

Railway Ramblings

Issue 156

July 2023

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



*UK Railtours charter train passes Welwyn North, going to Barrow Hill on 20th May 2023
hauled by 66706 with 66736 on the rear*

Photo credit: Mikki Hart

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

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 July 2023

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

11 th July	Re-creating the Past	<i>Des Shepherd</i>
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At Digswell, Welwyn (14:00-16:30, doors open from 13:30)

25 th July	The GER – rarely other than idiosyncratic	<i>Ray Schofield</i>
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During August 2023

6th August

Sunday

Branch outing to the Epping Ongar Railway (see page 6) - **BOOK NOW!**

The next indoor meetings at Hitchin and Welwyn will be in September

Donations are 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 have been reviewed and are now £3 for members and £5 for non-members. (It would be helpful if you try to have the correct money!)

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

Digswell, Welwyn meetings are held at Digswell Village Church Hall, Warren Way, Digswell, Welwyn AL6 0DH

Reminder - Please note the change of southern venue and donation rates.

“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

Looking back at the June issue I see that I commented on the appalling weather which doubtless affected the numbers attending the May meeting at Hitchin. The June Hitchin meeting was a total contrast – the day was around 30C and the evening was rather warm! However, the number of attendees was still rather on the low side. I just hope that this is not a permanent state of affairs as this would put the future of meetings in Hitchin at jeopardy.

The 27th June meeting (about Mangapps Farm), held at Welwyn, saw another very encouraging attendance.

As our Branch Secretary (Dave Elsdon) puts together the 2024 meeting programme, one of the “big” questions facing us is “what do we need to offer to persuade those members who do not attend meetings to join the rest of us?” Please, please, get in touch and let us know.

On a much more positive note, the substantial collection of railway books generously donated to us by the family of David Cole have featured on the book table at recent meetings and have been proving popular. These are books in very good condition and, as you might expect, comprise numerous unusual publications. Fortunately for those who have not yet benefitted the collection was quite big and there are still numerous boxes of books remaining for you to come and browse. The proceeds are certainly helping to put our branch finances in a healthier state.

Plans for the August outing are now taking shape. Following feedback from members we are now arranging a visit to the Epping Ongar Railway. The date will be Sunday 6th August and bookings can now be made with our Branch Secretary. You can invite family and friends to join you. Further details can be found in this issue of *Railway Ramblings* (page 6).

Steve Lacey

92 Squadron becomes Royal Auxiliary Air Force

In the June issue we carried the news “34081 92 Squadron becomes 34111 Royal Auxiliary Air Force !”. Quite a few of our readers were not sure what was going on. Here, Steve puts the record straight -

Last month I wrote of an identity change for 92 Squadron and this month I am writing of the temporary renaming ceremony. I apologise if anybody headed up to the Nene Valley Railway since then in the hope of a unique photo!

We had assumed that the RAF chaps would want to run her in her new guise for a month or two, before reverting to 92 Squadron. In the end, what we had not appreciated was that 2023 was the year **before** the RAAF centenary year and that the ceremony was just for some pre-publicity shots! We realised that when Squadron Leader Alfie Hall, at the end of a successful day, asked when we could have the plates off again for safe storage!

We were happy to oblige, but have not yet reinstated our own plates, as some touching up was required to corrosion on the casing where, over the years, ash had lodged behind the

plates and badge. We aim to avoid this by using some spacers when we reattach our 92 Squadron plates - we live and learn!

The current plan, once we are back in service (see *Workshop Wanderings* elsewhere in this edition), is to run for a period in 2024 as 34111 *Royal Auxiliary Air Force* for their benefit year.

A few pictures of the day when much gold braid was in evidence and a Spitfire Flypast from the Battle of Britain Memorial flight reminded us of our own rededication service 6 years ago.



Please note quartered buffers courtesy of me - and the cake approved and eaten by me!



Two sorts of top brass! The RAAF band and an Air Vice Marshall!



Top aircraft



I hope that answers the questions about what is really going on.

Steve Lacey

New Branch Members

We welcome Barry Titmuss, of Luton, and Hugh Driscoll, of Welwyn Garden City, as new members of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch.



The August Branch Outing 2023

Book Now!

By tradition, our August fixture is an outing, to which family and friends are also invited. For this year the outing is a visit to the Epping Ongar Railway on Sunday 6th August.

Final details are being agreed with the EOR General Manager, George Saville, but the visit is agreed and provisional details are shown below. The visit will include a shed tour for those who would like that. It is now time to decide if you wish to participate. Remember that you can invite friends and family to join you. There may be restrictions on access to the shed tour for under-18s.

Please book your places with our Branch Secretary, Dave Elsdon Hitchin@rcts.org.uk and let him know how many you expect will be in your party. Please help by letting him know by 25th July at the very latest. (We need to confirm places and pay EOR before the visit.)

Payment will need to be made by 25th July. This can be made (via BACS) directly to our Branch account: - RCTS Hitchin Branch, Sort code 40-24-20, account no. 81518003, - or by cheque payable to RCTS Hitchin Branch and sent to the Branch treasurer at 6 Langford Drive, Luton LU2 9AJ to be received by 23rd July.

Alternatively, the Treasurer (Paul Holloway) will accept cash, cheque or credit card at the Hitchin meeting on July 11th or at the Digswell meeting on July 25th.

Date & time(s): Sunday 6th August, meeting initially outside Epping Station at 10.20.

Price: £20 per person

(Refreshments are not included, but EOR prices are, by today's standards, very reasonable.)

Make your own way to Epping Station (you could discuss possible car sharing at forthcoming meetings). Station Parking (532 places) is £6 Sundays - all day. Note that the car park at Epping is "cashless" so you need to allow time to pay (by phone) as prebooking is not permitted.

(The Epping Ongar Railway is not responsible for the car park at Epping Underground station)

Epping Station is located off Station Road, and is signposted off the main High Street through Epping (B1393), and has easy access from both the M11 and M25.

From Epping we will travel on the heritage bus service (included in the price) to Ongar. The current plan for this visit is on **page 7**.



Mark 2 Coaches on the EOR.



RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Visit

Sunday 6th August 2023



10.25 Catch the 339 Routemaster bus from Epping Underground Station, going through parts of Epping Forest, to North Weald Station.

10.37 Arrive at North Weald Station, have a look around the Station (could visit the LNER Chalet for morning tea/coffee)

11.00 Depart North Weald Station for Ongar, sit back and enjoy the countryside views passing through, the now closed, Blake Hall Station, formerly London Underground's least used station with only 6 passengers a day.

11.15 Arrive Ongar have a look around the Station & Penny Saloon

11.35 Depart Ongar for North Weald Station sit back and enjoy the countryside views again passing through Blake Hall Station. Arr. North Weald 11.50

12.00 Talk on the railway and shed tour

12.45 Lunch (could be from LNER Chalet)



13.10 Take trip on the DMU to Epping Forest (you cannot get off as there is no platform) arr. back North Weald 13.30

13.30 Tour of North Weald Signal Box

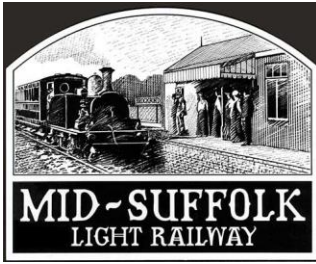
14.00 Depart North Weald for Ongar passing through Blake Hall Station. arr. Ongar and **Visit the Signal Box**

14.35 Depart Ongar for North Weald Station, yet again passing through Blake Hall Station. Arr. North Weald 14.50

Have a look around North Weald Station & shop for a souvenir of your visit

15.00 or 15.35 Catch the 339 Routemaster bus from North Weald Station to Epping Underground Station, going through parts of Epping Forest.

Information prepared by EOR group visits team



Mid-Suffolk Light Railway

Steam Railway Days in July

Located in rural Suffolk, steam train rides will be in Victorian carriages in compartments. Trains will run approximately every 30 minutes commencing from 11am through to 3.30pm. A wheelchair accessible compartment is available.

The refreshment room is open serving a selection of hot and cold drinks and food. Indoor seating is available or alternatively there are picnic areas available around the site.

The bar coach, the "Kitchener's Arms" will be open serving a range of local real ales, Aspall's cider and a variety of wines, spirits and soft drinks.

The gift shop will be open and offers a range of replica models, books and toys. Toilets are available and are disabled accessible.

Steam Railway & Land Rover Owners Day - 2 Jul 2023



Plenty of examples of the quintessential Land Rover marque including some very unusual applications of the basic framework AND a good day for steam fans with Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST 'Wissington' in steam.

Steam Railway Day - 9 Jul 2023



Visitors can enjoy train rides as many times as they like. All the railway and museum facilities – shop, café, Restoration Shed visits and real ale bar will be open.

Steam Railway & BMW Motor Cycle Club Day - 16 Jul 2023



A great day out for anyone interested in the evolution of the motor-cycle. This visit takes place during the centenary of the first 'Boxer' engine to be used in BMW motor cycles.

And all the Middy attractions will be open including the Tea Room, the Real Ale Bar, the Museum and the Restoration Shed and visitors can ride the genuine Victorian Great Eastern Railway coaches as often as they like.

Norfolk & Suffolk Narrow Gauge Modellers Day - 24 Jul 2023



A welcome return to the Norfolk & Suffolk Narrow Gauge Modellers who take over the indoor display areas of Middy with their many variations on the railway modelling hobby.

Layouts will be on display and in action in the Museum, the Restoration Shed, the Workshop and other offices around the Middy site.



Normal steam train service will also be running throughout the day.

Tickets for all events are available to purchase on the day at the ticket office (excluding Santa Specials) or you can pre-book from <https://www.mslr.org.uk/book-tickets/>

Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR

The July Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell the name of a London railway terminus:

1. The Nationality of I.K. Brunel's father Marc	
2. Name of locomotive D816	
3. Station between Inverness and Forres	
4. Manufacturer of D85xx diesel locomotives	
5. George ? locomotive superintendent of L&Y and LMS railways 1904 - 1925	
6. Name of locomotive 73111 King ?	
7. Island town with three stations	
8. Name of water troughs north of Wolverton	
9. Name of pre-grouping company, formed in 1865, serving northern Scotland	

10. Oswald ? Nock – Prolific railway book author	
11. Name of river crossed by Royal Albert Bridge	
12. Name of LMS locomotive 45713	
13. Terminus of branch line from Alne on the ECML	
14. Thomas ? 1792 – 1851 the inventor of the standard railway ticket	
15. Name of GW Grange Class locomotive number 6848	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 23.

Martin Elms

Newsletter Distribution

This e-newsletter, *Railway Ramblings*, 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

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

It's been so long since writing the last workshop wanderings; I had to look up the tag line! At long last progress - there has been change in the workshop.

News came through from Ashford that the long awaited turning of the tyres of the Belgian coach bogie (flatted last year when it was dragged from Peterborough with the hand brake applieddon't ask!) were about to be turned!

Sense at the Nene Valley Railway finally prevailed and the coach was lowered from the jacks in the workshop onto BR Mk 1 bogies, as accommodation bogies, and finally left the workshop, where it had been blocking other projects.

Not before time, the re-tube of Thomas's boiler has been completed and taken out into the yard ready for a steam test prior to reassembly into Thomas' frames. Let's hope this happens quickly as I am fed up explaining to children that Thomas has "boiler ache"! When I left the NVR last Wednesday the boiler had been placed on the Weltrol for ease of movement and was having his boiler filled through the *dome* at the water tower!



Thomas with a big smile about to have his boiler filled for the first time in months!



Having moved the coach and Thomas's boiler out of the way, 656 (the Danish F Class) was brought back in by DL83 to have its re-metalled axle boxes reinstalled, motion reinstated and finally enter traffic!



Meanwhile in the other shed repairs to 92 Squadron were underway, having been approved by the boiler inspector and a coded welder becoming available. For repairs to pressure vessels like our firebox no ordinary welder will do, but an M&S welder.....no a coded welder. These are welders with a higher qualification who work on high pressure stuff like nuclear power stations..... the elite! Also at elite prices! But who can deny them, bearing in mind the cramped conditions they work in, not helped by recent temperatures.



The initial efforts revealed more wasted metal necessitating a larger repair.



Bottoms of both thermic siphons cut away and the whole of the collar joining it to the firebox

Meanwhile back outside repairs to the signal box proceed, with sliding windows receiving new bottom rails, repair and repainting of woodwork continuing, but progress being hampered by the Grade 2 listing people not having yet made a decision on the roofing, after it was found to be in a poorer state than originally thought.



Wansford Signal Box

And on Father's Day weekend I ran an RCTS recruitment stand at "DEMU Showcase", the annual show of the Diesel and Electric Modeller's United Society at Sutton Coldfield, hoping to attract some younger members. I had help from Paul Chancellor who lives in Bromsgrove on the Saturday, but was alone on the Sunday, despite appeals to the local RCTS groups. We signed up 10 new members to the society. I tried to pitch the stand at a younger age group with the strap line "Not just Kettles"!



Steve Lacey



Nene Valley Railway

HST125 Debut Weekend 8th/9th July



For details about this weekend visit the NVR website: www.nvr.org.uk

Exhibitions

One local exhibition in July:

22 July - Letchworth Model Railway Society

Venue: The Priory School, Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 2UR

This is a new venue for this annual exhibition, with more exhibition space and better parking. The LMRS are currently expecting 20 layouts and 12 trade stands. There will also be our RCTS stand where we will be promoting the Society and selling books, etc in aid of the Branch.

Open: 10:00-16:30

Admission:

Adults (incl concessions) £5

Accompanied under-16's Free

Letchworth Model Railway Society

Model Railway Exhibition

SATURDAY 22nd July 2023

10.00am - 4.30pm

Over 20 Layouts plus trade support

The Priory School

Bedford Road

Hitchin SG5 2UR

www.letchworthmrs.org.uk



Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway

Princes Risborough North Signal Box Project



Computer generated image of finish work.

Visitors to the railway, who have taken the train to or from Princes Risborough Platform 4, will have seen the signal box standing proudly just north of the station, as it has for nearly 120 years. In its heyday it controlled the five railway tracks that radiated from Risborough – Watlington, Thame & Oxford, Birmingham, Aylesbury, and of course London. Since the new Integrated Electronic Control Centre at Marylebone took over signalling the Chiltern main line in 1991, this partially restored signal box now has the more humble task of safely controlling the heritage railway on its journey towards Chinnor.

The signal box has been fortunate to survive. Had it not been for local supporters successfully petitioning to have it listed a Grade II building, and the efforts of the volunteers at the C&PRRA in stopping the rot and decay, it is likely all traces would be long gone by now. Princes Risborough South Signal Box met that fate - it is now the station car park!

It was always the C&PRR intention to not only restore the building to its former glory and get the signalling equipment working again, but also to open it to visitors as an example of our railway heritage, complete with 'hands-on' levers and instruments simulating how a signaller of the period would have controlled the lines. The signal box already controls the points and small disc signals that allow engines to run round their C&PRR train, ready to take it back to Chinnor.

If you've visited recently, you may have noticed several gleaming white signal posts have sprouted up at the side of the track at the Risborough end of the line. The most recent is the imposing branch signal just to the rear of the signal box. If you look closely at the photo (*next page*), you can just make out another new signal at the end of platform 4 in the distance. They will be needed as soon as the second track - our 'Independent Line' – is re-laid towards Thame Junction.



New signals on the C&PRR at Princes Risborough

The renovations inside the signal box are continuing and real progress has been made in the last few years with a large part of the main structural tasks complete. They are still repairing the rotten windows around the top part of the box, so you may see the occasional boarding go up whilst they take them out to work on them. The ongoing building work and its operational status mean the C&PRR are normally unable to open the signal box to visitors or passengers, but they do hold a few rare Open Days during the year when the public are invited to come and see the progress made.

The C&PRR advertise forthcoming events on the Chinnor Railway and Risborough Box websites so, if you are interested in seeing the signal box for yourself, please check back regularly [Princes Risborough North Signal Box « Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway \(chinnorrailway.co.uk\)](http://PrincesRisboroughNorthSignalBox.chinnorandprincesrisboroughrailway.co.uk)

Information reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR

Light Engine to Peterborough – a story by Martin Elms

I walked away from the hustle and bustle of Euston Road, passing the site of the recently cleared “African Village” that was in recent years formerly in front of Kings Cross Station. Entering the cavernous concourse leading to platform nine, in the suburban part of Kings Cross, I was walking to an entrance door situated midway along the platform. This provides access, via a flight of steep wooden stairs, to the train crew mess room situated along a corridor above platform eight.

I am a second man based at Peterborough and delighted to have recently been advised that I am to be promoted to driver as soon as a vacancy arises: This would be subject to a medical examination. On this day I have travelled to the new medical centre at Euston for this. I was pleased to have passed with flying colours. Having been given the day to attend the medical the remaining time was for me to use as I pleased. I am dressed in my civies, now going to the mess room. I have my rucksack containing the tea making ingredients and my packed lunch. I hope to enjoy my refreshments with some civil fellow crew members, perhaps even someone from my Peterborough home depot.

As I approached the entrance door it was opened from inside by an old, short, stocky-built man wearing train drivers’ uniform. He was leaving. I immediately recognised him as George Watts from Peterborough. I hadn’t seen him for a while. I believed he had retired or died.

“Hello Martin”, he greeted me with a warm smile and handshake. I noticed that despite his advanced years he still had a firm steady grip. “What brings you here?” he said looking closely at the clothes I was wearing - he said cheekily “Are you appearing at the Old Bailey?”

I smiled at him and told him the nature of my journey and asked what he was doing. “I’m on a bit of a special mission” he replied. There was a mysterious air about his reply and his appearance.

Now I feel I should explain about George. He had been a driver for some forty-odd years, reaching Top Link. George was a very good driver, to be in his prime position as a driver was an achievement. He was a very friendly driver and willingly passed on his experience, helping considerably with the training of others. This included a lengthy period with me. I found George to be a most agreeable and knowledgeable man. He was however inclined to exaggerate some of his past endeavours! As far as I knew he had an uneventful career in his progress to becoming a Top Link driver. However, he was known to introduce some questionable and even untrue events in his life and work experiences. This included people he had supposedly met in his life as a driver. Because of this, I followed the suggestion of other drivers who also knew him well, “playing along” with George so I would not hurt his feelings. I did not feel it appropriate I should close question and dispute his yarns.

“I am here now to take a special diesel loco back light-engine to Peterborough. It is booked for a very, very special tour tomorrow” he said, this with a hushed voice and looked occasionally over his shoulder. “Do you want to ride with me?” he said this with enthusiasm and inviting me to reply in a positive manner.

I agreed to join him. This had the makings of a good trip with an interesting driver. It would be considerably better than killing time in a hot, smoky, noisy mess room. A better ride than travelling home on the cushions.

I fished an orange hi-vis jacket from my rucksack. We left the platform and walked over the wooden sleeper foot-crossing with George leading, appearing to be in a hurry to reach his “special” locomotive.

“You know this is closing”, pointing to the west side loco holding sidings, where two Class 31’s appeared to be the only locos stabled.

I acknowledged him with a nod of my head and added further information that Finsbury Park was also to close. The few locos left after the electrification to Peterborough and Royston plus the influx of HST’s would be stabled in a designated area at Bounds Green Depot.

“Shame to see it all go in the name of progress” George sighed wistfully “I remember when these sidings here were all full, originally with steam, then all types of diesels.

“Well, here we are then” George encouraged me to follow him. To my surprise hidden behind the thirty-one’s was a large green-coloured diesel of a type unfamiliar to me. It was stabled engine ticking over with a whistling sound which vibrated the ground nearby. Diesel smoke was drifting away on the stiff breeze.

“This is an English Electric Type Four. Number two zero six” said George proudly, as if he owned it. “I drove her many years ago when I was one of the first to pass out on diesels”. He was confident in his speech and sounded excited. “As I am only the only driver at Peterborough and still familiar with the workings of this type I have been selected to drive her today.”

Knowing his reputation, I greeted the information with mixed feelings and nodded to show my agreement with his statement. We stowed our property inside the front north-end cab. Then climbed back out onto the ballast, George explained to me how to set the train reporting disc on the front end of the loco to signify a light engine. “Bottom row centre one only” he said, with the knowledge gained years ago when these discs were in use.

After completing the necessary checks which included examining the exterior of the loco, George being the happy guide gave me the impression he was the font of all knowledge! After listening intently to him I felt confident and also now quite familiar with the loco.

We climbed into the loco again and moved slowly away with George shunting back and forth within the west side loco holding sidings. The maze of points was extensive. Eventually George stopped at the exit signal. As you’re in civies” George said looking again at my appearance, particularly at my trainer shoes, “I will get out on the dirty diesel oily ground here to ring the box for permission to go “. He said this in a friendly tone.

He held the telephone in his right hand and putting his index finger of his left hand over his left ear. This was common practice in environments like this to reduce the noise of the whistling loco echoing off the surrounding buildings.

He climbed back into the cab, immediately closing the door to reduce the noise. The ground signal eventually cleared. We began to move slowly with squealing, and screeching over the point-work leading on to the Down Slow. As the loco entered Gasworks tunnel, with a hoot of the horn, a little throttle was necessary. The single light of the head code disc pointed the direction in the dark smoky atmosphere.

We accelerated and soon reached our permitted speed, for a light engine, of sixty-five miles an hour. I knew George was of the old-school, expecting me to speak only when spoken to when he was driving, I took the opportunity of his silence to look over the cab, fascinated by its antiquity and barn-like appearance. I especially noted the novelty of having to sit upright.

I was perched on a high stool-like seat to peer out of the high arched cab windows at the line ahead. The loco rode smoothly, almost like a coach on plain track, but thumped and rattled on any point work with an unnerving noise as if it was trying to destroy it.

"Takes me back, driving this old girl" were the only words spoken by George on the entire journey as he stared ahead through the cab windows from his perched high stool-like seat, in the same format as mine. He was clearly happy, and his brow was furrowed in deep concentration.

We were routed to the slow lines due to being overtaken, on the adjacent fast line, by a succession of HST's. They appeared and left us as if we were standing still. We then gained a welcome straight-through passage at the Welwyn bottle-neck. This good fortune continued over the double-track "Fen" north of Connington.

We soon approached Peterborough. I became aware that our journey had not been watched with any interest from the public or staff at stations or from the lineside. We were signalled over the point work ladder at the north of the station into the freight yard. George brought the loco to stand alongside the Permanent Way offices. He shut the engine down, then disappeared into the engine room reappearing with four wooden chocks. "These locos are notorious for bad hand brakes when the air brakes eventually leak off, so we have to put these chocks, two each side, each side of a driving wheel" he explained. He then said directly to me "You do the nearside on your way home and I'll do the offside."

I bid him goodbye and after putting the chocks under as instructed walked down a narrow passageway alongside the offices and continued into the car park.

Here I saw Mike Jones a fellow second man who was an ardent loco enthusiast. He gave me the impression of knowing all about any diesel loco that had existed. He carried in his work bag extensive number of books, where he religiously wrote copious notes on all he had seen before transferring them later into a vast collection of folders, which he told me was treasured by him at his home.

Knowing that he would be interested, I told Mike of the journey I had just enjoyed with George and the loco. "I thought George retired three years ago" said Mike "But I'm really interested in the loco though". He dived into his bag, rummaging through what appeared to be a library of books.

"Just as I thought" he said, waving one of the dog-eared books in my direction "She was cut up for scrap six years ago". He looked accusingly at me, obviously doubting what I had said. "But, it could be one of the preserved locos renumbered for a special reason". He appeared to me begrudgingly stating this. Then added with a burst of enthusiasm. "Let's go and see her - it will be worth a photo."

Mike produced a camera from his bag. I set the pace and with Mike following we walked back along the passageway and entered the yard.

"Look then - over there on the nearest siding" I said, looking back towards him, hoping to prove my point and subsequently silence his doubts.

I then turned back looking in the direction of the siding.

There was nothing there.

Martin Elms

Martin's Short Stories

If you have enjoyed Martin's short story then you can find previously published ones on the RCTS website (go to <https://rcts.org.uk/>). Simply chose "Branch Pages", then select "Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City" and scroll down to locate back copies of this newsletter.

2022	January	A Mystery Story
	February	The Missing Loco
	March	The Cat and Its Signal Box
	June	The Journey
	July	Friday 13 th
	December	Christmas Eve
2023	January	The Snowstorm?
	February	ABC Combined Volume 1962
	April	The Travelling Companions
	May	The Mystery Gang
	June	Beccles Parcel Office

The RCTS website is open to all members and non-members (there is a members' only section). Take time to have a look?



A Note from the Editor

Really more of a plea – Almost from the start of the recent pandemic I have produced a much larger newsletter than we were used to receiving beforehand. This has been achieved mainly due to the preparedness of readers to also contribute articles.

I do now need more of you to become contributors. I know that many of you think you have little or nothing to offer, but please think again as you almost certainly have recollections of holidays, days out, childhood and/or work experience which many would be happy to read about. Even if you can't find the words to write a short article, then please search through your photos and send them to me with a simple caption. We could have a Readers' Photos page (or two).

You can contact me at hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk or look out for me at Branch meetings.

John Dossett

The July Presentations (1)

Re-Creating the Past - Des Shepherd

11th July at Hitchin



Fifty years apart at Farnborough
Image: Des Shepherd

Steam on BR finished well over 50 years ago – but today there's heritage railways where you can still see steam plus the range of main line tours with steam haulage. But it's often difficult to get a picture that truly looks the 50's and 60's. But not impossible. In this presentation, Des Shepherd presents a selection of pictures which could, just about, be seen as taken in the 1960's.

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 10):

1. French. 2. Eclipse. 3. Nairn. 4. Clayton. 5. Hughes. 6. Uther. 7. Ryde. 8. Castlethorpe.
9. Highland Railway. 10. Stevens. 11. Tamar. 12. Renown. 13. Easingwold.
14. Edmondson. 15. Toddington Grange.

Solution: FENCHURCH STREET

Martin Elms

The July Presentations (2)

The Great Eastern Railway - "rarely other than idiosyncratic"
- Ray Schofield

25th July at Digswell, Welwyn

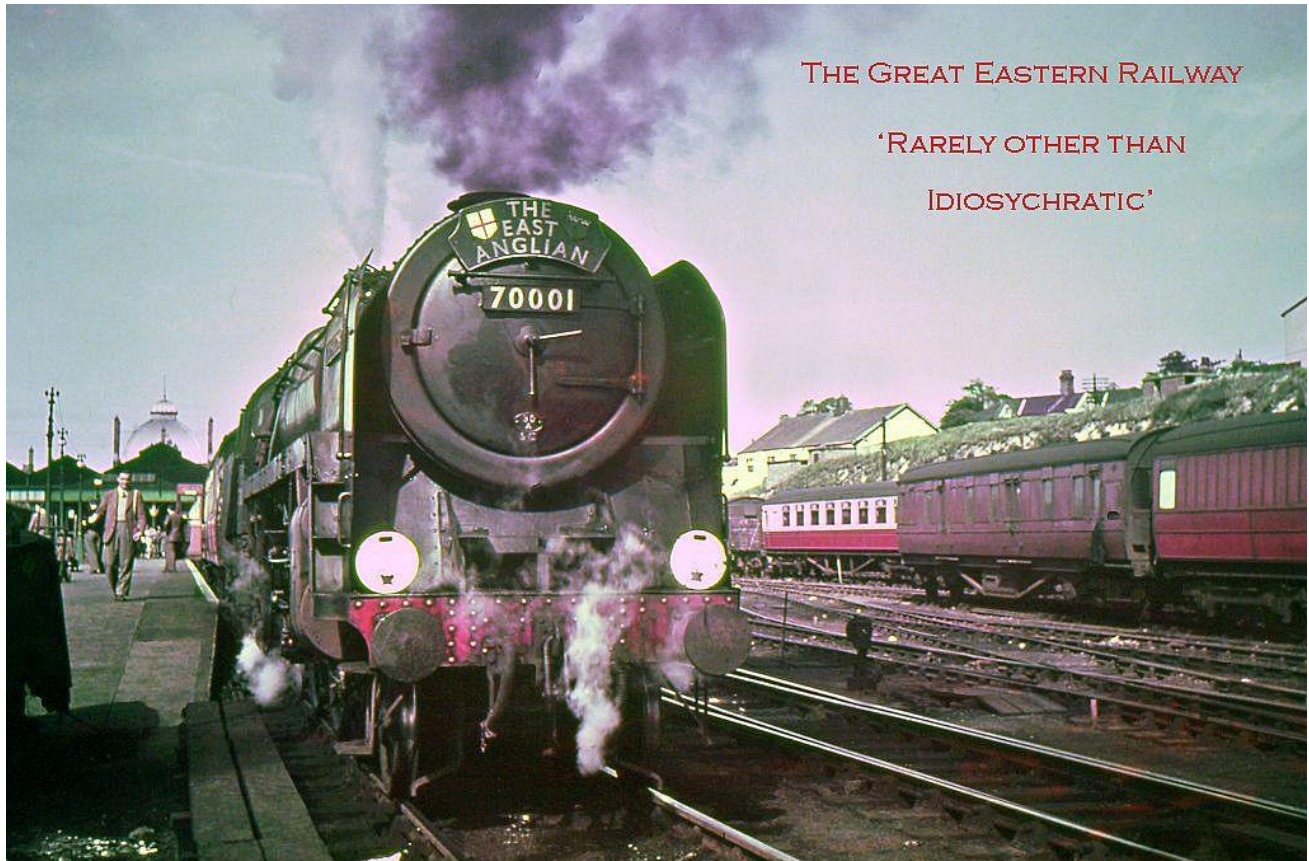


Photo: Ray Schofield

Following the openings, in successive years, of the significant London main line stations at London Bridge, Euston and then Paddington, there then followed a minor station in Mile End as the terminus of a railway planned to link the capital to Norwich via Colchester and Ipswich. The terminus was soon extended to Shoreditch and another early railway was also to use the same terminus, but connect London to York via Cambridge and Lincoln.

This second line ground to a halt halfway to Cambridge, but was piggy-backed by the first, who used it to gain Norwich via Cambridge and Ely, so deserting the shorter route via Ipswich. A rival concern from Ipswich then rapidly completed the direct route. Not only did East Anglia then have two disjointed main line routes to Norwich, but also other independent rail concerns and a plethora of idiosyncratic rural branch lines, all of which amalgamated to form the Great Eastern and to soon after, open a prominent terminus in the City.

The story is told, and many of the routes are travelled with illustrations in this presentation, one of a trilogy of railways in the 'Eastern Region'.

Finally, Another Photo from the GER Presentation on 25th July



Photo: Ray Schofield

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 Alan Cheetham. The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered with the Charities Commission.