773/849/850 from Hoo Junction to Whitemoor Yard. & finally, today 66766 passed at 22:40, also from Hoo Junction to Whitemoor. A quieter day was **Tuesday 9 March**, when 66704 ran by at 12:03 working a Doncaster to Holloway engineers' train and at 19:47 66717/726 worked back to Doncaster from Holloway. There were two workings via Hertford North today, with a Hoo Junction to Whitemoor Yard light engines 66544/745/773 at 13:13 and a Whitemoor Yard to Tonbridge engineers' train at 14:05 with 66729/766. The following day **Wednesday 10 March** started with 66726/755 coming through at 09:05 with a very long and heavily loaded train of concrete sleepers & track sections from Doncaster to Holloway. Then much later in the day at 19:47 66704/66727 worked back from Holloway to Doncaster. At 22:39 66760 ran the Hoo Junction to Whitemoor Yard train. More problems occurred on **Thursday 11 March** when the line was completely blocked at Newark due to a train hitting someone. This again caused cancellations & late running while the emergency services worked on the track, as did the speed restrictions imposed due the very high winds causing problems with the OHL equipment. The only freight working all day was 66705/772 working the Hoo Junction to Whitemoor Yard at 22:35. **Friday 12 March** produced many more engineers' trains in preparation for the weekend work along the line & at Kings Cross, these were 66748/751 Holloway to Whitemoor (11:17), 66725/755 Holloway to Doncaster (20:46), 66717 Doncaster to Holloway (21:05), 66764 Hoo Junction to Whitemoor (22:43), 66790 Whitemoor to Hadley Wood (00:42), 66753 also Whitemoor to Hadley Wood (01:35), 66752 Whitemoor to Potters Bar (01:41), and Doncaster to Potters Bar (01:57), Port Talbot to Kennett (02:05) both with unidentified locos.

Minimal movements on **Saturday 13 March**, saw another weekend with buses both days, and just 66715/772 returning from Holloway to Whitemoor at 12:09. 66717/66741 also returning from Holloway to Doncaster at 13:50. Much more work was continuing at Kings Cross and Hadley Wood on **Sunday 14 March** with only one returning engineers' train noted at 12:00 and that was 66752 returning to Doncaster. On **Monday 15 March** another scrap train of MK4 coaches & a DVT ran from Worksop to Newport hauled by 57312 at 10:54. 66765 passed at midday with a Doncaster to Holloway engineers' train. Back running again this week was 37421 pushing inspection coach *Caroline* at 12:55, returning at 15:19 with a Grantham to Grantham via Temple Mills working, this is to allow several drivers to learn the route at the same time - by sitting in the coach.

(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 Graham Ainge of Hertford, Jason Norris of Silsoe and Alan Barcock of Biddenham, Bedford.

How & Where Did It All Begin? - Paddy Carey

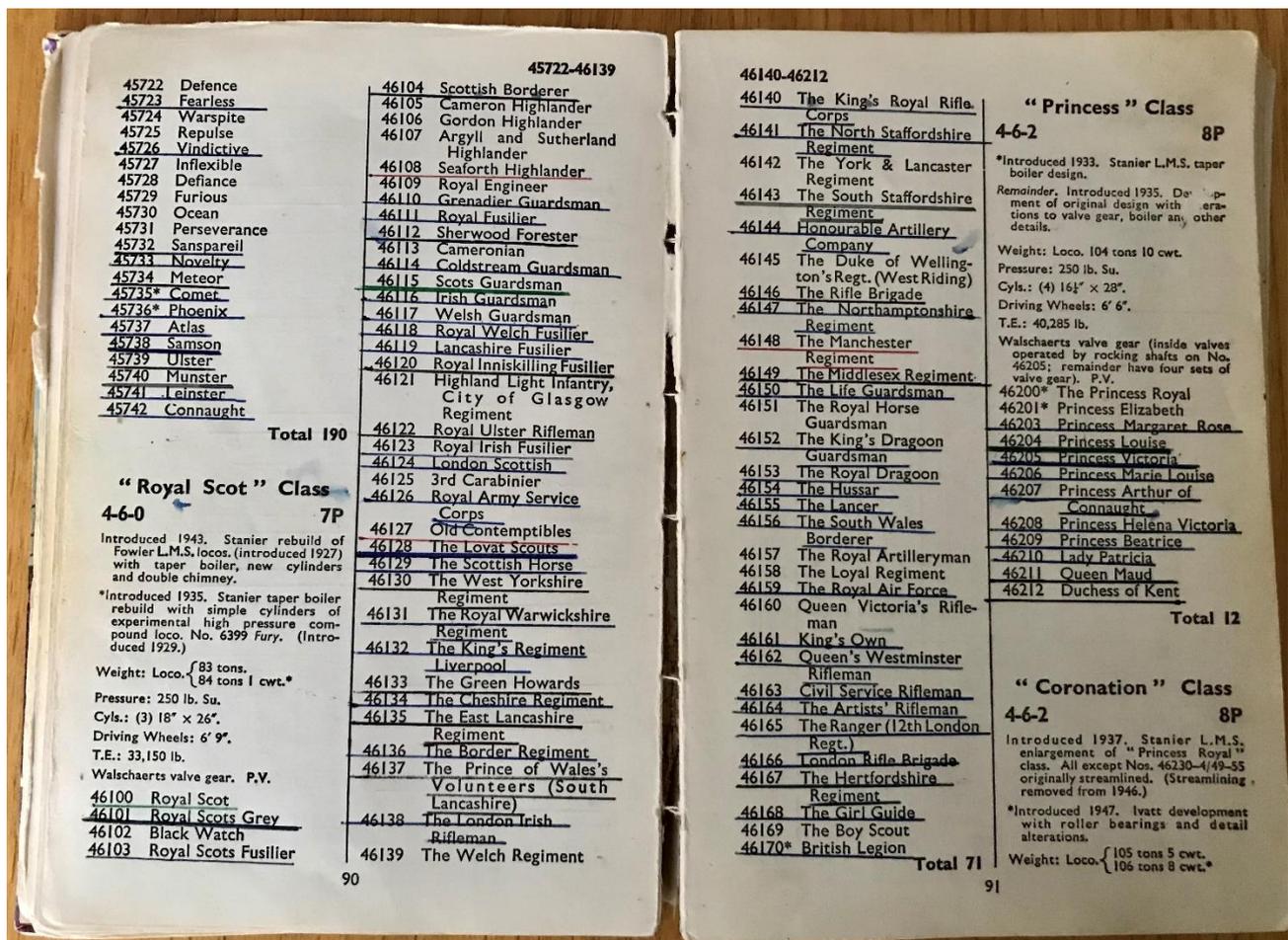
Since 2008 Paddy has been responsible for producing the Railway Observer Index, one of those necessary tasks undertaken by RCTS volunteers. He says that according to the previous holder of the job, Keith Brown, "it's a post for life because no one else will do it"!

But of course, like most of us, Paddy's personal experiences of our railways extend much further back in his life. In this first article Paddy takes us through the early years of his time "Observing" and we learn how his cousin was responsible for starting his interest in train spotting:

My railway interest started on 25th August 1959 when I went with my cousin to Rowton Halt to see 51xx class 4120 wheezing in the platform. I don't recall any passengers in the carriages - there were certainly none waiting to board and none alighted. The noise, the smell, the green livery and the sheer

size when viewed from a 14-year-old perspective converted me on the spot. When I returned from staying with my cousin in Waters Upton for a summer holiday, I decided to join my friends (at St. Francis Xaviers School in Liverpool) to spot locomotives in Liverpool Lime Street on our way home to Birkenhead. This was an eye opener compared to what I had seen in sleepy old Salop. We would wait for the 4:15 "Red Rose" to arrive, usually drawn by a Princess class. Other locomotives to see would be Patriot and Royal Scot classes. The Coronation class also appeared and I was drawn into finding out why some locomotives were green, some black and some maroon. I was told what "blinkers" were, but not why. I was not told why Coronation class were "Semis". I just went along with the other two classmates who had been to Crewe to see more.

Their underlined Ian Allan books were an exercise in multi coloured biro while mine was sparse with pages not yet underlined and not as full of a sequence of underlining. It annoyed me that as my underlining developed I had a single one missing that destroyed an impressive sequence. Jubilee class were there too with exotic names like 45581 *Bihar and Orissa*. I saw 45735 *Comet* and confidently declared it to be a Scot: I was told in no uncertain terms it was a rebuilt Jubilee in the terminology of these friends. I did suggest that the Patriot straight blinkers were rather good - they reminded me of rebuilt Merchant Navy class locomotives (I had just bought the Observers Book) but this was received with scorn. So, I just observed and listened. Eventually we three moved on to Liverpool Central to go home to Birkenhead and Upton. We scuttled down to the low level to get the 650-volt dc Wirral and Mersey line home. There were not likely to be 'namers' in Central station so we never bothered to look. Pity. The preoccupation with 'namers' and prestige express services meant we also disregarded Liverpool Exchange. In retrospect what more interesting locomotives did I miss? Loads. But I did go a few times to the bridge overlooking Brunswick shed where I got a flavour for what I could have seen in Central.

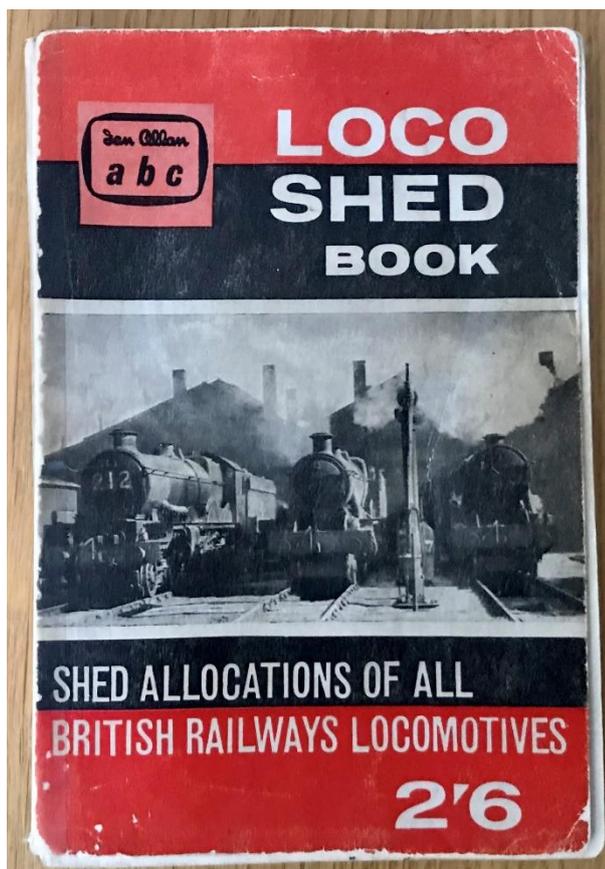


My Winter 1959-60 Ian Allan abc combined volume with an example of what was seen, mainly at Lime Street

Back home in Upton, Wirral, I would hang out of my bedroom window with a WW2 rifle scope given me by an uncle and spot the John Summers trains going to Shotton steelworks. This stopped when I realised our next-door neighbour who was sunbathing may have felt uncomfortable - I certainly did. So, at weekends, I took a return from Upton to Bidston and sneaked around Bidston shed. There I

saw 68065/6. I was perplexed. Nothing with a number beginning 6xxxx was in my *Ian Allan London Midland Region abc*. Eventually I learned about the Cheshire Lines Committee and how locomotives could be drawn in from the Eastern Region. I probably rode behind 84000, shedded at Birkenhead. The other locomotives I had seen did not have numbers 4xxxx or 5xxxx so now I was learning about the British Railways Standard class, and the Britannia class. A myth was being put around by the other two that there was a Brit 'streak', i.e. a streamlined Britannia. They had seen it. They had holidays on the North Wales coast and I suspect, but cannot prove, they saw a Britannia with indicator shelter on test.

It was not too much of a stretch, even on my meagre pocket money, to get the train from Birkenhead Woodside to Chester to see GWR locomotives. Then I noticed that there were no large white numbers on the cab side that were clearly visible. No, they had small brass numbers on the cab side which could be difficult to read at speed or from a bridge. The next logical step was to go to Crewe which was the ultimate for my friends and I. There I saw diesels 10000 and 10001 probably on 'The Royal Scot', as well as 10201/2/3 on the same. By now the early blue 25-kV ac locomotives were used from Crewe to Manchester and these were a sight to see with the white roof and raised chrome number on the cab side. There was so much going on in those days. If there was a quiet period and we went to differing platforms you could be sure that it was precisely the time an express would go through and the locomotive number was only just seen, or missed. My two friends would go over the footbridge to go round the shed but I was too fearful of being caught and repercussions at home. Thus, I missed seeing Patriot "R.E.M.E." which was not shown in our *Ian Allan abc* books but had obviously only just been named. While I was in the Wirral I did go round Bidston and Birkenhead sheds on my own, which could only be explained by the fact that they must have had very little in the way of staff chasing me away, or perhaps I went on Sundays? I also went to Thurston Station, by bike, which had by then closed but the rails had not yet been lifted. This is now apparently the *Wirral Way* but then it was another railway line for me to be perplexed about in the days before Google.

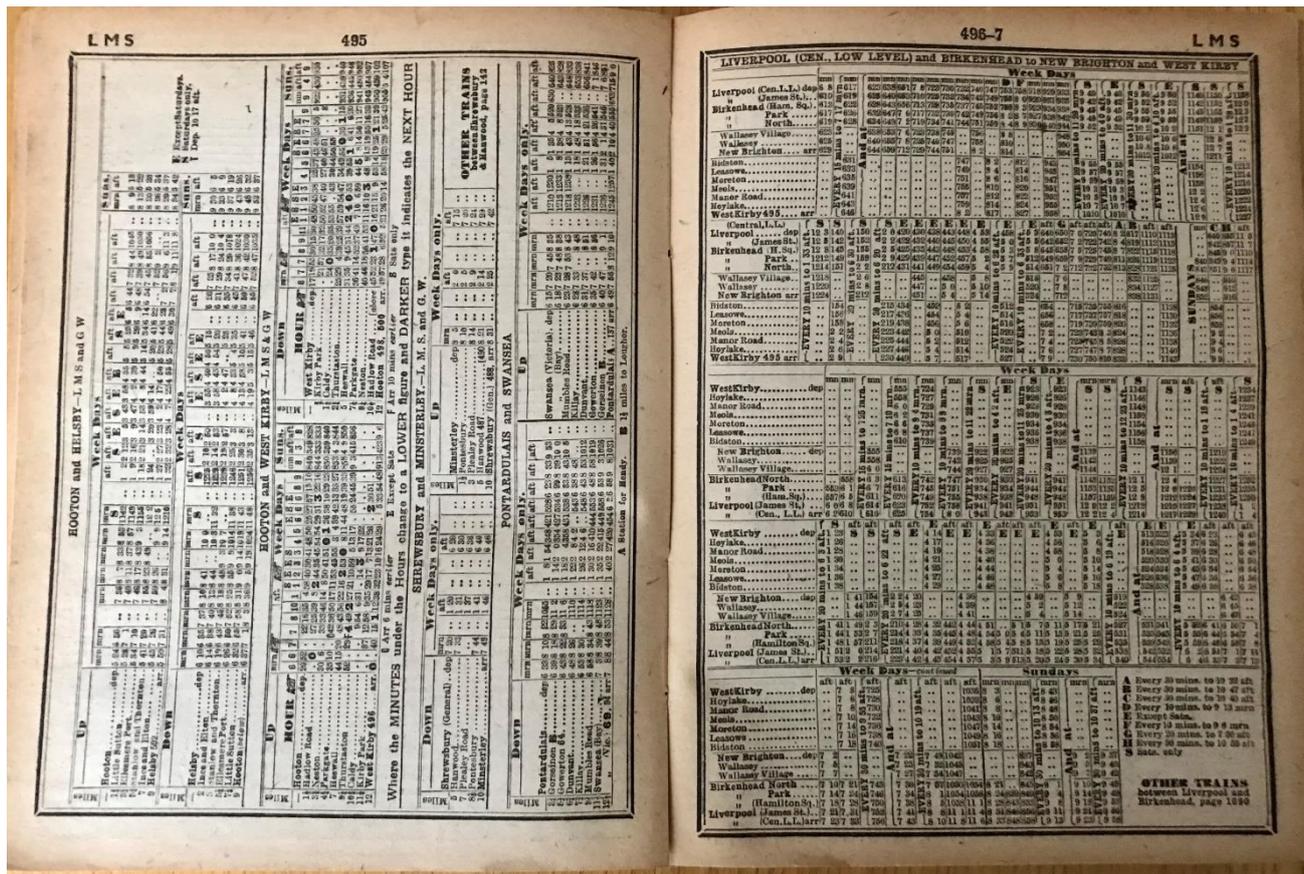


My well-thumbed Spring 1961 edition of *Ian Allan abc Locoshed Book* for checking some of the allocations.

We then moved back to Liverpool into an end of terrace house in Mossley Hill just a few hundred yards away from the main line to Lime Street. By now the blue electrics we're going past regularly and steam was being scrapped. I used to go round Edge Hill on my bike in the evenings (prompted by seeing a clip of Little Eva singing "The Locomotion" on

Granada TV which was obviously shot there). Two things I learned about going around sheds. First, without a 3-foot-high platform to view from, the driving wheels and number plates were way above my head. Second, even when steam locomotives are cooling down, they can still sometimes leak water from cylinders - which is hot on the head. Although in those days it was reasonably easy to go round sheds, I was always anxious in case my bike was stolen! Another find within a bike ride was Speke Junction, where the sidings and shed were observable without trespassing. I saw 61011 *Waterbuck*

there and thought why is there a locomotive number beginning 6xxx? Well, I think because it was stationed at 9G (Gorton) and I still had a lot to learn about the Cheshire Lines Committee.



A 1945 Bradshaw which was useful for working out some routes and locations

I also found other railway journeys to investigate, such as the line from Lime Street to Wigan (choice of close stations), and from there to Preston where I saw 45500 "Patriot". In my meagre spotting history this is my best cop. (None of the Patriot class were preserved but there will be a new-build soon. I don't like this. Where will this new build go in the future with rail and environmental restrictions?) I have an odd record from my youth which may not be reliable. "Wednesday 18th July 1962. 45429 . 7 coaches to Liverpool Riverside to connect with sailing of "Aureol" and "Thursday 19 July DP2 from London to Lime Street."

And then in 1963I moved to Hertfordshire.

Paddy Carey

In next month's issue Paddy will continue by relating how, following his move to Hertfordshire, his observing hobby developed.

Local Heritage Lines

As we regain our freedom from the stringent Covid-19 regulations most people will want to get out-and-about. What better plans for a day-out than to visit a local heritage line – the Epping Ongar Railway, the Nene Valley Railway, the Mid Suffolk Light Railway and the Leighton Buzzard Light Railway are but a short journey away and all have lots to offer.

In this issue of *Railway Ramblings* you will find a historical introduction to the "Middy" (the Mid Suffolk Light Railway). This is reproduced with the kind permission of that railway. In the next issue there will details of another local heritage line (The Epping Ongar Railway) and in future issues it is currently the intention regularly to bring you news about local lines. After the last year all of these lines need as much support as possible.

No. 92 Squadron RAF

In recent issues of Railway Ramblings we all read Steve Lacey's story about the restoration of 34081 92 Squadron, but what of the RAF Squadron after which it was named:

Number 92 Squadron, also known as No. 92 (East India) Squadron and currently as No. 92 Tactics and Training Squadron, of the Royal Air Force, is a test and evaluation squadron based at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire. It was formed as part of the Royal Flying Corps at London Colney as a fighter squadron on 1 September 1917. It deployed to France in July 1918 and saw action for just four months, until the end of the war. During the conflict it flew both air superiority and direct ground support missions. It was disbanded on 7 August 1919. Reformed on 10 October 1939, the unit was supposed to be equipped with medium bombers but in the Spring of 1940, it became one of the first RAF units to receive the Supermarine Spitfire, going on to fight in the Battle of Britain.

Stationed at Biggin Hill throughout the Battle of Britain, it was the highest "scoring" Squadron there. Probably the Squadron's most famous commanding officer was Squadron Leader Roger Bushell, who organised the Great Escape from Stalag Luft III and who was subsequently murdered by the Gestapo after his recapture. Another famous pilot was Geoffrey Wellum DFC who joined 92 at the age of 18, becoming the youngest fighter pilot to serve in the Battle of Britain. He wrote a book of his wartime experiences entitled "First Light" which was made into a BBC film.

Reformed after the war in January 1947, No. 92 (Fighter) Squadron was assigned to RAF Fighter Command flying the Gloster Meteor F3. Between 1961 and 1962, No. 92 (F) Squadron was the RAF's official aerobatic team, flying 16 Hawker Hunter F6's known as *the Blue Diamonds*. In December 1965, the squadron was reassigned to RAF Germany alongside No 19(F) Squadron, flying the English Electric Lightning F2/F2A and from January 1977, the McDonnell Douglas Phantom FGR2. Disbanded in July 1991, the Squadron was reformed as No. 92 (Reserve) Squadron at RAF Chivenor flying the British Aerospace Hawk until October 1994. No. 92 Squadron then lay dormant for the next 14 years before being reformed at Royal Air Force College Cranwell on 30 June 2009.

Main information source: Wikipedia



Supermarine Spitfire Mk Vb R6923 of No. 92 Squadron in 1941.

Ticket Office Queue

There is a queue outside the ticket office, Joe is right behind Jim and Kim is immediately behind John in the queue. Sarah is between Simon and Kim. There are three people between Jim and John. Mike is at the back.

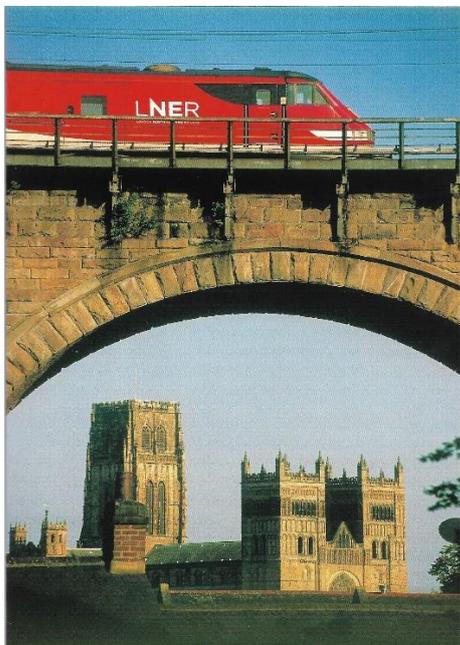
What is the complete order of the seven people in the queue?

(Solution at the bottom of the puzzle page)

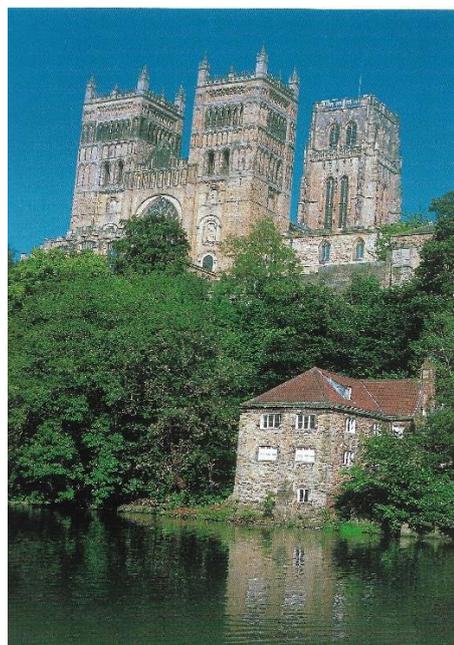
The Work of Stephen Gay

Stephen has been a regular presenter at our branch meetings for several years. His next presentation, all being well, is due in October and will be ECML London Kings Cross to York.

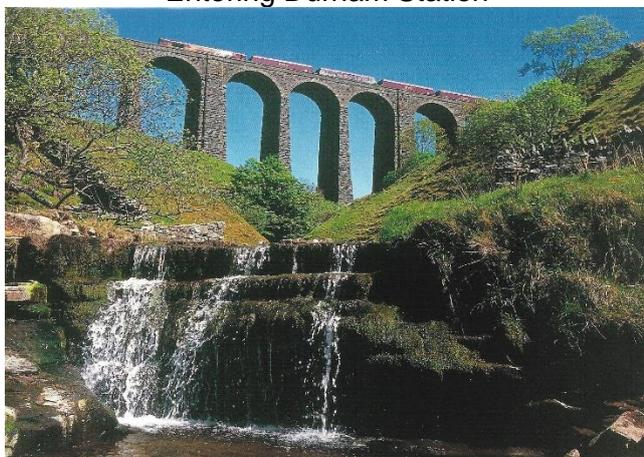
Stephen usually brings along Greetings and Christmas Cards for sale. His new Greetings Cards – which being blank inside could be used for a variety of occasions – are featured here. They are high quality cards with envelopes, sealed in cellophane wrapper (produced by Rothbury Cards).



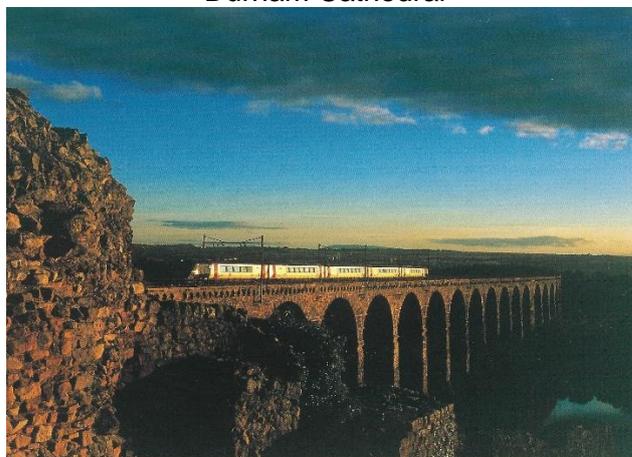
Entering Durham Station



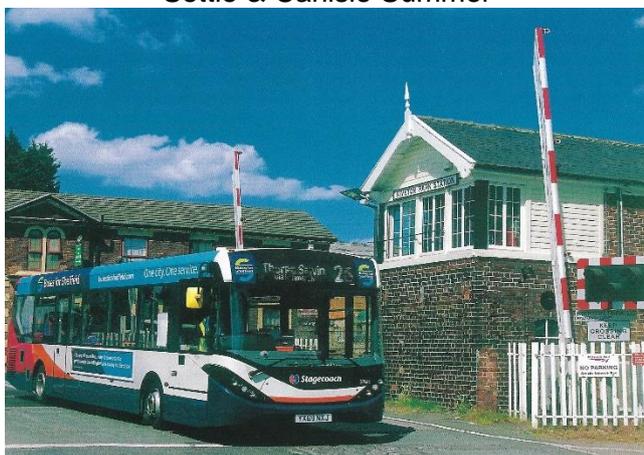
Durham Cathedral



Settle & Carlisle Summer



Crossing the Tweed



The Railway Crossing

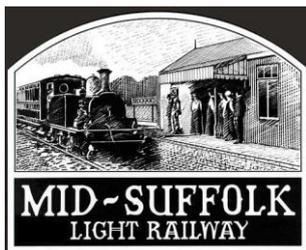
If you wish to buy any they are just £2 each (with P&P included if purchased directly from Stephen). Just mention RCTS Hitchin Branch.

Stephen Gay
63 Clipstone Road
Darnall
Sheffield
South Yorkshire S9 5ES

Tel: 0114 243 2713

(Stephen does not use email or social media)

The “Middy”



The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, affectionately known as the “Middy”, is a classic case of a railway built too late for the great railway age. It never paid its way and was effectively broke before it opened. Operating in receivership from the start, the line was never fully completed, the rails petering out in the middle of a field. However, it still managed to struggle on against all the odds for 50 years. The following brief history of this line, an extract from their website, is reproduced here by kind permission of the MSLR.

The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway was originally envisaged as a way of opening up the central areas of Suffolk to the rest of the county and the country. Mid-Suffolk was made up predominantly of farming communities, but ones which were quite far from the larger local markets in Bury St. Edmunds, Stowmarket and Ipswich.



Stradbroke villagers preparing to ‘send off the boys to the front’ August 1914. It will all be over by Christmas.

The government’s Light Railway Act was passed in order to enable such areas of the country to benefit from ‘railwaymania’, the railway-building craze of the 1800s, by authorising entrepreneurs to set up cheaper railways of lighter construction with less rigid safety restrictions. The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway was one such line.

The original plan for the MSLR was for it to cross central Suffolk from Haughley on the Great Eastern Railway’s main line to Halesworth on the same company’s East Suffolk line, with other connections with the GER at Needham Market and Westerfield. However, because of financial difficulties, managerial issues and some disagreements with the GER the line was curtailed 19 miles east from Haughley (where construction started) at Laxfield.



A train waiting to depart Laxfield during the ‘Middy’s’ LNER days

The branch to Needham had been abandoned before construction started and although track was laid from the main MSLR line towards Westerfield, it finished just outside Debenham and was lifted after a few years.

The line, bankrupt before it opened for business, struggled on independently until it was absorbed into the London and North Eastern Railway in 1924 (the LNER didn't want to take over the line during the grouping of 1923, so waited until the MSLR's financial situation was resolved the following year). The 'Middy' finally became part of British Railways at nationalisation in 1948.

As the line was in a poor state of repair following the strains of WWII and the number of people using its services were declining, the MSLR (or the Haughley – Laxfield branch as it was under the LNER and BR) closed in 1952, well before the Beeching cuts.



The MSLR's regular J15 no. 65447 with a mixed train at Old Newton

However, in 1990 a group was set up with the aim of preserving the memory of the MSLR on the site of the old Brockford Station cattle dock, a wall of which was still standing in the corner of a field. Despite the whole line being taken up in 1953, all the rolling stock scrapped and the buildings scattered around the county in various states of dereliction, the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum, a registered charity, has created a popular tourist attraction dedicated to remembering what was affectionately known as the 'Middy'.

Now boasting a purpose-built refreshment room, shop, museum and the Kitchener Arms, a real ale bar coach, with workshop and restoration locomotive shed, authentic rolling stock, some original buildings and a demonstration line, the MSLR Museum recreates a slice of Edwardian railway travel that everyone can enjoy.

(Reproduced by kind permission of the MSLR)

The MSLR have just published details of the programme they are going to offer this year – all of course subject to the Government's roadmap for the relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions happening as currently proposed. This is reproduced elsewhere in this issue of Railway Ramblings.

Contributions to Railway Ramblings

It has been most encouraging recently to have a number of new contributors to this newsletter but we continue to need more of you to "put pen to paper" and write articles for this newsletter. Use your knowledge and/or experience photos and/or text – please contact the editor:

Editor: John.Dossett@btinternet.com

The April Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month I have 20 miscellaneous questions for you, to test your railway knowledge:

1. What was unusual about how locos were removed from the front of their trains at Birmingham Moor Street station?
2. How many corridor tenders did the LMS, LNER, SR and GWR each build?
3. Who said, in 1991, we are having particular problems with the type of snow which is rare in the UK (wrong type of snow!)?
4. How many Brush Type 4 diesels were produced in total , and what were their original range of numbers?
5. Which London terminus has a lawn with no grass?
6. The “dockers umbrella” referred to which railway?
7. What was the name of the Highland Railway loco works at Inverness?
8. What was the name of the last railway horse working for BR and where?
9. What, in the 1950s, was referred to as the “wonder” loco?
10. Which class of steam locos didn’t have a red painted buffer beam?
11. Which railway author was awarded the MBE in 1993 for services to railway history?
12. What does a white star on a railway vehicle frame indicate?
13. 92020 to 92029 differed from the rest of BR 9Fs in what way?
14. What were the “Jellicoes”?
15. On which line does the National Air Traffic Control operate a Wickham railcar?
16. Which station is depicted in William Powell Frith’s painting “The Railway Station”?
17. How large was the British railway network at its peak in the early 20 th century?
18. What disaster overcame the northbound “Sunday Mail” train on 28 th December 1879?
19. What was signified by a red or green diamond on a card railway ticket?
20. The SR has one flyover on its mainline west of Salisbury – where?

Best of luck – solutions in next month’s Railway Ramblings.

(My solutions to last month’s puzzle questions are on the next page.)

Martin Elms

Solution to the “Ticket Office Queue” was (F to B) John, Kim, Sarah, Simon, Jim, Joe, Mike

Solutions to the Puzzle in the March Issue

Nickname	Locomotive
Austin Seven	Ex-LMS Class 3 0-6-0
Black Bess	WR Gas Turbine 18100
Blue Streak	Prototype Deltic
Dog Kennel	Class 150 or 153 DMU
Dub Dees	WD 2-8-0
Greenhouse	GER ClassF7 2-4-2T
Gunboat	Deltic Diesel
Hush-Hush	Gresley's Experimental 4-6-4
Jocko	Shunting Loco
Knee Knockers	High Density EMUs
McRats	Scottish Class 26 or 27 Diesels
Mini Gronk	Class 04 Diesel Shunters
Pug	LYR 0-4-0ST
Shoobox	Electro Diesel Class 73
Skoda	Electric Class 90
Spaceship	BR Class 9F
U-Boat	SR Class 2-6-0
Stealth Bomber	Class 91 in GNER Livery
Slim Jim	Hastings Line Gauge Class 33
Bloomer	LNWR 2-2-2

The "Middy" Programme for 2021

Date	Event
30th & 31st May	Middy in the War Years
6 th June	Steam Railway Day
13 th June	Steam Railway Day
20th June	Steam Railway Day – Father's Day
27th June	Steam Railway and East Anglian Practical Classics Day
4 th July	Land Rover Day – Series 1,2 & 3
11 th July	Steam Railway Day
18th July	Steam Railway Day
25 th July	Norfolk & Suffolk Narrow Gauge Modellers
1st August	Steam Railway Day
8 th August	Steam Railway and Classic Vintage Bus Day
15 th August	Steam Railway Day
22nd August	Steam Railway Day and Steam Punk
29 th & 30th August	Model Mania & Hornby Collectors Club
4th & 5 th September	Country Railway Gala
4 th , 5 th , 11 th , 12 th , 18th & 19th December	Santa Specials

Details provided by the Mid Suffolk Light Railway – all subject to the relaxation of the Covid-19 rules.

Branch Committee

The 2021-2022 Hitchin Branch Committee



Steve Lacey
Chair



Dave Elsdon
Secretary



Paul Holloway
Treasurer



John Dossett
Newsletter



Adrian Scrutton
Catering



Martin Elms
Catering



Roger Moulden

Organised Chaos? (The photo below, not the one above)



Kings Cross on 6 March 2021.

Photo: Bill Bass

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 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>

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 May 2021

Tuesday 11th May

A double bill:

Railways into the Chilterns

and

The History of the Watford Miniature Railway

Dr Rudi Newman

To register in advance for this presentation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcvfuGppj0qH9aZGGNs1CQ0vqhPx9FGrVEt>

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/>

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 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



Michael Portillo with LNER 985 on the Mid Suffolk Light Railway at Brockford Station, Wetheringsett, during filming for the TV series Great Railway Journeys. This railway features in an article in this issue of *Railway Ramblings*.

Photo: Mid Suffolk Light Railway

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

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), 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