

# Railway Ramblings

Issue 133

August 2021

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

## Forthcoming Meetings

*Traditionally, we make a summer outing in August, but this year, we are resuming normal meetings, with two presentations. The dates are 10<sup>th</sup> August, in the evening at Hitchin, and 31<sup>st</sup> August in the afternoon at Welwyn Garden City. For details see "Forthcoming Events" (on page 16).*

*Please remember that, if you wish to attend these presentations, you need to advise the Branch Secretary and, when at the meeting, you will need to follow our meeting "Protocol". We may be getting back to "normal" but the Covid-19 virus remains a threat to us all and safety precautions are essential.*

## From the Photo Album



Class N2 at Sheringham Station on the North Norfolk Railway in August 2017.

Photo: Tony Turner

*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](mailto:hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk). They should be your photographs!*

# Chairman's Platform



Let's start with the really good news – normal (“proper”) meetings again - which we had hoped to start last month! Whilst we cannot pretend it will be just as it used to be “in the good old days”, it will so nice to be back in the presence of others. With a number of safeguards in-place I trust those attending will feel reassured that there really is minimal risk. Meanwhile, the vaccination programme continues and more and more of the population will have developed immunity to the Covid-19 strains prevalent in the UK. We now have to hope that the worldwide picture also improves and that we are not suddenly back to square one because of new variants from which we are not protected by our current vaccines.

For the return to traditional meetings this month, we have prepared a “Protocol” which appears as page 18 of this issue of *Railway Ramblings*. We all know that our government has recently changed the law regarding Covid-19 regulations but, as an RCTS Branch, we have decided to be more cautious, as the safety of all of our members is paramount. Much as we would love to see you at the meetings, please, only attend if you are prepared to follow our Protocol. Following the two August meetings, we will review how they worked out in practice and may adjust the arrangements for subsequent meetings.

At the start of July, I was very pleased to go to the Network Rail Operations Centre in Milton Keynes, accompanied by my son James, our Branch Secretary Dave, and newsletter editor John. This came about because I made some bids in the Railway Benevolent Fund Auction and, for this visit, mine was the winning bid. Dave Elsdon took notes during the visit, John Dossett took a few photos, and between them they produced a visit report which is published in this issue. To be honest, it was not what we expected – I think we all expected the nucleus of operations to be something like Mission Control at Houston with big screens and a number of people at computer consoles managing the UK rail network in real-time. Instead, we found a large modern office block, with hardly anyone present, organising a number of key activities but not the minute-to-minute running of the network. However, the visit was interesting and enjoyable and we all had “a good day out”.

Once again, with thanks to those who have contributed, we have a substantial newsletter.

Steve Lacey

## Local Observations



### All reports as seen at Welwyn North and the local area

Late in the day on **Thursday 17 June** 755326 ran through at 19:51 on route from Norwich to Hornsey, this unit returned the following day at 16:37 almost nine hours late. Also on **Friday 18 June**, the Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe empties was hauled by 66090 / 101 / 028 / 190 at 11:41. Three of these loco's were being returned to EWS after being in France for some time. This was followed at 12:32 by Trans Pennine unit 802214 at 12:32 after working from Heaton to Kings Cross at 10:30. Early on **Saturday 19 June** the first steam loco for nearly two years ran by when 60103 *Flying Scotsman* worked from Kings Cross to York at 08:16. Unfortunately for those onboard, Scotsman failed at Retford causing them to get to York over three hours late. The train was rescued by 47772 and towed to York, the same loco returned the train to Kings Cross passing here at 21:11.

On **Monday 21 June** there was another storage move when 37884 came through at 13:35, from hauling 465245/466004/466016 from Gillingham to Worksop. Also today, a test train with 37054/37254 arrived from Derby into Welwyn Garden City yard at 11:13, then ran a roundabout test route finishing back at WGC late afternoon. On **Tuesday 22 June**, the same pair 37057/37254, on the test train, worked from Welwyn Garden City on a very long circular route back to Derby on passing here at 08:12. A charter train from Kings Cross to Edinburgh passed on **Thursday 24 June** at 08:41, hauled by 47746/47772 on this leg to York, where it was then continued to Edinburgh hauled by *Flying Scotsman*. Later that morning 37884 ran by hauling units 465017/46019 from Gillingham to Worksop.

**Monday 28 June** was quite a busy day - the Caledonian Sleepers ran this way with the Glasgow to Euston passing at 06:22 with 92020 in charge, followed by the Inverness to Euston through at 06:57 hauled by 92010. A further transfer of units for storage ran at 13:40 behind 37884 were 465010/466024 & 466043, again from Gillingham to Worksop. Then, in the evening, ex-LNER HST power cars 43290/43299 passed with a rake of Mk 4 Virgin-liveried coaches on test from Kings Cross to Doncaster at 21:18. On **Wednesday 30 June** another scrap movement from Ely to Newport ran at 10:56, when 66724 hauling 317888 passed. Later that evening 37219 ran through at 00:35 with a test train for Freightliner working between March & Hither Green. The Biffa liveried loco 66783 worked the Biffa waste train from Renwick Road to Scunthorpe at 06:15 on **Thursday 1 July**, whilst later that morning, 37800 hauled 321332/321407 from Clacton to Worksop passing at 12:09. While over at Hertford North 20119/20901 ran from Worksop to Willesden at 12:20. The following day **Friday 2 July** 60163 *Tornado* ran south via Watton-at-Stone at 16:57 from York to Southall in preparation for working "*The Bournemouth Express*" the next day.



9<sup>th</sup> July – 66092, 66073, 66032 and 66205 passing through Welwyn North, on a Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe working. The last three carry Euro Cargo logos, having just arrived through the Channel Tunnel.

*Photo: Mikky Hart*

37884 made another appearance on **Monday 5 July** hauling SE units 365004/366010 from Gillingham to Worksop passing at 13:40. **Tuesday 6 July** saw Greater Anglia unit 755327 returning to Norwich from Hornsey at 19:12. Some of these units now arrive at Hornsey via the North London Line. This time on **Thursday 8 July** 37800 was used to drag 317887/317889 at 12:05 from Ely to Kingsbury, while in the evening today at 19:12 two more GA units 755329/755337 returned to Norwich from Hornsey. At Hertford North today, 66786 hauling one brand new wagon, worked from Hoo Junction to Whitmoor at 13:07. Running 95 minutes late the Dollands Moor to Scunthorpe steel empties on **Friday 9 July** ran with four locos 66092/66032/66073/66205, the late running was caused by the last three class 66's returning late from France and being returned to their original company, all had Euro Cargo symbols on them. 755330/755335 worked from Norwich to Hornsey at 19:54 on **Monday 12 July**, both returning the following evening at 19:04 on **Tuesday 13 July**. A busier day at Welwyn North on **Wednesday 14 July** started with 66701 working the Biffa waste train at 07:36, some 80 minutes late, from Renwick Road to Scunthorpe. Another test run for 803002, this time coupled to 803001, passed at 13:50 from Darlington to Kings Cross, returning north at 15:02. Today, another 755408 ran to Hornsey from Norwich at 19:56. Whilst over at Hertford North today, 37884 arrived at

11:42, departing back to Doncaster at 13:14 with an unidentified 365 unit in tow. **Friday 15 July** saw another test run of 803001/803002 from Darlington at 13:36, returning at 15:02. 47580 came through Hertford North at 13:40 enroute from Alton to Dereham. A Charter service ran via the ECML on **Saturday 17 July** from Potters Bar to Scarborough hauled by 47828 & 47853 through here at 06:35, returning at 21:02.

(Observations courtesy of our Branch Secretary, Dave Elsdon)

## A Love Affair (Part 12) – Steve Lacey

### Or, Patching Things Up!

Last time, we were about to leave for the North York Moors Railway when cracks in the firebox were discovered, leading to the locomotive being failed at the NVR!

The Channel 5 documentary programme about the NYMR, showed a dramatic phone call taken by “piglet” their Chief Mechanical Engineer, explaining that our locomotive had failed and could they find a replacement. There followed some frantic “phone calls” to see if another Battle of Britain Class locomotive could be found (it was a gala celebrating 100 yrs of the RAF) but of course, none was available at short notice!

The true version was that as soon as the cracks were discovered, we knew we would have to grind-out and fill the crack with weld and pressure test the repair, as it is part of the pressure vessel. This required an independent boiler inspector and a coded welder, neither of which we had at the NVR. However, we knew that the NYMR had both! The actual phone call was more in terms of, “if we bring the locomotive to you early, can you do the repair and get her fit for traffic, at our expense? No problem mate, when shall we move her?” TV however, loves a drama!

The locomotive and tender were sent to NYMR as rearranged, the cracks ground out, weld applied by their coded welder, steam tested, repair approved by the boiler inspector and passed fit for service. No drama just good co-operation. In the end we had a very successful visit and were very popular with the public, as a locomotive that was novel for the NYMR. It was also very good for our finances, as it brought our sales stand to a new audience.



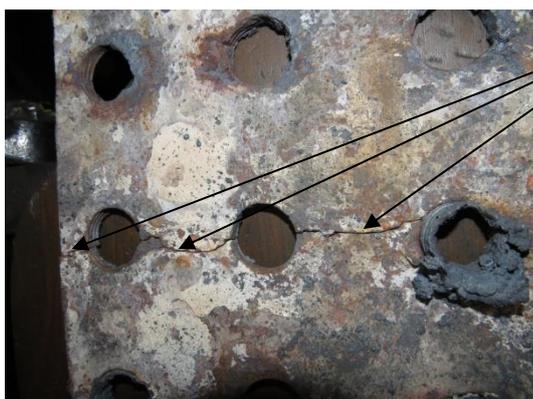
Just to prove I am not 92's only admirer! At Pickering with RAF flags, celebrating RAF 100.

Talking of which, money is vital to any preserved locomotive, as they never pay for themselves. Like the old joke "How do you become a millionaire airline owner.....start off as a billionaire!", locomotive owners have to constantly fundraise. To this end, we have always had a travelling fund raising stand which accompanies the locomotive on any visits and tours railway exhibitions (remember those!) in order to raise funds towards running repairs and the ever-looming next overhaul. This is always a problem. Our last overhaul cost in excess of £280.000, despite having all the bits and huge amounts of volunteer labour, not to mention a large donation from a supporter and use of the excellent overhaul shed at the NVR, which was paid for in future free steaming.



Sales stand at NYMR 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018 with my glamorous assistant (my wife). I know which side my bread is buttered! They did offer a place undercover, but with a good weekend forecast, we took the risk and were rewarded with great sales and a suntan!

Having returned to the NVR, we continued in traffic until the end of August 2019, when further cracks appeared on the inside of the firebox beneath the fire hole door. Our Engineers Alan and Tony cut out the offending area, initially a small area, but investigation showed a larger area to be necessary. Unfortunately this included an area of complex curves.....more money. While we were out of traffic we also took the opportunity to remove the front bogie and replace some rivets that were noted to be loose. When the offending rivets were removed their holes were found to be oval from previous repairs under British Railways! Holes were re-drilled, rivets sourced, heated to red hot and hammered into place with pneumatic hammers.



Arrows indicating cracks, which extended to edge of plate, hence larger area needed to be removed.



Arrow shows where inner lip of fire hole door cut away with section of inner firebox to remove cracked area in preparation for new area to be welded in.



Picture of inside of firebox with damaged section cut away

Damaged section of inner firebox removed. Black square shows section shown in first picture.



Patch beautifully welded into inside of firebox by Dave Wright the coded welder at Locomotive Maintenance Services, Loughborough. Picture by Kevin Wilkins, taken from inside the firebox looking out.

Once repaired, the boiler was hydraulically tested, steam tested and we were back in traffic ready for the Santa specials, much to the relief of the NVR and ourselves!

*Steve Lacey*

## New Member

We are very pleased to welcome David Sykes, of Welwyn Garden City, as a new member of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch.

# Network Rail “The Quadrant”, Milton Keynes

In a recent Railway Benevolent Fund Auction our Branch Chairman, Steve Lacey, won the trip for 4 people around the Network Rail National Operations Centre at Milton Keynes. Steve generously invited his son James, our newsletter editor John Dossett, and me to join him.



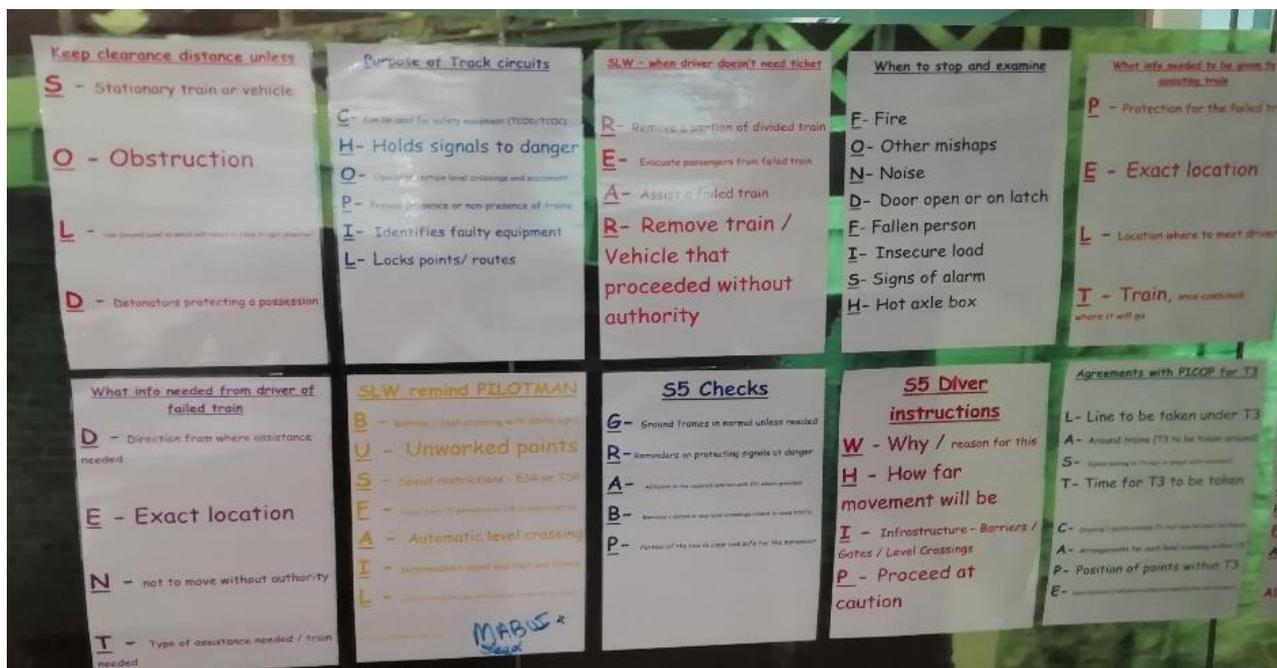
So, on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, we made our way to The Quadrant in the centre Milton Keynes, close to the railway station, where we were able to park securely in the service yard. We were met by Network Rail’s Fiona Roche and Steve Bassington, from their facilities management company Mitie. The Quadrant is one of Network Rail’s major sites, comprising four interconnected four-storey office blocks, each being named after one of the lakes within Milton Keynes. The blocks are linked by an impressive atrium which is referred to as “The Street”, being a place where staff can meet & mingle.

(John did ask why it was not “The Platform” or “The Concourse”!)

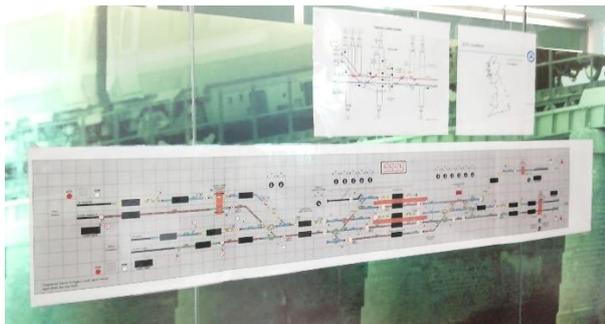
These offices can accommodate around 3,800 staff, of Network Rail’s 40,000 total work force, but at the time of our visit, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, there are no more than 600 employees on site at any one time, with many working from home or a hybrid of home & office. The offices and site were opened in 2012 by local hero, and Olympic Champion, Greg Rutherford. There is a plaque set in the floor of the reception area commemorating the fact.

We were told that the primary function of the The Quadrant is to log and monitor any faults or problems occurring on the track, or within the boundaries of the railway, whether it be buildings, bridges - or simply idiots trespassing. The staff then arrange and organise the appropriate actions to be taken and send a team to fix, repair or sort out the situation and, if necessary, arrange any spares to deal with the problem.

The other important work carried out here is in what they call “The Mission Room”, where training courses are held for track maintenance staff, ensuring they are qualified to deal safely with all trackside situations. Unsurprisingly, this is nearly all done using computer simulation. However, the number of acronyms used for different situations, visible on wall displays, was interesting!



Similarly, there are further training rooms for signallers, again all using simulators. For signallers, each of them must complete a twelve-week course before moving to on-site training.



In the signaller training suite

Other activities at The Quadrant include sessions for students, encouraging an interest in careers in Network Rail. The STEM Lab (Science Technology, Engineering & Maths) showed something of this work.



The STEM Lab



A simplified system!



We also saw the library, containing a wide range of railway books. Some of the titles seemed very familiar. I think Steve was envious of the shelving!



I have not worked in an office now for over twenty years and these offices surprised me with their spaciousness, comfort and remarkable cleanliness, along with the staff welfare facilities, which included a Well Being Centre, catering for health and mind (this unit currently houses a Covid-19 testing centre), a gymnasium for fitness which included many cycling machines, treadmills and weights for bodily fitness. Each of the four blocks housed their own rest room and catering facilities. There was also a primary catering area with a restaurant, canteen and a whole bank of microwaves for staff who brought their own food in. No likelihood of finding the famed railway curly sandwiches from my youth!



The whole site was very concerned with being eco-friendly, not having air conditioning but using automatic window blinds and shutters each adjusting to the position of the sun or prevailing weather. There is also a rainwater harvesting system providing grey water (for toilet flushing), and each block with a wildflower garden on the its roof space.

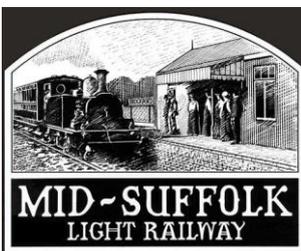
Interestingly, at the time of our visit, I think we came across no more than half a dozen employees, a couple of live track monitoring screens and a couple of station indicator monitors! I'm sure much more must have been going on, but invisible to us. Not getting close to track machines and equipment, or within sight of anything on rails, was a bit of a disappointment for all of us, but still good to see something on the inside of a modern railway operation centre.

Immediately following the NR visit we went back in time, to the Vintage Tea Room at Ridgmont Station. There we enjoyed delightful treats served in a somewhat smaller and cosier environment, and took the opportunity to inspect the old Booking Office in the museum. All somewhat of a contrast to The Quadrant.

Altogether a good day out, thanks Steve.

*Article prepared by Dave Elsdon, photos taken by John Dossett*

## More about the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway



### The "Middy" Museum

The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway is Suffolk's only standard gauge steam railway. In the early 1990's a group of enthusiasts decided to try revive this forgotten piece of Suffolk history, firstly as a museum and later by adding a demonstration line for visitors to experience rural travel on vintage trains.

The work of the museum was recognised when the Middy was declared the winner of the Suffolk Museum of the Year Award for 2014. Today, the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum is a registered charity and, while the museum may be small, visitors can look forward to a big-hearted welcome from the volunteer staff. When purchasing your Middy ticket you are able to ride the trains as many times as you wish and, being a season ticket, this also allows you to return free-of-charge throughout the year (except special events days). The station also has a well-stocked shop, real-ale bar, and tearoom serving beverages, home-made cakes and hot snacks. The MSLR volunteers look forward to welcoming you to the Middy very soon, for more details about events and opening times visit [www.mslr.org.uk](http://www.mslr.org.uk)

*All material is reproduced with kind permission of the MSLR.*

# Princes Risborough North Signal Box



On the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, not far from their platform at Princes Risborough Station, is the Princes Risborough North Signal Box. This is now a restoration project being carried out by the aptly named Risborough Box Group, which is a team within the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway Association.

*Courtesy of the C&PRR, we can reproduce the latest news from the group:*

## Limited Progress During the Covid-19 Lockdown

The task of re-instating the South end of the lever frame's interlocking, removed by BR in 1968, has continued. The interlocking mechanism has been fitted beneath the lever frame. This is the safety device which prevents a conflict on the way the signals and points are set at any given time. This will ensure the safe movement of C&PRR trains in and out of Princes Risborough Platform 4. It's often referred to as a mechanical computer. Mechanically there are horizontal and vertical movements of the component parts as viewed in the photo below. The position of which is governed by the levers above. The movement of the component parts will either lock or unlock the movement of another lever whether to move a set of points (and locking into place) or the arm of a semaphore signal.



You can just about see the electric locks at the bottom of the photo above/left. A closer view in the photo above/right. Electric locks fitted under signal levers primarily prevent signals being cleared if the line ahead is occupied by another train, this being detected by track circuits. Electric locks under point levers are there to prevent points being moved under (or in front of) a train.

Some of the levers of the frame on the floor above have been repainted and the block-shelf above them now has instruments on it. They have also begun the task of installing cables for the wiring.

## Boarded Windows & Toilet



Some window boards have had to come back to keep the weather out and the sills dry. Unlike the front and rear sash windows the ones either side of the entrance door (left) are narrower and there aren't any spares to temporarily slot in. However, the joinery team have been busy repairing the windows which should go back in the frame any time now. Some filling of cracks in the window sill will also be carried out before fresh coats of paint applied

The toilet upstairs on the operating floor has now been fully restored, saving many trips up and down the external stairs to the one on the ground floor. The readiness of hot running water to the small basin in there is also a welcome bonus.

## Semaphore Signal Posts

There are now three posts planted around the Princes Risborough site. There are more to come but they will have to wait for the repair of the larger Rail Crane before they can be installed. The one in the image below/left opposite the box is the Up Inner Home signal. It will be a bracket signal and is therefore much thicker. There will be two arms and a shunt disc signal mounted on it. It's perfectly vertical despite the optical illusion. The team have been busy over recent months cleaning, refurbishing and painting all the component parts to the signals as well as the posts themselves. Bracket frames painted in red oxide and other parts shown below/right.



The red or green coloured glass discs on the semaphore signal (called spectacles) as well as the arms themselves and the disc signals, above/centre, won't be fitted until the signals come into use some time in the future. The post to the right is the Down Advanced Starter. Its function is to set the road for the passage to Chinnor as you approach the overbridge to the industrial estate.

Note the absence of the original Chinnor line, our "Independent Line", the track here temporarily lifted pending relaying as funds become available. On the other side of the bridge towards Chinnor there will be an Up Home signal installed, again when the Rail Crane is back in use.



*All photos courtesy of C&PRR.*

*Any comments/feedback can be sent to [news@risboroughbox.org.uk](mailto:news@risboroughbox.org.uk) (Alan Jeffries). Donations are, of course, always welcome. Cheque payable to CPRRA Postal Address: PRNB, 27 Bedfordshire Way, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 3BA [www.risboroughbox.org.uk](http://www.risboroughbox.org.uk)*

## A Day in the Life of a Signaller – Paul Ebberson



“Lever Snatcher” – that’s what engine driver John Webb calls me, and he ‘passed out’ on A4 60034, a crack express loco on the East Coast Main Line so he must know something about railways! It’s true, a signaller does spend some of the time pulling signal levers but that’s only part of the job. Alan Jeffries asked me to explain a little about the role of signaller at Princes Risborough so come with me to the largest surviving truly GWR signal box for a day’s shift:

Heritage railways are always having to balance the way things used to be done, with the modern ways of doing things. Areas like Health & Safety, job titles and roles constantly evolve and in the 'big railways' - if I may call them that - the term signaller is now obsolete, the role is now called 'signaller'. Signallers at Marylebone control all the signals and points from London to Princes Risborough and beyond. Crucially, they also control two ground signals which allow movements into and out of the sidings at Princes Risborough. So how, I hear you ask, do they know when a departure from Chinnor is ready to come into the platform at Princes Risborough? At that point we now need a PICPR.

PICPR is an abbreviation for Person-In-Charge at Princes Risborough, the PICPR (pronounced 'pick-pea-are') is the focus for all of the heritage railway activity at Princes Risborough from the end of the south sidings at Risboro' through to Thame Junction. In particular the PICPR works with the signallers at Marylebone so that 'our' trains can safely go into Platform 4 - and sidings if necessary - without meeting a National Network train coming the other way. The signallers at Network Rail recognise the concept of a 'Person-In-Charge' and are able to agree a 'Method of Working' to enable our trains to be signalled past their signals. But we are already some way into my day, so I will back-track a little and start at the beginning.

In the Princes Risborough car park, I join the 'Orange Army' and don the bright PPE. I will be going trackside at Princes Risborough and it's important to be seen and to stand out. A blue hat for head protection is also required and it always gets tested when I go in the signal box locking room and hit the low beam there! The next 20 minutes are spent unlocking gates and walking to the signal box getting keys and setting up the comms. On the way over the footbridge a quick look left to check what is in the sidings. If there is a Network Rail tamper then life may get interesting later in the day.

The walk to the box is also a chance to see where all the stock is positioned, how points are set and what has changed. One day I remember I was surprised by a large platform shelter that had arrived. More recently its quite probable that I will bump into other C&PRR members who are dealing with the passengers, working on site or taking works trains out, and it's a chance to catch up with their plans and hopes for the day. On Sunday shifts the Signal & Telegraph team are invariably in - I know then there will be plenty of banter and good-natured humour.

The focus then shifts to contacting Marylebone Signalling Centre and getting the Method of Working, or MOW, set up. There is a set of procedures to work through and, if all is well, we have a time for starting our operations. In effect Network Rail is allowing us the use of their tracks to run our trains as we want. The only provisos are that they retain control of the two signals and that our drivers must, of course, obey them as they do for every other signal. The S&T department have been steadily adding more signals and point mechanisms and these are under the control of the PICPR and are linked to the levers on the operating floor.

Safety of People is the number one priority and the PICPR reduces the risks of accidents by 'clipping' the points which link the Chinnor line with the Chiltern main line. This means physically clamping the rails with a 'G' clamp so that trains cannot be routed by the Marylebone signallers onto 'our' line by mistake. The PICPR applies the clip, and then I like to inspect the track down to Thame Junction where I can open the gate that is normally locked across the line. It is a pleasant walk if the weather is OK and takes about 14 minutes each way. Depending on what train movements are happening there may be 'Stop' boards to put out. These are miniature signals that clip onto the track with red flashing light that prevent unauthorized movement of trains. By the time I have returned to the signal box the first train is ready to depart Chinnor.

*Many thanks to Paul Ebberson for this insight into his role as a signaller on the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway at Princes Risborough, and to the C&PRR for permission to reproduce this article.*



## "Bahamas" to Visit in August

The Nene Valley Railway (home of our Chairman's beloved 34081 92 *Squadron*) and the Bahamas Locomotive Society (BLS) have announced that 45596 *Bahamas* will be making a summer visit to the NVR during August 2021,

While at the NVR the locomotive will be steaming on two weekends in August, 21st to 31st August which will include a "Jubilee 1950's" Bank Holiday Weekend.

### **The Jubilee Jolly Fisherman – 19:30 Saturday 21 August 2021 – Only £35 pp**

A very special evening with LMS Jubilee class locomotive 45596 *Bahamas* hauling one of the popular *Jolly Fisherman* dining trains. Enjoy a drink whilst admiring the locomotive and chat with the crew before departure time. During the journey the friendly NVR volunteers will serve a delicious fish and chip supper\* at your seat. A leg-stretch stopover on the return journey offers an opportunity for photos and a drink as the sun begins to set. This is likely to be a very popular event so early booking is recommended. Guests will be seated in tables of four (children must be over 12 years of age).

(\*Menu Options: Traditional Fish and Chips, Battered Sausage and Chips, Veggie Burger and Chips, Chicken and Chips (ideal for Gluten Free). For any other dietary requirements please call the NVR office to discuss)

### **Driving Experience Courses on *Bahamas***

While *Bahamas* is at NVR, they are also offering Driving Experience Courses, on 19th, 20th, 26th & 27th August, priced at £495 pp. This exciting package includes theory and practical driving of 45996 in which you will receive an hour's tuition and an hour on the footplate of 45996 without rolling stock. During the hour on the footplate, two of you will take it in turns to drive and fire the locomotive for a total distance of approximately 15 miles. You'll enjoy drinks, and a light meal.

For more information: [www.nvr.org.uk](http://www.nvr.org.uk)

## How & Where Did It All Begin? (Part 5) - Paddy Carey

*This, the next part of Paddy's personal story about how his interest in railways developed, will now appear in the next issue of Railway Ramblings.*

## 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, at [hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk](mailto:hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk)



# Epping Ongar Steam Gala

11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021

The Epping Ongar Steam Gala is planned to take place on 11 and 12 September, with an intensive steam-hauled service in operation.

Subject to any last minute issues with availability the domestic fleet should consist of former GWR locomotives: 4953 "Pitchford Hall" and 0-6-2T 5619. The Rolling Stock Manager is planning to bolster these with others, but these cannot be confirmed yet.

Visit the EOR website: [Steam Gala | Epping Ongar Railway \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://SteamGala|EppingOngarRailway(eorailway.co.uk)) for the very latest details and to book tickets.



4953 "Pitchford Hall" on the EOR.

*Photo: Steve Peak*

## Back Copies of Railway Ramblings

Back copies of Railway Ramblings are now available on the RCTS website: <https://rcts.org.uk/hitchin>

# The August Puzzle – Martin Elms

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

1. On the MAGN Railway - Where was the only tunnel on the railway? Where was the highest point on the railway?
2. Whose design of streamlined railcar inspired Sir Nigel Gresley to design the wedge-shaped front to his A4's?
3. What was the largest and most powerful class of steam loco ever seen in Britain and where did it mainly work?
4. What was the name of the then fastest freight train in the late 1950's and early 1960's?
5. What is the title of the classic book by L.T.C. Rolt on railway accidents?
6. In BR days, complimentary tickets of different colours for first and second travel were issued - what were the colours?
7. As far as the LNER were concerned, what were the locos that won the war?
8. Which diesel locos were known as "Bones"?
9. What was the name of the annual holiday outings, involving special trains, run for the workers of Swindon railway works?
10. What was an "Iron Mink"?
11. Who was Charles Spagnoletti?
12. Which colonel operated several light railways in Britain?
13. What was the nickname of the meandering railway from Brockenhurst to Dorchester via Ringwood and Hamworthy?
14. From where did the SR obtain most of its track ballast?
15. What was the name of the LMS operated railway company on Northern Ireland?
16. What nickname was given to the Patriot class locos when first introduced in 1933?
17. What was the route mileage of the LNER on its formation: 6,590, 7,510 or 7,950 miles?
18. What was the name of the semaphore signal used by the GN railway?
19. In what year did the Selby diversion south of York open?
20. What was Kings Cross railway station named after?
21. Paper, pulp and diamond rocks are connected to which railway ?

Best of luck – solutions are on the page 17.

No cheating!

*Martin Elms*

# Forthcoming Branch Events

The national relaxation Covid-19 restrictions now allows us to recommence traditional meetings. We are very concerned that, as we restart, our meetings are conducted in a safe way and have therefore developed a "Protocol" to minimise risks. It is most important that you familiarise yourself with this if you are planning to attend.

We trust that you will feel that attendance will be safe as possible and we look forward to seeing you.

## During August 2021 - LIVE

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

10<sup>th</sup> Aug      **Roaming Around London with my Camera**      *Geoff Brockett*

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

31<sup>st</sup> Aug      **East Anglian Railways in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – A Period of Transition**      *John Day*

## During September 2021 - LIVE

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

14<sup>th</sup> Sept      **45596 Bahamas Locomotive Society – "A Preservation Pioneer"**      John Hillier

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

28<sup>th</sup> Sept      **Edge Hill Marshalling Yard & Its Complex of Railways**      George Howe

At least for the present, there are a few precautionary we need to take to make attendance as safe as possible. If you are going to attend you do need to advise the Branch Secretary (as numbers will be limited) and, at the meeting, you must observe our meetings' "Protocol" (see page 18).

For those members reading this, but not yet feeling comfortable to return, we understand your concerns and hope that, in due course, you will feel sufficiently reassured to make the change.

All members are welcome at all meetings, but please register your intention to attend (see p 18).

As a "welcome back", for meetings in August and September, 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.

# Meetings - Looking Further Ahead

## At Hitchin

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)

12 <sup>th</sup> Oct	That Was the Year That Was 1969	<i>Geoff Plumb</i>
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	European Railways	<i>Rob Freeman</i>
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	History of Leatherhead Station – Home to the RCTS Library & Archive Centre	<i>Andy Davies</i>

## At Welwyn Garden City

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)

26 <sup>th</sup> Oct	The East Coast Main Line, Kings Cross to York	<i>Stephen Gay</i>
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov	A Northern View	<i>Stephen Batty</i>
21 <sup>st</sup> Dec	A Lifetime of Railway Discoveries	<i>Mike Bunn</i>

As soon as we can, we will be re-instating the refreshment break (tea/coffee & biscuits) during the meetings.

We will also reintroduce the bookstall, where you can browse a substantial collection of pre-owned books (and hopefully make some purchases, which will contribute towards the running costs of the branch).

However, these changes can only be made after we have run meetings and had the opportunity to consider, in practice, any risks and how they can be neutralised.

# Puzzle Solutions

## Solutions to the puzzles in this issue (page 15):

**1.** Bourne Tunnel 330yds. Thursford 312 ft above sea level. **2.** Bugatti. **3.** LNER Beyer-Garratt U1, for banking work on the Worsborough incline. **4.** The “Condor” (container door-to-door). **5.** Red for Danger. **6.** Blue for second class, white for first class. **7.** The V2 Class. **8.** Class 58, as its body shape had a narrow mid-section and a wider cab at each end. **9.** Trip. **10.** Generally, a four-wheel covered goods van with a metal body – as used on the GWR (There were also some bogie ones). **11.** The first Telegraph Superintendent of the GWR, who developed a number of signalling instruments some lasting until the 1950's. **12.** Colonel Holman F Stephens. **13.** Castleman's Corkscrew. **14.** Meldon Quarry, in Devon. **15.** The Northern Counties Committee. **16.** The Baby Scots. **17.** 6590. **18.** The somersault signal. **19.** 1983. **20.** From a short-lived monument to King George IV which stood in the area from 1830 to 1841. **21.** Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway.

# 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](mailto: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 a safe environment.

This Protocol will be reviewed after the August 2021 meetings.

Steve Lacey (Branch Chairman)

## More from the Photo Album



8<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – Approaching Oakleigh Park, 37800 drags 317887 and 317889 to Kingsbury for scrap.

*Photo: Bill Bass*

## 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 [grikersteve@hotmail.com](mailto:grikersteve@hotmail.com)

*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*