

Railway Ramblings

Issue 131

June 2021

The monthly newsletter of the RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch

Forthcoming Meetings

This month we continue with Zoom virtual meetings. But, starting in July, we are expecting to be in a position to restart “traditional” meetings, continuing without a summer break, to the end of the year. We do need to know if you would want to attend – please see “Chairman’s Platform” for how to let us know.

Assuming we go ahead, there will be a number of practical things to be aware of and these will be set out in next month’s issue.

As you all know, progress back to “normality” is controlled by our Government and our plans could still need changing at relatively short notice.

*Our next **virtual** meeting is **8th June**: for details see “Forthcoming Events”.*

From the Photo Album



A previously published photo taken by Adrian White. May he rest in peace.
TPE IEP 802210 passing Welwyn North on 29 August 2019

Photo: Adrian 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, at hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk. They should be your photographs!

Chairman's Platform



As I was about to send out the May *Railway Ramblings*, I received some sad news: Adrian White (frequent attendee, speaker and railway photographer) had died in hospital on Wednesday 21st April. He had rung me from his hospital bed on Sunday 18th to apologise for not being well enough to fulfil his next booking with us at the RCTS! Not only that, but he gave me contact details of 3 people who had agreed to deputise for him. Fancy thinking of others when you are that ill. When I spoke to him, he was very breathless from his underlying condition, but it was still a shock to hear that he had succumbed, after a long battle. May he rest in peace. Our condolences go to his family and friends. As a tribute to Adrian, we have republished one of his photographs on page 1.

Last month, I indicated that there is a good prospect of us being able to restart traditional branch meetings in July. This is still the case and Dave Elsdon, our Branch Secretary, has been busy making the appropriate arrangements with our presenters and our venues. Details of the revised programme are in this issue of *Railway Ramblings*, but you must bear in mind that all of this still remains conditional on the relaxation of the Covid-19 regulations allowing us to restart and, secondly, on the rules regarding precautions which must be taken at indoor meetings. In the July issue, we should be able to confirm the situation, and we will publish details about the way we need to conduct the meetings. A draft, provisional, version is appended to this newsletter.

The revised programme takes us through to the end of 2021 – two meetings a month with one at Hitchin and one at Welwyn Garden City. You will see that having lost so much of our original programme, we are not taking the customary break in August (and there will not be an outdoors visit that month).

Importantly, we do need to know if you are ready to restart traditional meetings. It is obviously pointless for us to make the arrangements, unless enough people want to attend! Please help by sending a simple “Yes” or “No” and “H” and/or “WGC” (for the venue), in a reply to the email which carried *Railway Ramblings* to you. Please do this as soon as you can, and no later than **7th June**. You will not be making a binding choice, but will indicate to me whether or not we have sufficient numbers to proceed as I have already outlined.

But what of Zoom presentations? For most, these have been a real blessing, with a few negatives but also a number of pluses. It feels that there has to be an ongoing roll for Zoom –using technology enables anyone to access presentations originating anywhere (many of us have been spoilt for choice) and there are no travel issues! Attendance numbers far exceed those at traditional meetings and we need to work out how we can perhaps continue to use Zoom in conjunction with traditional meetings.

Steve Lacey

Local Observations – Dave Elsdon



All reports as seen at Welwyn North and the local area

On **Wednesday 14 April** 57305 ran through at 11:56 from Ely to Newport hauling 317650/658 for scrapping. At 12:03 37800 passed hauling a Class 365 unit from Hornsey to Peterborough. It was announced today that Hull Trains had commenced running their trains again this week after a third break in services due to the pandemic during the year. A movement occurred on **Thursday 15 April** when 37884 came past at 11:58 hauling 317651/654 from Ely to Eastleigh. The same loco was used again on **Friday 17 April** this time hauling 321354/360 from Clacton to Doncaster through here at 12:17, just behind 66143 with the Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe empty steel train at 11:50 and 60055 working 16 new wagons from Willesden to Doncaster at 12:12, this train subsequently failed at Biggleswade and was rescued by 66705. **Sunday 18 April** again saw the Caledonian Sleeper from Euston to Inverness diverted this way at 23:03. With the opposite working from Inverness coming past on **Monday 19 April** at 07:06. 37884 again appeared light-engine this

time at 10:01 on route to Hornsey, returning hauling 365538 for storage at Ely passing here at 12:23. At 20:28 755333 made its way to Hornsey from Norwich via Cambridge. This same unit worked back to Norwich at 18:43 on **Tuesday 20 April**. Another drag on **Wednesday 21 April** occurred when 57312 ran from Derby to Hornsey at 10:02 to collect 365530 for storage at Ely, passing Welwyn North at 12:08. For the second time this week a Class 755 unit came to Hornsey from Norwich; this time 755404 passed here at 20:28, returning to Norwich the following evening **Thursday 22 April** at 18:43. On **Friday 23 April** a lengthy engineer's train ran at 09:42 from Doncaster to Belle Isle for the weekend closure of Kings Cross, this impacted us at Welwyn North in that we had a bus replacement service all weekend.

Monday 26 April started with 92038 on a diverted Caledonian Sleeper from Inverness to Euston through at 06:58. This was followed by 37884 hauling 317649 (going for scrap) from Ely to Newport at 11:04. Then at 14:40 66767/775 returned from Belle Isle to Doncaster after spending the weekend at Kings Cross. 60028 worked a train from Chaddesden to Willesden via Hertford North on **Tuesday 27 April** through Hertford North at 12:18. 37099/175 appeared in the yard at Welwyn Garden City - this pair had worked a test train from Derby to Shoeburyness and were stabled at WGC instead of Ferme Park. On **Wednesday 28 April** the Class 37's returned to Derby, passing Welwyn North at 10:10 instead of working to Harwich as booked. The second scrap train this week worked by 57305 hauling 317660 & 317668 from Ely to Newport ran through at 10:59.



28th April 2021 – 57305 passing through Welwyn North taking 317668 & 317660 from Ely to Sim's scrapyards in Newport.

Photo: Mikky Hart

Strangely this was followed by another one on **Thursday 29 April** when at 07:01 57312 hauling 317669 came through heading for Newport from Ely. 755416 returned to Norwich from Hornsey passing at 18:49. In the evening of **Friday 30 April** both Caledonian Sleeper trains were diverted this way, with 92043 at 22:10 running from Euston to Inverness and 92028 at 22:51 with the Euston to Glasgow service. A busier day on **Saturday 1 May**, starting with both southbound Caledonian Sleepers passing at 05:22 with 92014 from Inverness to Euston, and 92038 at 07:54 from Glasgow to Euston. 66704/747 ran at 13:08 with a Doncaster to Belle Isle engineer's train. 66708/761 ran back to Whitemoor Yard from Belle Isle at 19:40 and 66709/760 worked in the opposite direction from Whitemoor Yard at 21:02.

Again, on **Sunday 2 May** the Caledonian Sleepers were diverted via the ECML with 92043 hauling the Inverness service at 21:56 & 92028 the Glasgow at 23:14. During day we also saw 66704/747 returning to Whitemoor Yard from Belle Isle at 09:32 and 66709/760 from Whitemoor Yard to Belle Isle at 11:52. The reverse Caledonian Sleeper workings to Euston on **Monday 3 May** were 92006 from Inverness Passing at 05:22 and 92023 from Glasgow at 06:55. An up-Caledonian sleeper was

again diverted this way hauled by 92014 at 07:10 on **Tuesday 4 May**. Also today, East Anglian unit 755412 returned from Hornsey to Norwich through Welwyn North at 17:10. **Wednesday 5 May**, saw 66762/788 returning from Belle Isle to Whitemoor via Eastfield at 12:12. A new Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday regular "Biffa" working started today with 66783 from Doncaster to Renwick Road, through here at 22:03. **Thursday 6 May** started at 07:00 when 57305 passed hauling 317669 from Ely to Eastleigh. 66728/730 ran past at 12:37 with an engineer's train from Whitemoor to Belle Isle, and at 19:11 66725/772 returning to Whitemoor from Belle Isle. On **Friday 7 May** the steel train empties ran from Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe with 66161 at 11:50 closely followed by 57305 hauling 317365 from Clacton to Doncaster at 12:12, and at 12:30 66725/765 passed on another Whitemoor to Belle Isle freight. Later that afternoon at 15:19 66728/66730 took their train back to Whitemoor from Belle Isle. At Hertford North on **Saturday 8 May** 66783 hauled an unidentified 321 unit from Slade Green to Doncaster at 14:08. Whilst at Welwyn North 66782/784 at 18:07 was the first of three Doncaster to Belle Isle trains, the others were 66714/766 at 20:04 and 66736/750 at 21:50.

Sunday 9 May was a strange day as LNER services had been suspended due to the published Azuma suspension fault but 66752/772 passed returning to Doncaster from Finsbury Park at 09:23 followed by 66714/766 returning from Holloway to Doncaster at 09:35 and 66736/750 at 13:08, also going to Doncaster from Belle Isle. 92043 ran on the northbound Caledonian Sleeper at 21:53 from Euston to Inverness. **Monday 10 May** started with the up Caledonian Sleeper from Inverness to Euston through here at 06:55 hauled by 92006. Then 66784 Belle Isle to Doncaster passed at 14:10 followed by 66720/727 at 15:18 from Whitemoor to Belle Isle and at 15:39 66712/758 Belle Isle to Doncaster. Over at Hertford North, 57305 ran through at 11:23 hauling 91102/113/126/129 from Doncaster to Sims at Newport for scrapping. **Tuesday 11 May** saw 91110 passing several times during the day having been brought back into service due to the Azuma suspension crisis. Another drag from Ely to Eastleigh started the day at 06:58 on **Thursday 13 May** followed by an engineer's train hauled by 66725/768 at 08:48 from Doncaster to Belle Isle and at 12:10 a pair of Class 321's worked through on route from Clacton to Doncaster. A fairly busy day was **Friday 14 May**, when 66730/752 ran an engineer's train from Whitemoor to Belle Isle at 09:32 closely followed, at 09:41, by 66779 working back from Belle Isle to Doncaster. At 13:02 66725/768 passed with a freight from Doncaster to Belle Isle, then something quite different at 13:07 when 70802/803 ran past light-engines from Westbury to Whitemoor. This was followed by another return working from Belle Isle to Doncaster hauled by 66720/766.

Saturday 15 May was the final day of working for EMU class 365's on our line after many years of great service, the final two trains left Peterborough for Kings Cross through Welwyn North at 08:59 and 09:57 hauled by 365502/504 and 365520/522 respectfully - each had many enthusiasts on board. There should have some other workings for these units during the day but all of these were cancelled. A further day of engineer's trains on **Sunday 16 May** starting with 66770 at 08:17 with a Huntingdon to Whitemoor, reversing at Welwyn Garden City before setting off to March at 09:50. 66711/783 ran through at 13:25 from Doncaster to Belle Isle before a return movement from Belle Isle to Doncaster using 66725/768 passed by at 14:19, followed by a Belle Isle to Whitemoor at 15:49 hauled by 66730/752.

(Observations courtesy of our Branch Secretary, Dave Elsdon)

New Member

We welcome Ian Watson, of Royston, as a new member of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch.

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

Adrian White : 19th September 1958 - 21st April 1921

Many of you will have known Adrian as an excellent photographer, Fixtures Secretary for the Stevenage Locomotive Society, supporter of the Severn Valley Railway, giver of splendid illustrated talks on railway matters, keen allotment holder, friend and supporter of Stevenage Borough Football Club. Well, no one is perfect!

I attended his funeral service at Harwood Park Crematorium by Web-link, together with the maximum permitted 30 actually on site and a few others who lined the road out of respect. Adrian had moved to Stevenage aged 6 months. He worked at the Land Registry his entire working life, until his retirement on closure of the Stevenage office in 2011.

From the eulogy, given by his friend Jamie Fraser, we heard that his passion for railways started when the football, that he and some friends were playing with, burst and they decided to go to Stevenage (old) Station to watch the trains ... the rest is history. We listened to the famous piece "From a Railway Carriage" by Robert Louis Stevenson: "Faster than fairies, faster than witches, Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches ...".

Music included Lead Zeppelin Rock and Roll, Elgar's Nimrod and Vivian Ellis's music for the film Coronation Scot.

He is survived by his mother Ruby and partner Anne to whom we express our condolences.

Steve Lacey

Random Reminiscences (Part 2) - Bill Wilson

Between 1957 and 1961, mainly during school holidays, my group of friends visited Platform 10 at King's Cross, St Pancras, Euston (Coronation Pacifics and Black Five 4-6-0s), Liverpool Street (BR Standard Class 4-6-2 Britannias on fast trains to Norwich, B1s, N7 0-6-2Ts and J69 0-6-0T, the station pilot) and Paddington (Kings, Castles, Halls and 15XX 0-6-0PTs on empty stock workings). Occasionally we went to Elstree (Jubilees), a 125mph section since November 2013, as it is on the 107 bus route from New Barnet. Liverpool Street involved surveying the station from the taxi ramp: very dangerous if you weren't careful. In 1959 or 1960 there was a school trip by rail to Doncaster.

My brother and I watched every Barnet Football Club match, apart from one (when the family went to the circus) on their way to the Amateur Cup Final in 1959: they narrowly lost 3-2 to Crook Town. Many of the trips were by football special hauled by steam. Some ventured onto the Western Region and I remember coming up from Harringay Park Junction on the Gospel Oak to Barking Line onto the GN at Harringay Station behind a V2.

Train working over the GN main line was governed to a marked extent by the double-line bottleneck through the tunnels from Greenwood signal box to Potters Bar. Quadrupling took place in 1957-59 (implemented as part of the 1955 Modernisation Plan) and completed on 3 May 1959. A number of us attended the official opening at Hadley Wood Station. The ceremony was performed by General Sir Brian Robertson, the last Chairman of the British Transport Commission. One Sunday afternoon at the time of the engineering work at Hadley wood I was at New Barnet and saw a down train behind an A2 set back over the crossover onto the up main (using a pilot man) and continue wrong line through to Potters Bar. Between 12th and 14th September, 1958 there was a public exhibition of locomotives and rolling stock in Noel Park goods yard, Wood Green.

At about the same time the family took a summer holiday in Folkestone and I was very impressed watching the boat trains being banked over the viaduct and up the steep gradient out of the harbour station towards Folkestone Junction by R1 0-6-0Ts (they were replaced in March 1959 by ex-GWR 57XX 0-6-0PTs). The last train ran on the branch on 12 April 2008 behind Bulleid Battle of Britain Pacific No. 34067 *Tangmere*. We also occasionally visited an aunt in Maidenhead and my brother and I used to walk round the corner and watch the 'Castles' charging up-and-down the GW main line.

Parts of the British Transport Commission 1955 Modernisation Plan were being implemented around this time, under which all steam traction would be replaced by either diesel electric locomotives, Diesel Multiple Units (DMU) or electrification. We were impressed by the prototype DP1 Deltic which operated on the GN from February 1959, having been built by English Electric in 1955. The locomotive ran on the national network until suffering engine failure in March 1961. Production Deltics Type 5 (TOPS Class 55) first arrived at Finsbury Park Traction Maintenance Depot (opened April 1960, closed completely October 1983) in March 1961 (the final Deltic hauled service ran on 31 December 1981). The thing that struck me about the Deltics was how fast they were coming out of London compared with an A3 Pacific. English Electric Type 4s (Class 40) started operating on the GN from 1958.

From February 1959 diesel locomotives of various types were introduced on the outer suburban services, these included North British Locomotive Company Type 2 (Class 21), English Electric Type 2 (Class 23 Small Deltics), Birmingham Carriage & Wagon Company Type 2 (Class 26) and Brush Type 2 (Class 30, later reclassified as Class 31 when their Mirrlees engines were replaced by English Electric rated at 1,470 horsepower). The previous steam-hauled rolling stock was retained, the last Quad Arts sets being finally withdrawn from GN services on 1 April 1966. We soon realized the Class 21s and Class 23s (the "Small Deltics", emitting their characteristic blue smoke) were particularly troublesome. This was largely brought about by the rush to introduce diesel locomotive without adequate evaluation and testing. For the North British Locomotive Company Limited (NBL) it led to insolvency. NBL were unable to convert successfully from building steam locomotives. The reliability and performance of their diesel traction was very poor leading to substantial warranty claims and NBL entered voluntary liquidation on 19 April 1962.

Craven two-car DMUs appeared on the inner suburban services in autumn 1958, providing these until 1976. I witnessed how, owing to their lack of power, they had a tendency to stall as they tried to depart as four-car (or six-car) sets from the steeply graded Platform 16 at King's Cross with a full evening peak load.

A group of us joined the Ian Allan loco spotters Special from King's Cross to Doncaster on 20 April 1960 behind GWR City Class 4-4-0 *City of Truro* No 3440 piloting Midland Railway Compound 4-4-0 No 1000. On the return trip *City of Truro* failed at Peterborough with an overheating axle box.

I visited King's Cross Top Shed (closed 16 June 1963) which had about 125 engines and a total staff of over 1,000, together with other London sheds (including Cricklewood, Willesden and Old Oak Common) with a group on a Saturday afternoon in about 1960. Also, at about this time I spent a day visiting sheds in the north of England (Derby, Rugby) with the same group.

The announcement of Dr Richard Beeching as the Chairman of the new British Railways Board (BRB) was made in March 1961. The BRB published *The Reshaping of British Railways* (the Beeching Report) in March 1963. There were many line and station closures up to 1973 following the report, but not all resulting from the report.

I worked for British Road Services Ltd (BRS), as a junior clerk, my first job, from September 1961 to December 1962: starting at BRS general haulage, Tufnell Park Branch and then transferring to BRS (Parcels) Ltd, City Road. BRS at that time operated the road haulage businesses and collection and delivery parcels services (not owned by the group railways) nationalised in 1948, as an undertaking of the British Transport Commission.

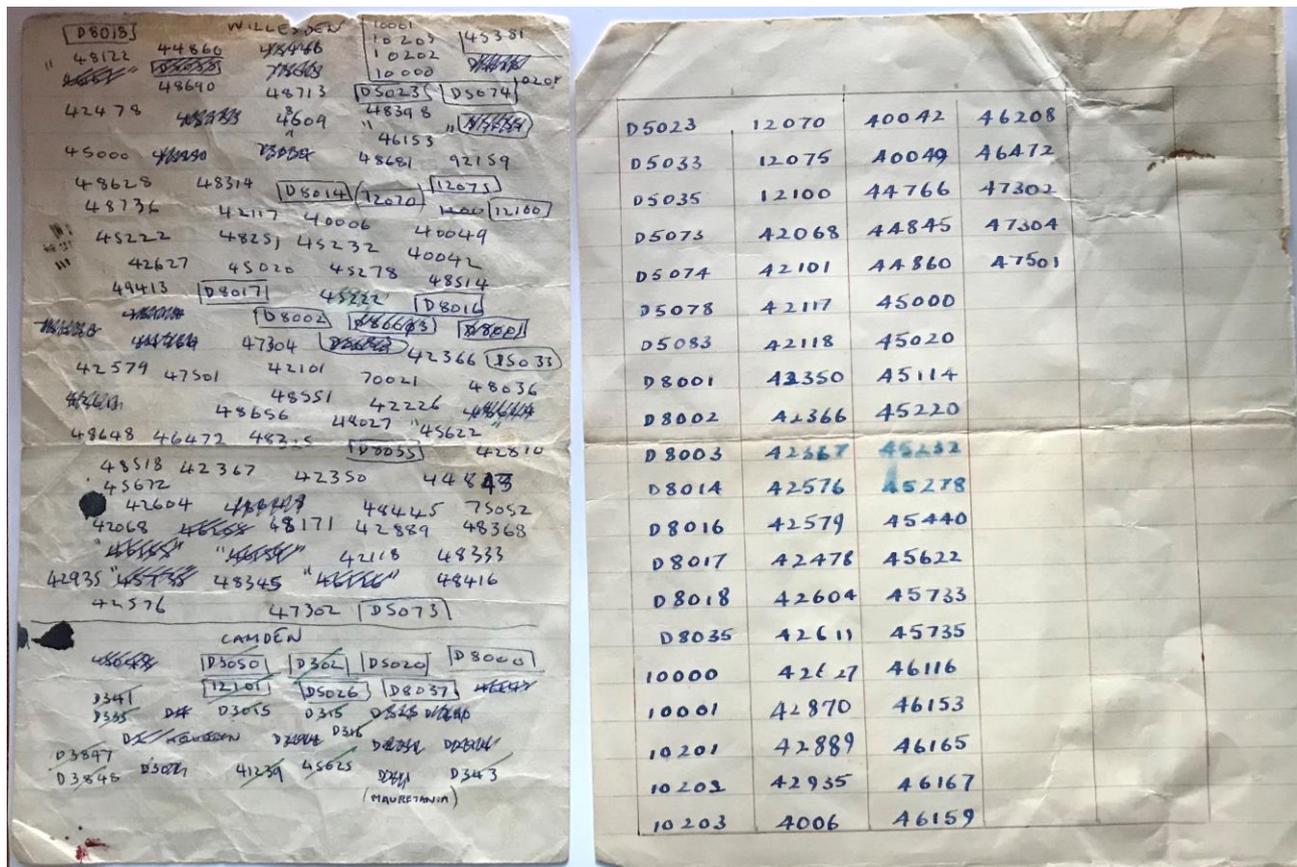
Coinciding with my withdrawal from regular trainspotting, the Euston Arch, the original entrance to Euston station, was dismantled in December 1961: a widely criticised act of 'appalling official vandalism'. My interest in railways was revived around 1977, just before the HSTs started operating on the ECML in May 1978, perhaps prompted by the introduction on 8 November 1976 of electric services from Welwyn Garden City to Moorgate (the ECML electrification was completed in 1991) and has continued ever since. Sadly, all my *Ian Allan Loco Shed Books* and notebooks disappeared and although I owned a Box Brownie camera it was never used for railway photography, but I did use a Second World War gas mask bag!

Bill Wilson

(The final part of Bill's Reminiscences will appear in the July issue of Railway Ramblings.)

These were 10000 and 10001 which I used to see double heading "The Royal Scot" at Crewe or Stafford and probably a combination of two from the 10201 trio on the same train working, and I was pleased to add 46126 *Royal Army Service Corps*, 46153 *The Royal Dragoon* and 46165 *The Ranger* (12th London Regt.). I note that I finally ended up with 56 out of 71 'Scots' in my book. Also on shed was 46205 *Princess Victoria* which I had seen before in Liverpool Lime St. but I think that shortly after this spotting it was withdrawn. There were the expected 8F 2-8-0s and Stanier Black 5s and also 49413, an 0-8-0 development of the Bowen Cooke LNWR design, so these freight locomotives were also added to my underlining. One locomotive really appealed to me even then: It was 46472, an Ivatt 2-6-0 of which I had only seen two before. I also saw D5073, a type 2 diesel, and it is only at this point in my forensic examination of the raw data that I notice the diesel numbers were circled numbers. Trying to track the code of a 16-year-old is sometimes problematic. Also noted was 40006 and similar. I think these were known as 'Suburban tanks' and my friends and I tended to note them while waiting for bigger fish to appear! I wonder now how many small fish I missed in pursuit of the big 'uns.

1B Camden. This was a smaller shed than the other two. Either that or we were chased off early in our tour. I saw D8000, which I first saw at Lime Street station, and D8037. Type 2 D5020 and D5026 were on shed but I'm not sure I took to this diesel class. There were a few type 4s D315, D316, D 333, D343 but D211 *Mauritania* reminds me that round about this time they were being named after ships of the Cunard line. Another class 4 was *Great Gable*, and the first 8 of this class resonated strongly with me because they were locations well known to me as a Liverpoolian. 12101 was an 0-6-0 diesel shunter from a 1945 design, and I am happy to recall that I saw quite a few of these before they were renumbered with a D prefix.



In collecting these meagre notes from 1961 I have had some pleasant memories. One talks of the 'good old days' but I think that this was true in my case. Steam was on the way out, diesels of varying types of transmission were being introduced, and the blue electrics were on the WCML. Consider nameplates. If (heaven forbid) one were to steal one, then *The Green Howard - Alexandra, Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment* would probably pose a problem both in weight to carry and size to sneak out. Some nameplates today seem easier to remove and steal. Smell: I can recall the smell of a locomotive shed at this time. It was oil, diesel fuel, steam (remember steam on shed was sometimes cooling down and leakage from cylinders could sometimes catch one on the back of the neck), and ash and clinker. It was a time of enormous change, and not just in the narrow focus of railways. But it was a good time to have come through.

Railway Employees & Public Transport Association (REPTA)

The RCTS has negotiated membership of REPTA, available to all RCTS members, without the requirement of being an active or retired transport worker. Visit their website at <https://repta.co.uk> for further details.



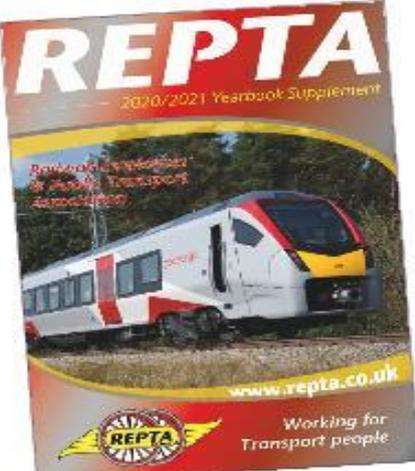
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CONTACT:
 Colin Rolle
 4 Brackmills Close,
 Forest Town,
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Total remittance enclosed
 £
 (by cheque or Postal Order made payable to REPTA)

Please note: With regard the reference to 'local secretary' the relevant person for RCTS purposes is Colin Role, the contact shown towards the bottom of the application form.

Revised 2021 Branch Programme

Please note that, at present, these dates and speakers are subject to there being sufficient numbers of members letting us know that they want to return to live meetings in July. There are some changes of speakers from the originally published programme and there is no break in August.

HITCHIN MEETINGS 2021

Subject to the Covid-19 regulations

Held at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin SG5 2EE on the Tuesday evening from 7:30 to 10:00 (doors open from 7:00)

13 th July	A 10 th Colour Rail Journey	<i>Paul Chancellor</i>
10 th Aug	Roaming Around London with my Camera	<i>Geoff Brockett</i>
14 th Sept	45596 Bahamas Locomotive Society – “A Preservation Pioneer”	<i>John Hillier</i>
12 th Oct	That Was the Year That Was 1969	<i>Geoff Plumb</i>
9 th Nov	European Railways	<i>Rob Freeman</i>
14 th Dec	History of Leatherhead Station – Home to the RCTS Library & Archive Centre	<i>Andy Davies</i>

WELWYN GARDEN CITY MEETINGS 2021

Subject to the Covid-19 regulations

Held at the Methodist Church, Ludwick Way/Cole Green Lane junction, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3PN on the Tuesday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:30 (doors open from 1:30)

27 th July	Depots, Works & Open Days 1980-1998	<i>Robert Warburton</i>
31 st Aug	East Anglian Railways in the 21 st Century – A Period of Transition	<i>John Day</i>
28 th Sept	Edge Hill Marshalling Yard & Its Complex of Railways	<i>George Howe</i>
26 th Oct	The East Coast Main Line, Kings Cross to York	<i>Stephen Gay</i>
30 th Nov	A Northern View	<i>Stephen Batty</i>
21 st Dec	A Lifetime of Railway Discoveries	<i>Mike Bunn</i>

All members & guests are welcome at all meetings.

A reminder that the current suggested meeting donation rates are £2 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

The Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway



In previous issues of Railway Ramblings we have featured the Epping Ongar Railway and the Mid Suffolk Light Railway. The Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway is another local heritage line, ideal for a day outing, and now starting to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown.

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A Brief History of the Line



The last day of regular BR passenger train operations was on 1 July 1957

Originally known as the Watlington and Princes Risborough Railway Company, the railway was largely promoted by local land owners following the failure of the planned extension of the Wallingford branch through to Watlington. Construction of the branch was authorised by an Act of Parliament dated 26 July, 1869.

This authorised the construction of the branch as a Light Railway, commencing from the Great Western Railway Station at Princes Risborough and running for a distance of 8 miles 66 chains to a terminus at Pyrton just outside Watlington.

The Branch was opened on 15 August, 1872 and had two intermediate stations at Chinnor and Aston Rowant. After opening, the company immediately ran into difficulties and for a period of time the company directors ran the line at their own expense. Finally, after being offered the branch on more than one occasion, the Great Western Railway (GWR) acquired it on 01 July, 1883 for the sum of £23,000, which was less than half the cost of its construction. Under the ownership of the GWR, track on the branch was re-laid, the original being in very poor condition laid directly on the chalk. Rail level halts were opened at Bledlow Bridge, Kingston Crossing and Lewknor Bridge in 1906 and Wainhill Crossing in 1925. After the Second World War the passenger traffic on the branch started to fall and

by the mid-1950s had fallen to such a level that on 01 July, 1957 the line was closed to passenger traffic.

The last train from Watlington was due to leave at 21.00, however it was nearly 10 minutes late leaving with a number of local dignitaries present. As had become the custom, the train left to the sound of detonators exploding on its last journey. The train finally arrived at Princes Risborough some 25 minutes late and so brought to an end the 85-year history of passenger carrying on the branch.

The various halts at Lewknor, Kingston Crossing, Wainhill and Bledlow Bridge were closed immediately, but the stations remained open for goods and parcel traffic until 02 January 1961, after which the section from Chinnor to Watlington was closed completely and the track lifted. The section from Chinnor to Princes Risborough was retained to serve the cement works and the wood yard in the village. The wood yard ceased to use freight by the beginning of 1961 and in the early 1970s the station building at Chinnor was demolished and the platform broken up. In 1989 British Rail declared the hopper wagons used to carry the cement works fuel obsolete. Set against the cost of new wagons and unloading system and given the effectiveness of having coal delivered by road, the service was declared non-operational.

On 20 December, 1989, a class 47 diesel (No.47258) together with 35 hopper wagons made the final journey into Chinnor cement works, with the locomotive sporting a headboard with the legend "Last BR Train on the Watlington Branch". Maintenance of the branch from Chinnor to the junction with the Thame branch near Princes Risborough was given to the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association from January, 1990.

The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway (C&PRR) was granted a Transport and Works Order under section 6 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 on 04 July 1994, the order coming into force on 26 July 1994. Thus, the legality of the C&PRR status was assured and passenger services could recommence.

A new platform suitable for two coaches was completed in May 1994 and the restoration of operational passenger and goods stock was also completed that year. 1994 was an historic year with the freehold of the branch purchased by the Association in August for £125,000, and the first public service since 1957 ran on 20 August with round trips to Wainhill Halt. In April 1995 the passenger carrying line was extended some 2 miles to Horsenden Lane. A further extension to Thame Junction opened at the start of the 1996 season, where a run round loop was constructed. The final stage into Princes Risborough, Platform 4, finally opened in 2018.

Reproduced by kind permission of the C&PR



Epping Ongar Railway - Update

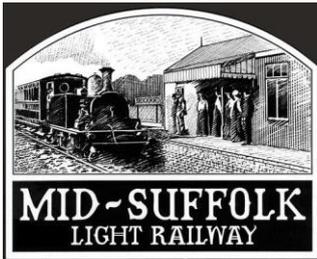
Steam returns on 29th, 30th & 31st May (Bank Holiday weekend), with services to and from North Weald and Ongar, and a shuttle service to the Forest. Heritage diesel (DMU) services restarted on 22nd May.

Did you know? - All distances on the Underground are still measured from Ongar. The change happened in 1972 when the station's location in relation to all the other lines meant it was suitable for selection as a 'datum' or reference point for these measurements. In some way Ongar Station is the 'Greenwich Meridian of the Underground'. There's a London Underground distance marker mounted by the buffer stops showing the starting distance of 0.0km and you will see other similar signs along the side of the track.



(All reproduced with kind permission of the EOR)

The “Middy” Gets Going



This Bank Holiday weekend 30th & 31st May – two days of living history – how it was in the 1940s:

“Middy in the War Years”, one of the MSLR’s most popular and ambitious events, is confirmed as the first event of the 2021 programme following the latest easing of the Covid-19 restrictions. The weekend will celebrate the Middy’s part in WW2 with a wide range of re-enactors including, perhaps, a famous face or two, displays of memorabilia and a long list of military and vintage vehicles. And for the first time, a re-enactment group of German Mountain Troops. Plus, of course, steam train rides in genuine Victorian 4-wheel coaches.

With the number of confirmed contributors and participants, “Middy in the War Years” should bring history alive and makes a great day out for families and enthusiasts alike.

This is the MSLR confirmed programme for 2021, all subject to the Government relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions:

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

Pre-booking only - Train times, prices and ticketing arrangements are on the Middy website :

<https://www.mslr.org.uk/>

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Back Copies of Railway Ramblings

Back copies of Railway Ramblings are now available on the RCTS website: <https://rcts.org.uk>
Look under the “Branches” dropdown, then “London & South East” to find “Hitchin”.

News from the Nene Valley Railway



Trains started running again on the weekend of 22nd/23rd May.

If you are looking to spoil someone then the luxury Afternoon Tea services dates recently announced are 29th May, 12th June, 21st July, 21st August and 18th Sept.

Your Afternoon Tea will be served to your table as you enjoy your nostalgic steam-hauled journey down the line, while you travel in the luxury of 1st Class continental coaches. Seating is available in open carriages or in a compartment (each train will follow a Covid seating plan, so numbers will be limited, and you will have a table to yourselves - all socially distanced from other bookings). NVR also plan that these services will be steam hauled but, of course, this cannot be guaranteed.

For details of all services, timetables & prices visit the Nene Valley Railway website: www.nvr.org.uk

(From information provided by the NVR)

A Trip on the Chinnor

The Chinnor & Princes Risborough restarted operations on 15th April 2021. To mark my grandson Henry's 8th Birthday we booked a compartment on the early afternoon service on April 25th. Although good weather cannot be booked, we were fortunate that the day was bright & sunny.



At Chinnor the impressive station building is in fact a modern construction replicating one that had existed at Watlington.

Photo: John Dossett

The service had originally been scheduled for steam traction (GWR tank 6412), but gremlins had appeared a few days beforehand and the C&PR resident diesel (a 1960s-built Class 37, number 37227) was in charge. Although a few people had taken up the option of transferring their bookings to a later date, the train was still more-or-less full of people keen to come back on the rails. Staff were strictly adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines, giving passengers reassurance about their wellbeing, as for many (including us) this was their first outing for many months.

Since our visit, 6412, an 87-year-old locomotive, has since been repaired and will be providing steam power for the remainder of the 2021 season, starting on 23rd May.



6412



37227

Photos: Courtesy of C&PR

The route goes into Platform 4 at Princes Risborough and there is direct access to the rest of the station and all services. My grandson was fascinated to go along the platform and watch the decoupling and re-coupling process once the loco had run round the train.

Not far from the end of the platform is the Princes Risborough North signal box which is undergoing a major restoration. Not yet open to the general public it is apparently able to accept small groups (a potential visit?).

Back at Chinnor the gift shop was doing a roaring trade (despite the need to queue in a socially distanced line) and the “pop-up” catering marquee was also doing fairly good business.

With a really enthusiastic volunteer team (right from the greeting in the car park) the day was most enjoyable. A good day out – just under an hour each way from our home in Welwyn.

For full details of the services, prices and booking arrangements, visit their website:

www.chinnorrailway.co.uk

John Dossett

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.

Email - hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk

Competition

Do you have a budding young photographer in the family?



The prestigious Rail Camera Club (RCC) is organising a new photographic competition to give an opportunity for budding and established railway photographers aged 25 and under to showcase their work.

The Competition is being supported by **Network Rail, the National Railway Museum, part of the Science Museum Group, Jessops Europe Limited, Mortons Media Ltd (Railway Magazine, Heritage Railway, Rail Express and Silver Link Publishing), Bauer Media (Rail and Steam Railway), TimeLine Events and the Bahamas Locomotive Society.**

THEME - 'THE RAILWAY SEEN'

Pictures taken since 1 January 2019 should illustrate the diversity of the current railway scene and the variety of subject matter available such as steam, electric and diesel traction, contemporary railway vehicles, architecture, people, landscapes, design features and abstract image. Some images might also show how the new blends with the old. However, every picture must have some connection with the 'railway today'.

IMPORTANT: Entries will not be accepted if they have been taken from an unsafe railway location or a location where the photographer has clearly been trespassing on railway property.

ENTRANTS:

Entries will be accepted from any photographer aged 25 and under on 31 October 2021. There are two age categories:

Category One - Photographers aged under 18.

Category Two - Photographers aged 19 - 25.

Successful entrants will be required to provide proof of eligibility at some stage in the competition.

There is no entry fee.

FORMAT

Entrants are required to submit a diverse portfolio of six images based on the theme.

They should be submitted online using the Competition website (see below) by the closing date: 1 November 2021.

JUDGING

All portfolios will be assessed using a standard set of criteria based on the quality of the image, its composition and how the photographer has interpreted the Competition Theme.

A Panel from the sponsoring organisations will judge the entries in each category as a group of six images and will select an overall winner. The winners will be announced as soon as possible after 1 January 2022.

PRIZES

The sponsors are providing a range of highly desirable photographic and railway related prizes. Full details can be found on the website. It is hoped to arrange a series of ancillary events for entrants and to publish the winning entries and a selection of others in due course.

Ts & Cs apply: Refer to the website for full details

ENQUIRIES:

Email: info@youngrailphotographeroftheyear.co.uk

It's all about railway photography!

www.youngrailphotographeroftheyear.co.uk

The June Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month I have 21 miscellaneous questions for you, to test your railway knowledge:

1. What was the longest name carried on a British steam locomotive?
2. Intermediate crossing loops on the Kyle of Lochalsh line are remarkable for the wide space between the tracks, and the bridge at Garve is of exceptionally generous proportions, although it is a single line – why is this?
3. Which type of British steam loco was built in five classes to a total number of 36? It was introduced in 1912., and the last was withdrawn in 1942.
4. What was the most westerly station in Europe?
5. What was strange about the clock on the North British hotel which overlooks Edinburgh Waverley station?
6. Which Britannia Class pacific loco was never named?
7. On what former southern line were the accident sequences in the film “The Wrecker” made?
8. In terms of route mileage, what was the furthestmost station on the LMS from Euston?
9. Name the two dock operations that the LNER absorbed from the Great Central Railway.
10. How many narrow-gauge locos did BR inherit from the GWR?
11. Which Scottish island once had a 10¼” gauge line between castle and ferry?
12. What connects loco’s 34064 and 92250?
13. Which line was featured in the 1930 film “A Quaint Little Line”?
14. In an alphabetical listing of BR steam loco names which are first and last?
15. What was the Class designation was given to the Blue Pullman units?
16. In what way are the EMU Class 325 different from the rest of the 3xx Class units?
17. What line on the Isle of Man did “Sea Lion” and “Polar Bear” work on?
18. What happened to Class M7 number 672 at Waterloo on 13 April 1948?
19. Why did the electric loco Classes 70 and 71 carry pantographs?
20. Name the architect who designed many new underground stations in the 1920’s and 1930’s?
21. Which railway station in Yorkshire has Grade 1 listed status?

Best of luck – solutions are on the next page. No cheating!

Martin Elms

Puzzle Solutions

Solutions to the puzzles in this issue (page 17):

1. “The Green Howard - Alexandra, Princess of Wales’s Own Yorkshire Regiment” carried by V2 Class 60835. **2.** The line was constructed to carry “Zulu” type fishing boats between Dingwall and Strome Ferry to avoid the hazardous voyage round the north of Scotland. However, but the contract was cancelled before the line opened! **3.** The 4-6-4 Baltic tank. **4.** Valentia Harbour station in south west Ireland, the terminus on the Great Southern and Western Railway branch from Farranfore in Ireland. It was also the most westerly railway station in Europe. **5.** It was traditionally set two-minutes fast. **6.** 70047. **7.** At Lasham, on the Basingstoke and Alton Light Railway. **8.** Lybster, near Wick, 742½ miles from Euston. **9.** Grimsby and Immingham. **10.** Seven – two from the Welshpool, three from The Vale of Rheidol, and two from the Corris Railway. **11.** Isle of Mull. **12.** Both were fitted with Giesl ejectors. **13.** Leek and Manifold Light Railway **14.** Abberley Hall – 4981 and Zeebrugge - 62666. **15.** Class 251. **16.** They were built for Rail Mail and have no passenger carrying accommodation **17.** Groudle Glen Railway. **18.** It fell down the Armstrong lift that gave access to the Waterloo and City line – it was cut up on site. **19.** To collect power from overhead line equipment in places where a third-rail would be too dangerous. **20.** Charles Holden. **21.** Huddersfield.

Martin Elms

More from the Photo Album



66550 near Potters Bar on 7th March 2021 carrying materials for the remodelling work at Kings Cross

Photo: Bill Bass

Forthcoming Branch Events

Covid-19 restrictions continue to prevent us from holding traditional meetings this month (June) so, once again, we are offering a “Zoom” presentation. This is 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. The presentation is open to members and guests.

Then in July we are planning to restart traditional meetings! Details are shown below – **but** will only take place once we have sent confirmatory advice (and/or in the next issue of *Railway Ramblings*).

We look forward to seeing you.

During June 2021 (Zoom)

Tuesday 8th June

The Peter Bland Collection Part 2

Bryan Cross

To register in advance for this presentation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZEpdOCvrz8tHtYYZ3lpOAKXpKlaoODF0HtH>

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 July 2021 (Hopefully Live!)

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

13th July **A 10th Colour Rail Journey** Paul Chancellor
(Another of Paul's whistle-stop tours)

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

27th July **Depots, Works & Open Days 1980-1998** Robert Warburton

All members are welcome at all meetings.

As a “welcome back”, for meetings in July and August, we are not requesting donations (which are normally £2 for members and £3.50 for non-members).

Other Branch Virtual Presentations

Many other RCTS branches are still 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 & Welwyn Garden City Branch will be very welcome at other branches' Zoom meetings.

IMPORTANT REMINDER – to Branch Members

Please reply asap (and no later than 7th June) to the Branch Chairman (gricersteve@hotmail.com) to let us know if you want to return to traditional live meetings in July. Send a simple “Yes” or “No”, and “H” and/or “WGC” (for the venue).

If sufficient members respond “Yes” then, subject to any changes in Government Covid-19 rules, the programme will be as shown above. Otherwise a Zoom meeting will be arranged and details will be in the next issue.

To help you make your decision a draft meeting protocol is appended to this newsletter (as page 21).

We will not know for a while what government regulations will apply at the date of the meetings and therefore our protocol might change (possibly with less restrictions if the “Roadmap” progresses as government currently intends).

Railway Ramblings is published by the committee of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City 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

DRAFT

Subject to Change

Protocol for Keeping Safe at Branch Meetings

As we restart our meetings the safety of all of our members is paramount.

Coming to branch meetings might be nice-to-do but is almost certainly not something to do unless there is virtually no risk. Many of us are of an age where catching Covid-19 is likely to carry serious consequences. The following measures will apply at our meetings in order to provide you, our members, with a safe low-risk environment.

- Do not come to meetings if you are feeling unwell.
- You need to advise the Branch Secretary if you wish to attend a meeting: hitchin@rcts.co.uk (preferably) or 01438 714277. Do not attend unless the Branch Secretary has been advised.
- Put on a face mask as you enter, and wear it throughout the meeting.
- Avoid touching door handles as you enter (committee members will act as “doormen”).
- Use the hand-sanitiser as you enter.
- Do not move seats around and please use the same seat throughout the meeting.
- If you use the wc, wash your hands thoroughly and reapply hand sanitiser after leaving the wc.
- Maintain social distancing as much as possible.
- At the end of the meeting apply hand-sanitiser as you leave.
- Should you test positive for Covid-19 or have symptoms within fourteen days of attending a meeting please let the Branch Secretary know.

Unfortunately, there will not be refreshments provided during the meeting and no book-sales table.

As usual there will be a register of those attending and this will be used to assist in contact tracing should the need arise.

If we all follow the rules our meetings should be as safe an environment as possible.

Steve Lacey (Branch Chairman)

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