

Railway Ramblings

Issue 151

February 2023

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



6233 Duchess of Sutherland passing Welwyn North for Lincoln on 3rd December 2022

Photo credit: Tom Gladwin

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.

Branch Programme

Special Note: In the event of any late change to the programme, everyone on the distribution list for this newsletter will receive an emails advising the details of the change.

During February 2023

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

14th February **Railways and Tramways of the Isle of Man** *Goff Brockett*

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

28th February **A Railwayman Remembers** *Dave Cockle*

During March 2023

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

14th March **Harringworth Viaduct – A Victorian Gem** *John Hillier*

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

28th March **The LMS Patriot Project – How are we doing?** *Colin Hall*

Donations will be requested for attendance at branch meetings – these, together with book sales, go towards the costs of hiring the venues, speakers expenses/fees and the provision of tea/coffee & biscuits during the meeting. These are currently suggested as £2 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

Hitchin meetings are held at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin SG5 2EE

Welwyn Garden City meetings are held at the Methodist Church, Ludwick Way/Cole Green Lane junction, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3PN

“Zoom” Virtual Presentations

Some RCTS branches are offering Zoom virtual presentations. In addition, there are “national” Zoom presentations (on the fourth Thursday of each month). Details of these can be found on the RCTS website (and in the *Railway Observer*). Members can register and then take part in any of these events.



Chairman's Platform

One hundred years ago the newly formed Big Four (the GWR, LMS, LNER and SR) came into existence – being formally inaugurated on 1st January 1923. Twenty-five years later, on 1st January 1948, the whole lot was nationalised. I hesitate to say anything about the hotch-potch arrangement we currently have to live with! All of this is a long way round to remind you that our own Society came into being in 1928 and that the Strategy Group (in which I participate) are already considering activities which could take place to mark our centenary. If you have any suggestions I would very much still like to hear from you.

I won't say that responses to our Questionnaire about the future of the branch have been overwhelming – because they haven't! However, your committee are starting to analyse the results and we will report further on this next month.

Meeting attendances have been picking up recently and, in January, the Hitchin meeting – *The Siemens-ECML Project*, presented by Luke Reger from Siemens – was our best for some time. I think that particular meeting gave us all an interesting glimpse into the way that this rather revolutionary project is going to change the way our railway operates! Your Branch Secretary has already been in contact with Luke about a return visit and we expect to be able to arrange that for next year, once driver training has started.

Although winter will still be with us for a while, our local heritage lines are starting to stir. Try to support them if you can. The Epping Ongar and the Nene Valley have started - Details of some of their February activities feature in this issue of *Railway Ramblings* – more details can be obtained from their websites.

Steve Lacey

AGM Approaching – Do Not Stand Well Clear!

The 2023 AGM will be held on the 25 April, at Welwyn Garden City, as the initial part of the meeting that day. Unlike recent years, the AGM will NOT be followed by members' presentations as experience has shown that this doesn't really work. The business of the AGM will (probably) be quickly completed and will be followed by a full presentation from Eddie Veckranges of the Epping & Ongar Railway. A good reason to attend your AGM this year.

The customary reports and financial statements for the AGM will be published as an Supplement to the March issue of *Railway Ramblings*.

New Member

We are pleased to welcome Alan Cheetham, of Welwyn Garden City, as a member of the RCTS and the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City branch. A number of readers will already know Alan as he has been attending meetings for some time as a guest - and has now decided to become a member.

ABC Combined Volume 1962

– a short story by Martin Elms

I arrived home from shopping in Cambridge and opened the paper bag containing my purchase from W.H. Smiths. I had been saving for weeks for it. It was “ABC Ian Allen Combined Volume of Winter 1962” and it was my biggest solo purchase so far at 11 shillings and 6 pence. At last, I would be able to underline the locos numbers that I had started to collect during the last months of 1962 and discover details of locos, DMU’s and other motive power on BR.

I browsed through the pages and noticed gaps in steam loco classes and the expanding range of new diesel and electric powered train classes. The axe of Beeching and the modernisation plan, which even as a twelve-year-old, I had heard of was clearly biting. For instance, my local station and the branch line on which it was located was still open, but now only during the day, the trains were now DMU’s and what little freight that was running was diesel-hauled

At the end of the book, as a supplement, was a list of proposed new diesel loco classes. One I noticed, on page 242, was a British Railways built Type 4 to be introduced in late-1962, to be numbered D1700 onwards, for use on East Anglian railways based on Cambridge. There was a note that the Brush diesels under construction would be numbered up to D1699 and if any more were to be ordered they would have to be placed in another yet-to-be-decided number range.

So, there was a chance I could see a new class of loco in my local area, Cambridge being the start of my local branch. As there was no social media those days and magazines were expensive, and depended on local observations usually some months old anyway, notes on anything diesel or electric being very sparse most information being on steam locos, I would have to go myself to look for this new class.

After a few fruitless trips to Cambridge on the search for D1700, I was passing through the station on the way home from a visit to a friend in the city.

On the through line, I saw her: a large Bo–Bo loco in a smart two-tone green livery, looking like the Brush type 4’s starting to enter service at Finsbury Park and Sheffield. However, this loco was more the shape of the future English Electric Type 4 (Class 50 of 1967), but that loco was at least four years away and at time unknown. I had a good look at her and wished that I had remembered my camera (a Christmas gift from my parents) and my ABC, both being at home. So, I endeavoured to try to take-in all the details. A Type 4 with Bo-Bo bogies was unique for a diesel electric I believed, although there were many diesel hydraulics with this wheel arrangement in service. Her body shape looked very continental with a raked front making her really fit-for-purpose. Unfortunately, the engine wasn’t running so I couldn’t appreciate what she sounded like.

I hurried to catch the DMU home and, once there, investigated my ABC.

I read up on the British Railways Type 4, but I saw an asterisk next to the description. I hadn’t noticed that before, it referred me to page 245, also not observed before.

There I was startled to read :

STOP PRESS “Since the publication of much of this volume it has been revealed by BR that the proposed Type 4, on page 242, has been cancelled at the design stage. Therefore, none will be manufactured and the Brush 4’s under construction will take the D1700 number slot”

Martin Elms

100 Years of Scotsman



Flying Scotsman at Wansford Station, Nene Valley Railway, 28-09-2019

Photo: John Dossett

Flying Scotsman was built in Doncaster, the first locomotive of the newly formed London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). It went into service on 24 February 1923 with number 1472. It was designed by Sir Nigel Gresley as part of the A1 class—the most powerful locomotives used by the LNER at that time.

By 1924, when it was selected to appear at the British Empire Exhibition in London, the locomotive had been renumbered 4472 - and given the name 'Flying Scotsman' after the daily 10.00 London to Edinburgh rail service which started in 1862.

In 1934, Scotsman was clocked at 100mph on a special test run—officially the first locomotive in the UK to reach that speed.

In 1948, British Railways was formed and rail travel in Britain was nationalised. Scotsman, now numbered 60103, was painted blue for a time, then BR Green.

More recently, starting in 2006, *Flying Scotsman* underwent an extensive restoration in the workshop of Riley & Son (E) Ltd. In 2016 the painstaking £4.2m project to bring the legend back to life—resplendent in BR Green livery in its guise as 60103—was completed.

(Source: NRM)

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

- HST Arrives at Wansford!

No need to check the date of this newsletter, it is not April 1st!

On the 11th of January 2023, I arrived at Wansford to find a large low-loader in the cafe bay platform where we offload stock onto the yard head shunt. I had heard rumours that one of the Nene Valley Railway members had acquired two HST power cars and four Mk3 coaches, but here was living proof.



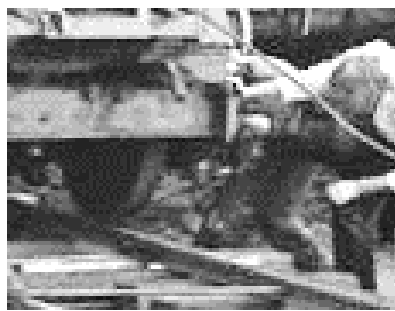
As I watched, 43045 was winched off the low-loader onto the head shunt, where it joined 43060, both in East Midlands livery, both having been stored at Porterbrook's Long Marston facility. As I understand it, they will shortly be joined by three Mk3 coaches, one of which is a buffet car. The owner has purchased a fourth carriage, but this is not due to arrive until later. I was assured by the owner himself, that there is no truth to the rumour that one is due to come from the Royal Train (where Mk3 coaches form the late HRH Prince Phillips and HM Queen Elizabeth II saloons).



Originally these units were powered by Paxman Valenta engines of 2,250 hp. Subsequently, in 2005, these were replaced with Paxman VP185's, capable of 3,501 hp, but in practice limited to 2,250 hp giving reduced fuel consumption and emissions. (You can see and hear 45045 being started up on the turntable at the NVR by typing "125 preservation HST class 43045 start up" into your browser and selecting the YouTube clip.) The plan is to store them at an extended siding at Railworld, at Peterborough NVR, between uses on NVR trains.

For those who do not know, the HST was designed by Sir Kenneth Grange and produced at British Rail Engineering Limited, Crewe as a quick replacement for the abandoned Advanced Passenger Train (APT), when funding was pulled after a disastrously rushed introduction. The HST (High Speed Train) revolutionised BR services and 197 power cars were produced between 1975 and 1982, being used in all regions. Their axle loading of 17.5 tonne gave them wide availability. During their lifetime in mainline service, an HST on a test run between Northallerton and York on 1st November 1987, achieved the world record for diesel traction of 148.5 mph with 43102 at the head and trailed by 43159, a record that still stands. Their popularity was extolled by a certain Jimmy Saville "Let the Train take the Strain" etc., not that they make much of that fact nowadays!

It is interesting to note the improvement in low-loader unloading ramps between now and 1977 when 34081 was unloaded at the British Sugar Corporation sidings at Fletton in Peterborough!



Note the sharp angle between the low loader and ramp in the old days! The springs on the driving wheels are under such strain they would frequently break and the Delta truck wheels are above the track and in danger of derailing! As I say things are much better now.

Steve Lacey

The February Puzzle – Martin Elms

Similar to the puzzles in the previous issues, this time the first letter of the correct answers to the following questions will spell the name of both a famous steam locomotive and a passenger train:

1 Tunnel near Salisbury	
2. Name of a Diesel Trial locomotive number D0260	
3. Station south of Dereham	
4. Name of diesel locomotive number D7	
5. Locomotive depot with code 2B	
6. Sir Daniel ? locomotive superintendent of GWR	

7. Station East of Kyle of Lochalsh	
8. Name of locomotive 46235	
9. Station east of Hastings	
10. Name of diesel locomotive number D9015	
11. Station with a swing bridge that was on the ECML	
12. Water troughs on WCML south of Warrington	
13. Locomotive depot with code 56B	
14. South Wales GWR station West of Cardiff	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 14. No cheating!

Martin Elms

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



A Half-Term Treat on the Nene Valley Railway

2023 got underway on the NVR on the 21st and 28th January when the “new” Pacer railcar units had their first public outing of the year.

February includes a bit of Half-Term fun on board The Pyjama Express, with passengers expected to wear their favourite PJ's and Dressing Gown - or Onesie!

On February 15th here will be two Pyjama Express services - 12:20 departure and 14:20 departure (both services depart Wansford Station). The Pyjama Express Experience starts 30 mins before the booked train's departure time - 11:50am for the 12:20 train departure and 13:50 for the 14:20 train departure.



Enjoy an hour long return journey from Wansford Station to Overton Station, via Yarwell, travelling on board the NVR Pacer for the service

There will be on board entertainment on each carriage of the Pacer (The Pacer consists of 2 x carriages).

On board entertainers will greet you on Platform 2 of Wansford Station and show you where to board the train.

Once on board each carriage you will be entertained with a interactive story with a magical twist.

Each child will receive a Milk Shake carton and a cookie to enjoy whilst listening to the story and an iron on Pyjama Express Badge that can be ironed onto their favourite dressing gown or PJ's.

Please note the DRESS CODE: Pyjama's and dressing gown or a onesie.

Join the Pyjama Express, where the magical characters need your help to restore magic across the land. There are rumours some people do not believe in magic anymore and all magical creatures need your help to fix the magic pocket watch to keep the magic alive. Add a touch of magic to your day!

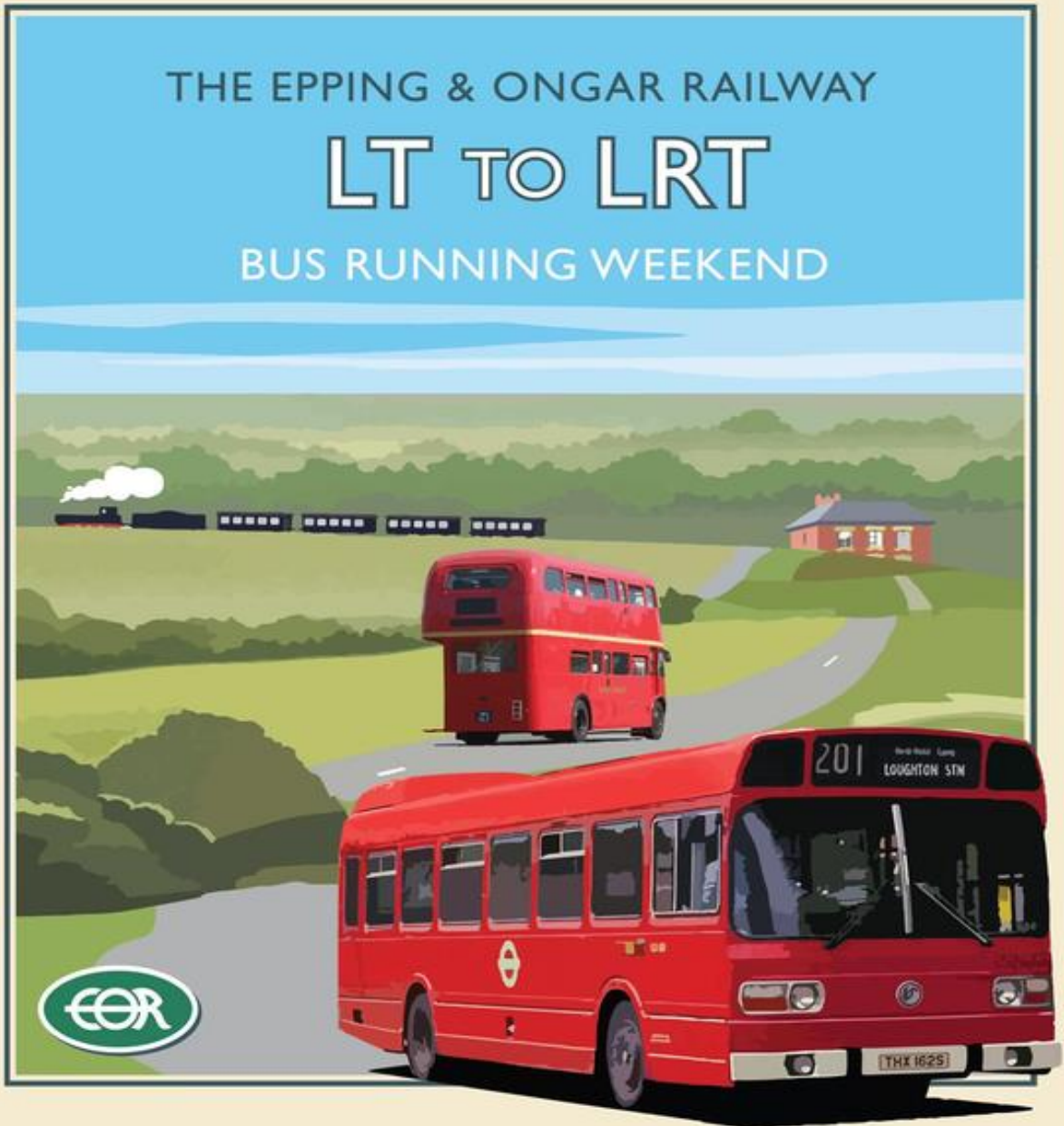
(Reproduced courtesy of the NVR)

SATURDAY 18TH AND SUNDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2023

THE EPPING & ONGAR RAILWAY

LT TO LRT

BUS RUNNING WEEKEND



WEEKEND BUS & TRAIN £25
WEEKEND BUS ONLY £15

TICKETS

ONE DAY BUS ONLY £10
KIDS FOR A QUID £1

EVENT SPONSORED BY

LONDON BUS COMPANY

 **LONDON BUS WORKS**

MORE INFORMATION AT THE EPPING & ONGAR RAILWAY WEBSITE EORAILWAY.CO.UK

(Reproduced courtesy of the Epping & Ongar Railway)

East Bedfordshire Model Railway Society

- Annual Exhibition: Sat 18th February 2023

Stratton School, Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8JB

OPENING TIMES: 10am -4.30pm

ADMISSION: Adults £7.00 Concessions £6.00 Children £3.00 Family £17.00

After a 2-year delay due to Covid and the loss of their clubroom, East Beds MRS is finally staging their 60th Anniversary Show. Most of the traders and layouts / exhibitors that were due to attend the cancelled 2022 show, have agreed to attend the 2023 Show. Where layouts or traders have retired they have been replaced with newly invited ones.

List of Traders Attending:

- Book Law Publications
- Elaines Trains
- Friends of National Railway Museum
- H & A Models
- Keiths Railwayana
- Hobbytools4u
- Railway Memories (DVDS)
- EBMRS Second Hand Emporium

List of Layouts Attending:

- Lisworth Bay - N - BR Branchline Steam in the South West
- Bee Road - OO - Fictitious London Midland West Midlands Terminus in Early 1960s
- Gracetown Bank - OO - Small Northern England Railway Goods Yard Circa 1960
- Brent Eleigh - OO9 - A Might Have Been Narrow Gauge Line in West Suffolk
- Market Bosworth - P4 - Representation of Station and Goods Yard at Market Bosworth in 1908
- Mers Les Bains - 1:32 - Terminus of the Metre Gauge Cote De Picardie Railway
- Sporle Shed - EM - Small Great Eastern Inner London Depot in First Quarter of 20th Century
- Stodden Hundred Light Rly - 7mm - Small Industrial Site in Rural Bedfordshire in 1930s
- Streatwell Green - OO - BR Southern Suburban Station in South London in 1950s-1960s
- Tetbury BR(W) - 7mmfs - DCC Layout Depicting Cotswold Location Between 1950 and 1964
- Welford Coppice - OO9 - Typical Narrow Gauge Ironstone Interchange Site in East Midlands
- Fleebight Wharf - 7mm - A Small and Cramped Service Facility in Londons Dockland
- Obbekaer - P87 - Typical Private Branch Line Station Set in Rural Denmark.
- Fullers Wharf - 7mm & 0:16.5 - 1930s Terminus Goods Station With Canal & Narrow Gauge Interchange Set in Derbyshire
- Naples Street - TT (1:120) - Small North American Railroad Yard

Other Displays:

- Sandy Transport Society

Editorial Error !!

The following story (well, most of it) appeared in the January issue of *Railway Ramblings*. The author (Martin Elms) has since pointed out to me that I missed off the ending, although by a stroke of luck, where I ended the story still made sense. My apologies to Martin. In order to do justice to the story I am republishing it in its entirety.

John Dossett (Editor)

The Snowstorm?

– a short story by Martin Elms

I drove onto the open space behind Low Marsh signal box and carefully locked my pride and joy Morris Minor which I had saved up for in my two years as signalman here.

I crunched over the ballast covered ground and climbed the stairs onto the balcony looking, out of habit in both directions along the tracks. All quiet, only the flickering red semaphore signal lights on this still moonless night.

I entered the signal box which despite the always-lit coal stove, was only just warm due to the many drafts around the loose-fitting windows

I greeted Joe who I was to relieve at 22:00.

“Not bad out there”, he commented.” dry moonless night”. putting on his coat. We both signed the box register with the change of shift details and Joe clumped out down the stairs and away into the dark

He returned.

“O bye the bye the direct phone to control at Carlisle isn’t working – again. But Bob at Garsdale will pass any messages to you on the omnibus phone which is O.K.”

Low Marsh is a signal box about halfway between Ribbleshead and Garsdale on the Settle and Carlisle railway line, it has fifteen levers and has a main-to-main trailing crossover which sees little use and like the signal box seems only to exist to shorten the signal box distances, which with less trains nowadays – 1965 - could only spell a short future.

There isn’t and never was a station here, the only habitation being six railway owned cottages occupied by the local permanent-way gang and some distant farms. I lived about seven miles away and was glad of my “pride and joy” that replaced my trusty bike in harsh weather.

On the night shift there were unfitted freights passing through and the up and down St Pancras to Glasgow sleeping car trains – the main trains of the entire day.

At two o’clock, between the procession of freights, I went onto the balcony and was surprised to see heavy snow falling and the clouds about to cover a bright full moon.

The phone rang, it was Bob, as message passer

“Control have told me that the up-sleeper is held at Carlisle and the down one at Skipton. They are organising a snow plough from north of me to you where the crews of the goods trains have reported the snow drifts. It is to plough the up line then cross over at your box to

the down and plough northwards back to me. The p-way gang at your place have been called out to clear and check the crossover”

I repeated the message, and he rang off

Outside I could hear and then see the gang busy on the crossover.

The ganger Fred came into the box dripping wet snow over the highly polished floor to belatedly report their presence.

I was told in all cases get the register up to date and get it signed.

Fred did so as he was bid, dripping over the pages, and I told him that when the plough was signalled from Garsdale I would tell him, and they were safe to work on the crossover, as now all trains had stopped running to allow uninterrupted snow clearance.

Bob rang to inform me that the plough was on the way and feeling that “all hands to the pumps” was required I put my coat on and armed with the box broom and shovel left the relative warmth of the box to help, in the now less heavy but persistent snow, to clear the crossover points.

I had “one ear open” for the signal bells and after about half an hour I heard them. I left the gang, returned to the box soaked but feeling glad to have helped to get the trains running again, and hung up my now dripping coat.

Locos 44567 and 44673 arrived and were sandwiched between the snow-covered ploughs they stopped in a swirl of smoke and steam south of the now clear crossover.

A figure left the front loco cab and entered the box. He was clad in a long black mac and wearing the obligatory trilby hat. It was district inspector Allen a highly respected and well-informed man. He also entered details of his presence in the register, and he apologised for dripping snow on its pages. Of course, I didn’t dare comment, hoping that the writing was still legible

On his instructions I busied myself with the signals and, with his assistance, the point lever.

Thanks to the efforts of us all concerned, the points moved over, and inspector Allen hand signalled the movement onto the down line. He then wished me well, I updated the register with the events, tried my best to dab up some of the wetness on its pages and signalled the ploughs away to Garston. The locos whistled and I watching its flickering red taillight disappear northwards

Looking out, the snow had stopped falling, the moon had reappeared, and the landscape looked Christmassy, and the area was deadly quiet with the shiny now cleared tracks disappearing in the distance in the cutting made by the ploughs with the signal red lamp lights reflected on the rails

I was surprised to see the time - nearly six.

There was a noise outside and my relief Charlie came in, wiping his highly polished boots on the doormat

He didn’t have any snow on him or his boots.

“Nice quiet night I see” he said and looking at the register “I see the sleepers were on time and no delays, but why is the register smudged and wrinkled, ... you spilt something on it?,” he accused.

Speechless at this incorrect version of events, I looked again out of the box into the weak daylight.

Not a bit of snow was to be seen - just the sound of farm animals and the very distant hum of a motorbike.

In a daze, I signed the register, noticing that no sign of the nights snow-caused events had been entered in it

I then grabbed my coat and hastened to leave.

There was a pool of water on the floor below it - and the coat was soaking wet.

Martin Elms



Our Branch Committee

Please consider joining your branch committee.

Currently you have just five committee members and, although this suffices, it would be nice to have an additional member. Could you be that person?

Anyone prepared to take on the committee role is invited to discuss this with Steve Lacey or Dave Elsdon in the first instance.

The Book-Table



A familiar feature to those who attend branch meetings, the book-table, has returned. Currently with hundreds of books, ranging from “coffee table” volumes to rare-to-find treasures, this is an opportunity to purchase a pre-owned book (or two) and thus contribute financially towards the branch running costs. All books are most modestly priced.

We are always looking for “new” stock, so you can also contribute books which you no longer want – which will free-up space on your book shelves for new volumes!

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 8):

1. Fisherton. 2. Lion. 3. Yaxham. 4. Ingleborough. 5. Nuneaton. 6. Gooch. 7. Strome Ferry.
8. City of Birmingham. 9. Ore. 10. Tulyar. 11. Selby. 12. Moore. 13. Ardley. 14. Nearth

Solution: FLYING SCOTSMAN

Martin Elms

The February Presentations (1)

Railways and Tramways of the Isle of Man

- Geoff Brockett

14th February at Hitchin



Taken in 2015, loco 4 being banked by loco 8 on a mixed train at Keristal.

I made my first visit to the Island in 1974 and have been visiting regularly ever since. I always intended to go over every year once I took early retirement and have done so since 2005, except for 2020 when their borders were closed. My show will look at the splendid variety of vintage transport on the Island, most of which is operated by the Manx Government as a tourist attraction. This year is one of major celebrations to commemorate the 160th anniversary of the opening of the steam railway to Peel in 1863 and the 130th anniversary of the opening of the first part of the Manx Electric Railway between Douglas and Groudle in 1893. The latter is a particular favourite of mine, with cars 1 and 2 being in the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest tramcars in the world still operating on their original system. Hopefully my show will encourage anyone thinking of planning a visit to do this year.

My show will feature all of the vintage railways and tramways currently operating on the Island, using slides taken on my regular visits. I will also be including a bit of background history and information about the lines.

Geoff Brockett

The February Presentations (2)

A Railwayman Remembers

- Dave Cockle

28th February at Welwyn Garden City



Class 08 shunter and brake van - taken from the road over bridge at Bayford Station

This was during the nine-week period from March 1973 when the Hertford Loop was closed between Cuffley and Hertford for repairs to drainage in Ponsbourne Tunnel.

My "A Railwayman Remembers" talk covers a thirty-eight-year period from 1968 to 2007 looking at my railway career from unofficial signalman on the Hertford Loop to Operations Compliance Manager for the former train operating company First Capital Connect.

My work was predominately in operational roles starting as a junior railman (Telegraph Lad) at Finsbury Park, then Signalman, Operations Clerk (Broxbourne Area) and various Supervisory and Management roles on both West Anglia, Thameslink and Great Northern routes.

I had "On Call" responsibilities and responded to numerous incidents and accidents.

Dave Cockle

Late News – see main article on page 6

Three of the four coaches arrived at Wansford (Nene Valley Railway) on 18th January:



Photos: Steve Lacey

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) and Roger Moulden. The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered with the Charities Commission.