

Railway Ramblings

Issue 130

May 2021

The monthly newsletter of the Hitchin Branch of the RCTS

Forthcoming Meetings

Hopefully not too long now before we can restart traditional “proper” Branch meetings but for this month, once again, it’s a continuation of our virtual meetings. These have become very popular – if you haven’t yet tried one, why not give it a go this month?

Our next virtual meeting is 11th May: for details see “Forthcoming Events”.

From the Photo Album



Foxfield Railway Gala 2009 with “locos blasting up the bank with rakes of former coal wagons from the colliery site”. (See article in this issue.)

Photo: Bill Davies

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 hope you are all keeping well and that, when invited to do so, you have been getting vaccinated. All being well, we will soon have the majority of the adult population enjoying the added sense of security that vaccination brings, not just to individuals, but to their family and friends.

Although the Covid-19 restrictions are changing, we are continuing with our virtual meetings until we reach a situation when the rules permit indoor meetings AND where we feel confident that most of you will consider it is safe to return to traditional meetings. At present, we are expecting that day might come in July 2021, when I trust we can lure you back – although this may require masks and social distancing. I also doubt that, when we first restart, you will be able to enjoy refreshments being served by Adrian & Martin, or our customary book stall. But being positive, one step at a time will be better than nothing.

In April we were able to publish some details of the Mid Suffolk Light Railway and this month we have details of the Epping Ongar Railway. Along of course with the Nene Valley Railway and Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, these are local heritage lines worthy of a day trip as the weather improves and I'm sure that all of these lines are hoping to see plenty of visitors this summer. Across the country the finances of so many heritage lines are in a perilous state and we have to hope that most of them can weather the storm.

Just in case you missed it, the “hump shunting wagon” I included in last month’s edition should have shown the date as April the First! The wagon exists, but its history was in my imagination.

This month, within these pages, you will note the absence of anything about my experiences with 92 Squadron - just a few statistics - but fear not! In next month’s issue, I have been cajoled to write about visits made to various lines, in-service problems and the perennial issue of raising funds. I suppose I had better start to put my words into some sort of order!

Finally, it really is nice to see more new contributors to Railway Ramblings, and I hope these will encourage even more of you to “put pen to paper”. The Editor would be delighted to hear from you.

Steve Lacey

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome Peter Gregory, of North London, and Mike Palos, of Enfield, as new members of the RCTS, and especially as members of our local branch.

Local Observations

All reports as seen at Welwyn North and the local area

Tuesday 16 March saw just 37421 with inspection coach Caroline working between Grantham & Temple Mills and back, passing at 12:56, returning at 15:08. **Wednesday 17 March** two engineers' trains, these were Whitemoor to Holloway at 11:57 hauled by 66773, and 66718 with a Holloway to Doncaster at 13:14. After the cancellation for the second day running of the route learner from Grantham to Temple Mills, on **Thursday 18 March** this left just 66719 working a Whitemoor to Holloway engineers' train at 10:33. as the only additional working today. Not such a busy **Friday 19 March** with just 66717/783 heading to Holloway from Whitemoor at 10:32. Nothing much over the weekend as we again returned to buses, only 66783 from Holloway to Whitemoor ran via Welwyn North on **Saturday 20 March** at 19:20. Two trains also ran via Hertford North today with 66769 at

06:41 working back to Whitemoor from Holloway along with 66767 at 14:24 taking empty coaching stock from Slade Green to Doncaster.

Monday 22 March, we saw a substantial train with ballast, track and sleepers pass at 06:25, working from Doncaster to Holloway with 66709 / 719. At 11:14. 66769 worked empty back to Whitemoor from Holloway. The only other notable working was the Yellow Test HST running from Heaton to Cambridge via Kings Cross, at 13:52 it worked Kings to Cambridge via Hertford North. Another three freights ran on **Tuesday 23 March**, these were 66705 / 712 at 09:02 from Doncaster to Holloway, and two workings from Holloway to Doncaster at 14:45 (66718 / 787) then at 15:47 66706 / 719. There was also another test run with 717001 / 002 from Hornsey to Peterborough and back passing here at 09:45 and 13:00. Only one freight ran on **Wednesday 24 March**, that was 66722 Whitemoor to Holloway passing at 10:37. **Thursday 25 March** began with 66705 at 05:46 with a returning Holloway to Whitemoor, the Class 717's numbers 001 / 002 ran again from Hornsey to Peterborough passing at 09:46, returning at 13:03. Then at 13:27 37884 hauling 317659 / 671 from Ely to Eastleigh. At 23:01 66790 came through with another Doncaster to Holloway engineers' train. Also, this week there were several Grand Central Class 180's for drivers to refresh their route knowledge, working from Heaton to Kings Cross and back. Nothing much happened on **Friday 26 March**, but overnight Friday and on **Saturday 27 March** fifteen freight movements were sent via Hertford North, some of the locomotives involved were Class 70's 806 / 813, the rest were all Class 66: 003, 006, 25, 544, 556, 585, 705, 709, 719, 754, 761, 789. On **Sunday 28 March** there was just one engineers' train passing here, 66790 at 10:52 returning to Doncaster from Holloway.

A Doncaster to Holloway engineers' train at 12:58 was the first train through on **Monday 29 March**, this was followed in the evening by 66709 / 769 working from Holloway to Whitemoor at 19:46 & 66755 / 789 from Holloway to Doncaster at 21:49, closely followed at 22:02 by 60056 with just two wagons from Chaddesden to Acton. Just a single working on **Tuesday 30 March** at 08:59 when 66722 / 777 worked back to Whitemoor from Holloway. **Wednesday 31 March** a returning Holloway to Whitemoor ran at 14:11, also a Holloway to Doncaster at 23:40 (almost 4 hrs late) hauled by 66784 / 790. **Friday 2 April**, at 11:42, creating a lot of interest, 60046 worked light engine from Willesden to Leicester, followed by an unidentified engineers' train from Holloway to Hitchin at 14:13 and then at 22:40 another Holloway to Whitemoor passed hauled by 66777 / 778. A Slade Green to Doncaster empty stock working took place at 14:21 on **Saturday 3 April**, this was unit 465907 hauled by 66759, followed shortly afterwards by 66701 / 711 running between Alexandra Palace & Doncaster through here at 15:32. **Sunday 4 April** just two engineers' trains worked from Bayford to Doncaster, one at 09:42 with an unidentified Class 66 the other with 66572 at 15:08.

Monday 5 April the scheduled diverted Edinburgh Caledonian sleeper was cancelled but that from Inverness to Euston passed at 06:56. The only working today was 67023 / 027 at 19:57 running from Heaton to Derby via Stockton & Kings Cross. We were scheduled another engineers' train at 19:30 on **Tuesday 6 April** from Wembley to Doncaster hauled by 66740 but this was delayed by around 6 hrs. at Alexandra Palace, eventually through here at 01:32. A light engine move, on **Wednesday 7 April** came past at 09:30, this was 37884 working from Doncaster to Hornsey, this then worked a train via the WCML to Crewe. A busier day on **Thursday 8 April**, with the Acton to Hitchin stone train hauled by 66518 passing at 04:59. A Whitemoor to Holloway engineer's train with 66756 / 768 through at 05:23, returning at 19:58. **Friday 9 April** we only had the regular Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe empty steel train with 66030, passing at 11:43. A very quiet weekend with only 92014 coming through. **Saturday 10 April** saw the diverted Caledonian sleeper service to Edinburgh at 21:51 and the opposite working from Edinburgh at 06:56 on **Monday 12 April** hauled by 92038.

Also **Monday 12 April** saw light engine 57312 pass at 09:43 running from Norwich to Hornsey returning at 12:44 hauling two unidentified Class 365 units from Hornsey to Ely for storage. On **Wednesday 14 April** 57305 ran through at 10:56 from Ely to Newport hauling 317650 / 658 for scrapping. It was also announced today that Hull Trains had commenced running their trains again this week, after a third break in services due to the pandemic over the past year.

(Observations courtesy of our Branch Secretary, Dave Elsdon)

Notes on the May Presentations – Rudi Newman

From Scythes to Suburbia: The Socio-Economic Impacts of the Coming of the Railways to the Chilterns.

The effects railways had on Nineteenth Century Britain are much debated, especially what impacts occurred and their extent. Many study industrial regions, but what about rural areas? The result of four years PhD research, this presentation demonstrates that for rural Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, railways had varying degrees of impact, acting mostly as a facilitating factor rather than an overall cause of change.



LNWR advertisement card (c.1880-1910) from Rudi Newman's collection

Steaming to Sixty: A History of the Watford Miniature Railway

Cassiobury Park in Watford, Hertfordshire, has long been a popular public space. Among its amenities is the Watford Miniature Railway, one of the oldest still operating in Britain. Having brought joy to visitors for over 60 years it has become a local icon, continuing to perform its original task – having passengers leave a little bit happier than when they arrived. Presenting the railway's history and development, this is the story of how a personal hobby turned into a community asset; from the line's remarkable miniature locomotives to the continuous work of dedicated supporters keeping trains running whatever the obstacle. Its history is one of serving the community, but also reveals how much it is still appreciated.

These Zoom presentations will be given on Tuesday 11th May, by Rudi Newman PHD, who is a Transport Historian and Author. He is also Editor, Hertfordshire Constabulary Great War Society.

Random Reminiscences (Part 1) - Bill Wilson

I lived within earshot of the Great Northern mainline (GN) from 1950 to 2012, with the exception of 1993. For the first thirteen years the family lived in Victoria Road, New Barnet and ten-minutes' walk from the railway. New Barnet station is 14.9km from King's Cross.

From 1957 until leaving school in summer 1961 I was a regular loco spotter at New Barnet station. At that time the steam locomotive types seen at southern end of the Great Northern included A4 4-6-2, A3 4-6-2, A1 4-6-2, A2 4-6-2, V2 2-6-2, Thompson B1 4-6-0, L1 2-6-4T, N2 0-6-2T, BR Standard 9F 2-10-0, ex-War Department (WD) Austerity 2-8-0, Britannia 4-6-2, B17 4-6-0, J6 0-6-0, J15 0-6-0, J50 0-6-0T, J52 0-6-0ST, K3 2-6-0 and N7 0-6-2T.

Of the named trains, '*The Elizabethan*' non-stop summertime service from London to Edinburgh ended in 1961 and 1962 was the final season of the named train, whilst the '*Master Cutler*' was transferred from the Great Central route to the Great Northern main line at Retford from the beginning of the 1958 winter timetable. There were two Pullman trains, the '*Tees-Tyne Pullman*' and '*Yorkshire Pullman*'.

Loco spotters at New Barnet came mainly from four schools in the Barnet area. Some of us knew a BR staff member based at Great Northern House, Euston Road, opposite St Pancras station, who lived in New Barnet and provided us with information and train numbers. Working timetables are now of course available on the Network Rail (NR) and other websites. Two members of the group later joined British Railways, one on the clerical side and the other as a driver.

At this time there was still a ticket and parcels office, with a wooden plank floor, on the footbridge linking the platforms. This was destroyed by a fire in August 1989. There was pigeon traffic at New Barnet during the time I was a loco spotter and about once a week during the racing season (April to September) owners brought pigeon baskets to the station.

Summer and winter suburban timetables were available in the ticket office, as were printed supplements giving details of public holiday and engineering work changes. These I took home and studied avidly. Loco spotters used to congregate on the footbridge, but every now and then when we made too much noise, the chief clerk lost patience, came out of his office and told us, in no uncertain terms, to leave. We then went to the top of York Road, overlooking the station, and watched the trains from there.

On the down side was a loading dock and on the up side a goods shed and yard. Vans were picked-up and delivered from these, about once-a-week, by a Gresley N2 and later a Brush Type 2. There were up and down slow lines plus up and down goods lines, as well as sidings on the down side. Loose coupled freights hauled by WD 2-8-0s, known by the familiar 'clank' 'clank' from their running gear and 9Fs were often held on the down goods awaiting a path. Up freights trundled towards the freight yards at Ferme Park, Hornsey. The New Barnet layout was rationalised in the 1970s. The last siding (upside) was lifted by NR in autumn 2018. Maintaining point-work is expensive as a signal engineer has to inspect it monthly.

To the north of the town (at the end of Albert Road), between the railway up side and Victoria Park, was a moderate sized gas works. A facility was first built on the site in 1872 by the East Barnet Gas and Water Company to provide power for gas lamps. It is interesting that a gas works had been a prominent landmark at this location on the GN from when Nigel Gresley was born in 1876. The main buildings at the gas works site were demolished in 2008.

From the footbridge was a marvellous view towards Oakleigh Park in one direction and Hadley Common, together with the gas works, in the other. The L1s coming down the gradient from Hadley Wood at high speed on an outer-suburban train looked very unstable, particularly bunker first. At night I used to listen to the Gresley V2s struggling up the 1 in 200 gradient with heavy fully-fitted freights. Beyond Hadley Common, just south of Hadley South Tunnel, was Greenwood Box, at the point where the four roads from London reduced to two. This was depicted in the iconic poster '*On Early Shift,*' produced for British Railways in 1948, with artwork by Terence Cuneo. The original poster was sold at a Christie's London auction in June 2014 for £2,500. Greenwood Box closed in April 1959.

For some years the upside yard at Oakleigh Park was used to stable wagons of motor vehicle parts in wooden crates. Vauxhall/Bedford Luton and Dunstable vehicle parts trains would trundle down the gradient towards their depot at Oakleigh Park behind an N7. These trains stopped in 1962.

Blocks of flats were subsequently built on surplus railway land on both down and up sides at New Barnet station, whilst a private housing estate was built on the yard at Oakleigh Park.

Bill Wilson

In next month's issue, Bill continues with his reminiscences.

Foxfield 2009 – Bill Davies

This was an occasion that I had always had at the back of my mind for a long time, that of the Foxfield Railway annual Gala which I had read about and seen spectacular pictures from. An easy journey for us, as Harvey my Labrador always accompanied me from Bedford, change at Leicester and again at Derby, into a “tin rocket” on the Crewe service, which once boasted 3-car DMU’s. (Not sure why passenger numbers appear to have dwindled so much on this line.) At Blyth Bridge we alighted for the short walk to the terminus of this delightful line. My knowledge of the locos involved is strictly limited except for that amazing piece of steam machinery, *Bellerophon*, a loco which has graced many of our preserved lines and certainly looked very much at home here. Belonging to the Vintage Carriage Trust at Ingrow on the KWVR, it is currently in store awaiting overhaul.

The original line was built by the North Staffordshire Railway staff at weekends to link Foxfield Colliery with the ‘Main Line’ utilising second hand material from the NSR, opening in 1893, closing in 1965. Judging by the gradients it must have been a challenge for those involved hauling the loads up the very steep grade then holding them down the other side towards the connection with the main line, probably, even more difficult in diesel days.

Having arrived at Caversham Road Station, the new terminus, we bought tickets before retiring into the *One Legged Shunter* bar for a pint. Then, catching the train to Dilhorne Park we made our way into the ‘viewing pastures’ to watch the matinee performance of locos blasting up the bank with rakes of former coal wagons from the colliery site.



Here we have *Bellerophon* leaving Dilhorne Park to return down the bank to Cavershall Road having brought us up there in great style. It even had a pilot - to cope with the extra weight of my Labrador !!



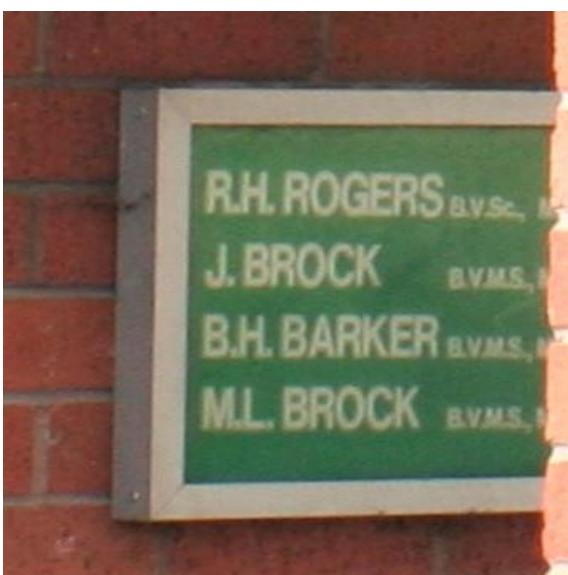
No.2 *Florence* working hard up the incline, complete with Giesel ejector, a successful device on both main line and in industrial use which came too late to save steam.

After *Florence* came two saddle tanks (see photo on front page), making a delightful sound that I had not experienced since the days of Bold and Bickershaw Collieries.

Typical of an English Summer, it rained as these saddle tanks double-headed out of the former Colliery Yard at Foxfield.



If we ever get back to normal please put Foxfield on your 'to go to' list, especially their Galas, you won't be disappointed.



On your way out you might notice the Vets' Practice, adjacent to Blythe Bridge Station, where you will be attended to by two Brocks, a Barker and a R Rogers, the latter presumably deals with horses!

Yours, in a field with fox?

Bill Davies



EPPING ONGAR RAILWAY

Last month's Railway Ramblings featured the Mid Suffolk Light Railway. This time it's the turn of the Epping Ongar Railway: Another heritage line ideal for a day trip from our area. The following brief history of this line, an extract from their website, is reproduced here by kind permission of the Epping Ongar Railway.

In 1856 The Eastern Counties Railway (ECR), which later became part of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) opened a double track railway between Stratford and Loughton. A single-track extension between Loughton and Ongar was added in 1865. Increased usage on the line led to the building of double track between Loughton and Epping. At this point 50 trains operated between London and Loughton each day, with a further 22 continuing to Epping and 14 more to Ongar. Little changed in the intervening years.



Ongar c1905

Photo: courtesy the EOR Collection.

During the Second World War (1939-45) extensions to the Central line were postponed and service between Ongar and London reduced to seven trains per day.

In 1946 the Central line extension reached Leytonstone, and in 1947 progressed to Woodford. It finally reached Loughton in 1948. A steam shuttle service continued to run from Loughton to Ongar and a passing loop was put in at North Weald the following year to allow more trains to operate. Following nationalisation of the railways in 1948 individual assets of the main line rail companies and LT were transferred to the control of new executive bodies. The London Transport Executive (LTE) was the inheritor of the former LT assets and as the line from Leyton to Loughton was served by LT trains the track, stations and staff were transferred to them. Questions arose about what was to happen to the service between Loughton and Ongar. The government initially resisted the electrification of the line however, the arrival of new housing in the area allowed electrification of the track through to Epping. The Central line officially reached Epping in 1949. LTE also took control of the branch line to Ongar, and hired the steam shuttle from the Eastern region's railways.

During the 1950's attempts were made to improve the steam service between Epping and Ongar. It was eventually decided to give the line light electrification: this avoided the need for a sub-station at Blake Hall. Modification was made to the rail and signals in 1957 allowing two 4-car trains or one 8-car trains to run on the branch line, however, in practice the short platform length made the use of the 8-car train unworkable. A twenty-minute passenger service was offered between Epping and Ongar, although freight service continued to run on steam.

Due to reduced passenger numbers Blake Hall station was closed on Sundays and a reduced weekday timetable implemented from 17th October 1966. In the same year Central line 1962 stock replaced the two 4-car trains on the branch line. Continued decline in passenger numbers led to the decommissioning of the passing loop and signal box at North Weald in 1976, and complete closure of Blake Hall station on 31st October 1981. A reduced service operated on the rest of the branch line. In 1989 an attempt was made to run an all-day service. It was unsuccessful and London Transport closed the loss-making section on 30th September 1994.

Shortly after 1994 a private company 'Pilot Developments' purchased the Epping to Ongar section of the line. Despite assurances that they would run a passenger service within five years of the purchase, no trains ran. In the early part of the new millennium The Epping Ongar Railway Volunteer Society (EORVS) was formed. Initially, this consisted of a small group of enthusiasts, volunteering their time to repair and preserve, damage and wear and tear, to the neglected buildings and track. Working alongside the owners the volunteer group gradually restored the line and station building at Ongar so that trains could run once again and provide a passenger service to North Weald. On 10th October 2004, almost ten years to the day since the line closed, the first EORVS train service left Ongar at 11am. EORVS operated five train services every Sunday until December 2007.



10 October 2004. EORVS first passenger train leaving Ongar and at North Weald Station.

(Photo: courtesy of Jackie Kelly EORVS member)

A change in ownership occurred late in 2007. It was decided to cease running trains and to concentrate on improving the infrastructure both to enable locomotive hauled trains to once again run, and to secure the long-term future of the branch. Both Ongar and North Weald Stations have seen long over-due investments in their infrastructure in our efforts to undertake an authentic restoration of the branch:

All of the essential infrastructure improvements (track, signalling and rolling stock) that have, and continue to be, undertaken help to widen the variety and frequency of heritage services, and are all key parts towards our central goal - to once again run trains to connect at Epping; both as we preserve our transport heritage and to enable us to run services for the wider benefit of the local community, restoring this important link in our transport network.

All reproduced by kind permission of Epping Ongar Railway.

Epping Ongar Railway Operations

Since reopening to the public in 2012 the Epping Ongar Railway has gradually increased its own stock of both steam and diesel locomotives. Currently these include:

Steam

4953 *Pitchford Hall* (operational), 4141 Large Prairie (currently undergoing refurbishment), 3437 Hawthorn Leslie *Isabel* (currently undergoing repairs on-site), 5619 Collett 0-6-2T (on loan, operational), Robert Stephenson & Hawthorne 0-6-0ST locomotives No's 56 & 63 (recently arrived as a longer-term refurbishment project).

Diesel

47635 *Jimmy Milne* (operational), 45132 (coming to the end of long-term refurbishment), 37029 (operational), 31438 (operational), 25173 (currently off-site undergoing refurbishment), 20001 (undergoing repairs), 03170 (operational), 03119 (awaiting refurbishment).

Diesel Multiple Units

205205 (awaiting bodywork repairs), Class 117 paired with Class 121 (operational).

Up until the time of the 2020-21 pandemic, services ran each week-end, and some week-days during busy periods, between April and early January.

The operating staff is provided by the Epping Ongar Railway Volunteer Society and members currently number around 650, with approximately 270 classed as active volunteers. New members are always welcome, adult membership costs just £20 per year and this includes four copies of the 44-page in-house magazine, *Mixed Traffic*, which features articles on both local and wider interest railway related issues.

The EOR Membership Secretary can be contacted at: membership@eorailway.co.uk

Details provided by the EOR

News from EOR - Services Resume from 22 May



As reported in the Supplement to the April issue of *Railway Ramblings*, the Epping Ongar Railway has announced that its heritage services will re-commence on 22 May, subject to the Government's roadmap remaining unchanged. Due to continuing essential engineering work the initial service will be formed of a heritage DMU operating between North Weald and Ongar and return only. They expect a steam service to be operated from early summer.

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 griersteve@hotmail.com

Nene Valley Railway



Also in the April Supplement we reported the news from the NVR that the Wansford Station site would reopen in April with cafe, shops (NVR platform shop, *Keith's Railwayana*, NVR charity shop and the 92 Squadron shop). Railway services on the NVR will restart from May 22nd, when booking will be essential. Please check all this on the NVR website before travelling

(Info provided by NVR)

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway



Another local line, which will be featured in the June issue, is also now back in operation. Steam services recommenced on Thursday 15 and Sundays 18 & 25 April. Compartments for parties of up to 6 people or individual reserved seating available.

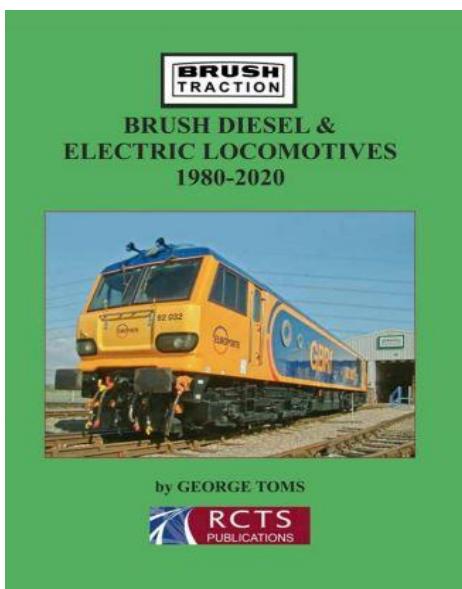
On Saturday 8th May the C&PR are aiming to bring back vintage diesel action with "Growler" 37227 (a resident loco). This is an 'all-day' event and you can join the train at Chinnor (for free car parking) or at Princes Risborough (for Chiltern Railways connections). Offering up to SIX round trips on your 'all-day' ticket between Chinnor and Princes Risborough (and up to FIVE round trips if you are joining at Princes Risborough); every ticket will be valid for as many trips as you please in your own reserved seat(s) or compartment for the WHOLE DAY.

(Info provided by C&PR)

RCTS Publications

NEW for 2021 - our latest book *Brush Traction Diesel and Electric Locomotives 1980 - 2020*

RCTS Publications presents the latest publication, this time on Brush Traction, a major builder of locomotives for export and within the UK. Written by George Toms, a life-long employee of Brush Traction, this work covers the period from 1980 to 2020 and covers all aspects of the Brush output of Diesel and Electric locomotives during that period plus the many changes experienced in work practice, management control and ownership of the brand name.



In addition to the export orders this work covers the large orders for BR Class 60, Class 92 and Eurotunnel. Later chapters explore the changes in outlook which led to the development of re-engineering as the main-stay of work undertaken by the works at Loughborough.

Detailed appendices are provided for all those locomotives built in 1980-2020 plus completely up-to-date tables on those built pre-1980 (Class 31, 47 etc).

Presented casebound in 184 pages with 73 accompanying photographs.

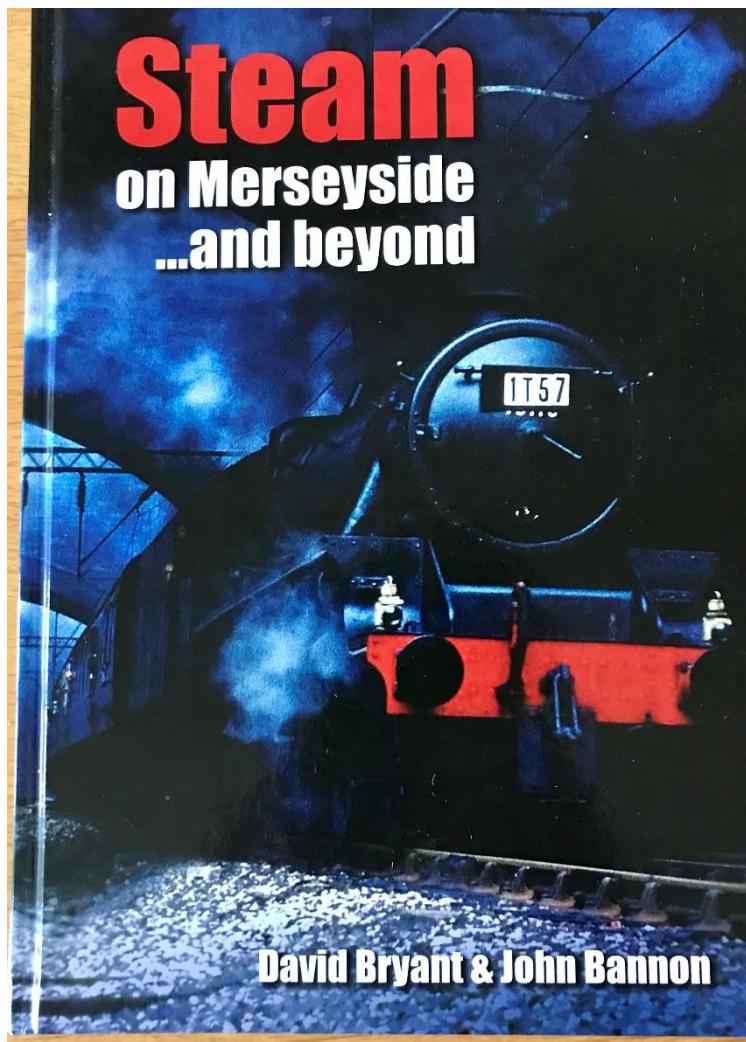
Take the opportunity to purchase this book through the RCTS website www.rcts.org.uk at a members' price of £20.00 plus £3.00 for p/p. Normal retail price £24.50.

How & Where Did It All Begin? (Part 2) - Paddy Carey

In last month's issue we heard how Paddy's cousin introduced him to trainspotting. This month we were going to pick up the story as he moved from Shropshire to Hertfordshire - but memories have been stirred and he continues with additional earlier recollections before moving on!

I feel I need to recap by including some omissions from my memories of Liverpool. As a primary and secondary school student I used to travel from Gillmoss into Liverpool on the 19A tram, usually a Baby Grand in green and cream livery. The tram stop was opposite Napier's, a World War 2 shadow factory with a name associated with the Sabre engine for the Tempest and Typhoon aircraft. Further along was English Electric, and I recall seeing diesel locomotives on trailers being transported for export via the East Lancs. Road, presumably to the docks. To my eye even then the livery seemed garish not to say bizarre. The route to school followed the East Lancs. Road to Walton Hall Avenue where we passed under the CLC line which may have had a cream painted lattice girder bridge. The next overbridge was at Walton, under the LNWR line to Walton and Anfield (Bootle branch). After that I can't recall any railway lines of significance.

At primary school we had a day out on the Liverpool Overhead Railway (LOH) to see the warehouses at the docks and learn a bit about geography. I remember looking at a cargo of dried animal hides which had a most disagreeable smell! The LOH had some railway tracks underneath the overhead system and I saw many saddle tanks of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. I noted Numbers 14 and 23 (steam) and 34 (diesel). Because of the shelter of the overhead structure this was termed 'The Dockers' Umbrella'. On a separate trip, with my father, we went on the LOH in its final years to see an aircraft carrier in dock. This may have been shortly before the Suez crisis and I can't say whether we saw *Ark Royal* or *Theseus*. In Birkenhead dock I also saw a Joseph Perrin dockside locomotive number 72 but as this was not in the Ian Allan book I had nothing to underline!



Checking back in my 1961 abc I see I copped a few locomotives in the 5XXXX numbering series. I regret not seeking out more saddle tanks and smaller engines in the early 1960s instead of looking for more 'namers' and D200 diesels. I did manage to see 51253, an Aspinall L&Y 0-4-0ST from 1891, probably at Speke Junction, and other Aspinall saddle tanks and 0-6-0 tender engines of similar vintage. By this time, with diesel and electric locomotives appearing in the North West, I had become reasonably satisfied with what I had been able to see and record, but for some reason by then my favourite 'cops' were 47005 and 47009, Kitson 0-4-0STs, seen at Birkenhead.

I review books for the RCTS - whatever I wrote at the time, the proof of my enjoyment was that I immediately bought my own copy of this particular one. It has now been invaluable in checking details - and correcting my recollections sometimes!

But now it is 1963 and I am in Welwyn Garden City working as a lab assistant at ICI Plastics (Butadiene). Now I can go to the pub (The Cherry Tree, which has since become a Waitrose shop) play snooker and enjoy a social life, so my train observations were side-lined. However, on my way to and from work from my digs I would see steam locomotives from the bridge over Bessemer Road, on the old Hertfordshire & Welwyn Junction Railway, but I suspect at this time it would be on a rubbish trip to Cole Green. Sometimes in the evening, I would return by a different route which would take me onto Bridge Road with a view to Welwyn Garden City station (before the Howard Centre days). I remember seeing a white diesel locomotive, which could only have been D0260 *Lion*. On Monday evenings I had an evening class at Mid-Herts College of Further Education. Some of us did Science practical in the building nearest 'White Bridge' and I clearly remember a diesel locomotive on this old Hertford, Luton & Dunstable Railway branch line. This would have no passengers by then and I wish I had bunked out to see if it was a D8XXX or other. While at I.C.I a friend and I were trusted with burning solvent residues containing polymer in a tray outside some safe distance from the site equipment store. One day we left it burning safely and had a snoop round the store. Something caught my eye which turned out to be a small steam locomotive partially hidden under a dust sheet. I found out later that one of our Directors was Peter Allen, so I thought he was obviously a brother of Ian Allan, until I noted the difference in spelling of the surname. I later found out that this 'Allen' was also a railway enthusiast and I suspect the locomotive was a Spanish shunting engine which was discretely taken on to his back garden.

After this it was more studying, moving to what was then Hatfield Polytechnic ... and marriage. We moved first to a flat in Hatfield near the St. Albans branch (Nast Hyde Halt) then, about a year later, to Knebworth in a small house backing directly onto the ECML. And what I saw in those days will feature in the next issue.

Paddy Carey

More from the Photo Album



An unusual departure from Kings Cross platform 4. It's 66729 at the rear of one of the work trains during the remodelling work, on 6 March 2021.

Photo: Bill Bass

Travel Tales

I reproduce below three photos and notes that Tom Gladwin recently sent to me as a letter. I found the letter amusing and, with Tom's agreement I reproduce the details here.

John Dossett



Here we have three photographs of the naming of 47172 "County of Hertfordshire" by Major Hughes, then Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, at Hertford East on 26th July, 1979.

After naming, the train, comprising just the locomotive and observation coach, made a round trip to Broxbourne.

Although not invited I took my chance and got on as it was about to depart.

I was employed by the County Council at the time and, although known to Major Hughes and the senior officers present, I was diplomatically unchallenged.

Originally D1767, the locomotive was delivered to Tinsley in October, 1964. It was renumbered 47172 under the TOPS scheme in March, 1974, and renumbered again 47583 on 9th November, 1980.

A year or two before its naming I had travelled behind it on the ten-car 4.50pm departure from Liverpool Street to Lowestoft. I used the train regularly on Fridays.

Janet would meet me at Darsham from where we drove the few miles to our cottage in Wangford. On one occasion my connecting train from Hertford East was running late because the driver hadn't arrived for duty.

A driver was found to take the train to Broxbourne where a replacement was waiting.

Despite the late running of the train the two drivers started an angry discussion on the platform.

I got out of the train and said something like "if I miss the 4.50pm Lowestoft train you could well find yourselves out of work".

On arrival at Liverpool Street, at 4.58pm there was an announcement. "Would the passenger travelling to Lowestoft please hurry to Platform X". (I don't remember the actual platform number.)

There I was shown to the comforts of first-class travel, and provided with a free meal in the company of Jim Prior, the then MP for Lowestoft.

He was travelling home to his farm in Brampton. I presume his use of rail travel was unusual.

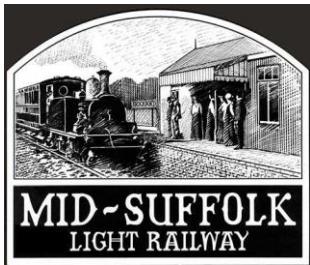
Jim later became Leader of the Commons and Minister for Northern Ireland.

Tom Gladwin

Contributions to Railway Ramblings

You will have seen that we have recently had a number of new contributors to this newsletter but we still need more of you to "put pen to paper" and write articles. Use your knowledge and/or experience to help provide a rich variety of material for the benefit of all - photos and/or text – please contact the editor: John.Dossett@btinternet.com

News from the “Middy”



Last month's issue of *Railway Ramblings* gave an introduction to the history of the Middy (the Mid Suffolk Light Railway) and we were able to include their new 2021 opening programme.

We continue this month with news about their line extension.

(All material is reproduced with kind permission of the MSLR.)

Track Extension – We Are Getting There!

During the various stages of Covid-19 restrictions the MSLR have still been able to make significant progress on their main project of extending the line.



The first major advance was the preparation and tidying of the Dovebrook area, which also included the building of a new footbridge to access both the station and picnic areas. This work was carried out by the Middy Infrastructure Team.

On March 1st TES2000 Network Rail Contractors carried out more heavy lifting for the MSLR beyond Dovebrook platform taking the line on to the beginning of the climb to the final destination.

The TES eight-man team extended the track some 73 metres closer to the long-held aim of adding a further 500 metres to the track length.

The work also included crossing the divide caused by the public footpath and installing a new public foot crossing. A 360-degree road/rail digger was employed with the Middy's own works train in support. TES2000 having completed this tranche of work, MSLR will be pressing on to completion with a mix of further contractor help and the infrastructure team.



The new section follows the existing track bed, which when completed, will enhance the visitor experience of this unique Edwardian Railway by more than doubling the length of demonstration journey and giving passengers a 'destination'. The line will eventually terminate at Aspall Halt, the construction being modelled on the old station at Wilby, which had the minimal building and facilities so typical of the original cash-strapped Middy. The Middy is already an important part of Suffolk Tourism and this extension will be a major step in securing the future of the museum for generations to come.

This is the first time that the track has been extended since the Spring and Summer of 2006 and marks a milestone in the plan to extend the track to Aspinall Halt.

Having missed 2020 visitor income, the MSLR now need funds to complete this project. If you would like to help, please visit the "Extension Appeal" page (Sponsor-a-Sleeper) on their website.

Reproduced by permission of the MSLR.

34081 92 Squadron Statistics

(For those who like facts and figures!)

General

Built	Brighton works 1948
Cost	£22,108
Length	67ft 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
Height	12 ft 11"
Width over cab	9ft (we have a "wide" cab)
Loco wheelbase	35ft 6"
Tender wheelbase	13ft
Total wheelbase	57ft 6"
Engine weight	86 tons (working) 77 tons (empty)
Adhesive weight	56 tons 5 cwt
Tender	42 tons 12cwt (working) 17 tons 5cwt (empty)
Total loco weight	128tons 12 cwt
Max axle load	18 tons 15 cwt
Boiler pressure	250 lbs per sq inch (initially 280, until April 1954)

Heating surface

Grate	38.25 sq ft
Firebox	253 sq ft
Evaporative	2,122 sq ft
Superheater	545 sq ft
Total	2,667 sq ft

Cylinders

Total 3	16 3/8" x 24"
Valve diameter	10"
Valve travel	6 1/4"
Piston valves	10" diameter

Wheels

Coupled	6 ft 2"
Bogie and delta truck	3ft 1"
Tender	3ft 7"

Capacities

Coal	5 tons
Water	5,500 gals
Coal to light up	1 ton (about £350)

Tractive effort

As built (280 lb/sq ft)	31,000 lb
After 1954 (250 lb/sq ft)	27,715 lb

Maximum speed

Nene Valley Railway	25mph
Mainline originally	100mph (104 mph was reported)
Mainline now	90mph (Not us, as not mainline certified)

Steve Lacey

The May Puzzle Page – Martin Elms

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

1. The LNER classified a tunnel as any bore of 50 yards or longer. Name the five railway tunnels in East Anglia.
2. Diesel locos D210 to D235 were all to be named after liners associated with Liverpool but which one was not (despite nameplates being cast)?
3. The Liverpool & Manchester loco "Lion" appeared in three cinema films. Name them.
4. What is the name of the fictional station where Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard met in the film Brief Encounter?
5. What was the purpose of flashing green signals installed on the ECML north of Peterborough?
6. Which island is connected to the UK mainland by the Kingsferry road and rail bridge?
7. Apart from the South Devon Railway, which other line in England used the atmospheric system of propulsion when first open?.
8. What was the name of the letter and number script used by the GWR?
9. What was the proposed name for the prototype English Electric Deltic?
10. In which country was Oliver Bulleid born?
11. Some Bulleid "Battle of Britain" pacifics carried names of individuals; all were named by the individual concerned except one. Which one?
12. What event in July 1864 on the North London Line frightened passengers?
13. Name the three BR steam sheds in Carlisle in 1960.
14. Name Britain's first diesel-only depot and the year it opened?
15. Which UK standard-gauge railway permitted ordinary passengers to travel in the brake van of goods trains?
16. What was the mechanical difference between grey and bauxite coloured freight stock?
17. Who founded the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in the 1920's?
18. What was unique about the nameplate of 35019 "French Line CGT"?
19. What top speed did APT-P achieve in December 1979 and where?
20. How many books has O S Nock been credited with having penned?

Best of luck – solutions (together with those for last month) are on the next page. No cheating!

Puzzle Solutions

Solutions to the puzzle in this issue:

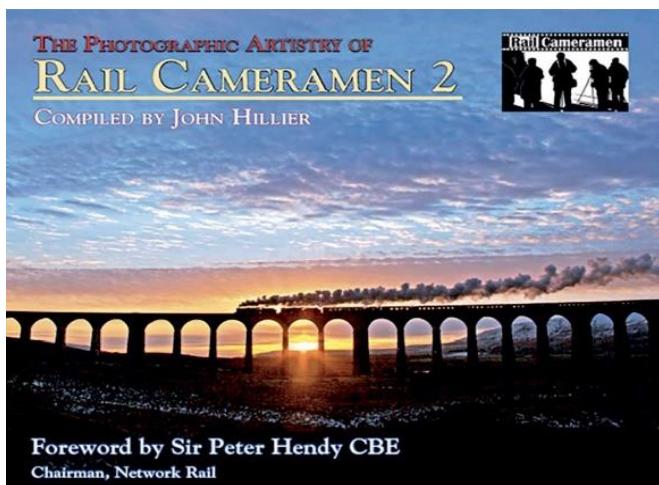
1. Warren Hill (1100yd), Ipswich (361yd), Audley End (456yd), Littlebury (407yd) and Maldon West (66yd).
2. D226 - was to be "Media" after the Cunard liner built by John Brown in 1947. Strangely, D227 was named "Parthia", the sister liner to "Media".
3. Victoria the Great (1937) scenes filmed at Bricket Wood. Lady with a Lamp (1952) scenes filmed at Cole Green. The Titfield Thunderbolt (1953) filmed at Limpley Stoke.
4. Milford Jcn, actually Carnforth. Urban scenes were filmed at Denham or Beaconsfield near the studios where the film was made.
5. To indicate suitability for 140 MPH running.
6. The Isle of Sheppey, Kent.
7. The London and Croydon Railway.
8. Egyptian Slab Script.
9. Enterprise – it was identified as DP1 on paperwork.
10. New Zealand.
11. Winston Churchill.
12. The murder of Thomas Briggs by Franz Muller.
13. Kingmoor (12A), Upperby (12B) and Canal (12C).
14. Devons Road (1D) Bow, in 1958.
15. The Highland Railway – in remote areas with no convenient passenger train service.
16. Grey – non-automatic brake, Bauxite – automatic brake fitted.
17. Capt J E P Howey.
18. The only BR steam loco to carry the name in upper and lower case and also in script style.
19. 162.2 MPH between Beattock and Lockerbie.
20. Approx. 140

Solutions to the puzzle in the April issue:

1. Due to restricted space a traverser was used to move the locos sideways, in place of conventional pointwork.
2. LMS 1, LNER 22, SR 0, GWR 0
3. Terry Worrall, BR Director of Operations.
4. 512, D1500 – D1999 AND D1100 – D1111
5. Paddington.
6. Liverpool Overhead Railway.
7. Lochgorm.
8. Charlie, at Newmarket – he retired in 1967.
9. Diesel 10800.
10. The A4s.
11. Colin G Maggs MBE.
12. The location of the brake release pull-cord.
13. They were built with Franco-Crosti boilers.
14. Nickname for special HM Forces and coal supply trains to Thurso, for Scapa Flow.
15. Snaefell Mountain Railway – to maintain the aerial masts at the summit.
16. Paddington.
17. Approx 21,000 route-miles – twice its current size.
18. The collapse of the Tay Bridge.
19. It was a platform ticket.
20. At Axminster, for the Lyme Regis branch.

In future issues of *Railway Ramblings* we have decided to include the solutions in the same issue as the puzzles. We trust you will find this easier to use.

Martin Elms & John Dossett



Rail Camermen 2

You can purchase this book by John Hillier, who was our guest speaker in April, at a 15% discount from Merton Books:
<https://www.mortonsbooks.co.uk/> by quoting code "Books15" when you place your order.

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 May 2021

Tuesday 11th May

A double bill:

From Scythes to Suburbia : 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/>

During June 2021

Tuesday 8th June

The Peter Bland Collection Part 2

Bryan Cross

To register in advance for this presentation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpdOCvrz8tHtYYZ3IpOAKXpKlaODF0HtH>

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.

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