

# Railway Ramblings

Issue 159

October 2023

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

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*"The Skipping Devonian", a UK Railtours charter, headed by 67007  
with 67005 "Queens Messenger" at the rear  
snakes into Paignton station for the return trip on 16 September 2023*

*Photo: John Dossett*

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*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 October 2023

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

10<sup>th</sup> October **Steam in the 1960's** *Chris Wright*

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

31<sup>st</sup> October **The Severn Valley and The Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railways** *Richard Morris*

## During November 2023

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

14<sup>th</sup> November **Five go to Swansea** *Chris Jones*

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

28<sup>th</sup> November **An A-Z of Switzerland** *Steve Ollive*

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 are £3 for members and £5 for non-members.

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

## “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

During September, as normal branch meetings resumed, it was good to see so many of you again. At Hitchin we experimented with name badges (or labels to be more precise) and these were readily received. Nobody remained anonymous and “Mickey Mouse” was absent. It was good to see at-a-glance just who I have spoken to in the past! As some of the committee expected, a few of the labels dropped off during the meeting and were on the floor at the end. So, for the October meetings we will provide our more regular attendees with a better-quality badge and only use labels for the infrequent visitor.

On the downside, the meeting at Hitchin reinforced the need to try to find alternative accommodation. Hiring that hall is expensive, it is larger than we really need, the acoustics are poor, and car parking was once again a bit chaotic as we competed with others using other parts of the site. If any reader is aware of other halls in that general area that they think might better suit our needs, then please let me (or the Branch Secretary) know and we will investigate further. With your help we ought to be able to solve this.

At Digswell the smaller premises might bulge a bit when we have a substantial number of us present but it certainly helps generate so much more atmosphere for our meetings (and the hall hire is half the cost of Hitchin).

And finally, a plea for your help.

Since the first Covid restrictions started to bite, readers have provided articles from which John Dossett, our Editor, has been able to produce a fairly substantial newsletter each month. However, over recent months, there have been very few new contributors and without “new blood” there will come a point when there is little to publish.

Please consider writing an article (or even becoming a “regular”) – everyone has knowledge and experiences, although many think they don’t have anything of interest to share with others.

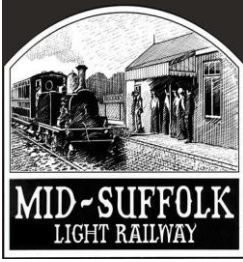
Our members and readers have a really diverse range of interests, so articles can be almost anything (railway related!). It could be a visit, a holiday, childhood recollections, local “happenings”, your favourite heritage line, experience working on the railway, even a work of fiction (providing it’s clear that it is made-up), puzzles. It is always helpful if there are pictures or diagrams – but if not, then we may be able to help source suitable material. Don’t be too concerned over spelling, grammar or formatting – as John can usually sort those out.

Even if you still can’t be persuaded put pen to paper, then look through photos you are willing to share with others. Send them in, with a suitable caption, and John will look to include them in future issues.

So, please, become a new contributor to *Railway Ramblings*. Contact John at [hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk](mailto:hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk), give him a call (01438 714325), or chat with him at branch meetings. He usually has his badge on!!

Steve Lacey





# Mid-Suffolk Light Railway

## Track Extension Update



With the tracklaying, huge progress has been made and the MSLR is now fundraising to build the platform – they already have the station building – and progress the application for the Transport & Works Act Order to allow them to run trains across the public footpath at the bottom of the climb to Aspull Halt.

This new section follows the existing track bed and will enhance the visitor experience of this unique Edwardian Railway by doubling the length of demonstration journey and giving passengers a 'destination' at Aspull Halt. The station construction is modelled on the old station at Wilby, which had the minimal building and facilities so typical of the original cash-strapped Middy.

## Next MSLR Event

If you are interested in visiting the Middy in the coming months the next scheduled event is on Sunday 26th November. This will be a [Steam Railway Day + Vintage & Bygones Fair & Exhibition](#) (click to get more details). Open from 10.30 am through to 3 pm.

*Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR*



# Epping Ongar Railway

## Restoration of the Line

*This article continues the story of the history of this line and the detail is reproduced with kind permission of the EOR.*

Both Ongar and North Weald Stations have seen long over-due investments in their infrastructure in the efforts to undertake an authentic restoration of the branch.

### Ongar



The trackwork through the whole station was renewed and realigned, both to the correct height for the platforms and to reinstate the original track layout with access into the yard, run-round and locomotive shed. The Cattle Dock and Milk Platforms still remain, as does the main station building and outbuildings which have been repainted in GER colours (1880-1930's). Ongar is the only original operational GER station in GER colours!

The previous Good Yards area (wasteland for many years) was purchased by David Wilson Homes who have built a small collection of houses. This does not affect EOR ability to run trains and the main station site remains in place, with heritage trains running from here to North Weald.

Inside the original 1865 station, the rooms have been reinstated to their original layouts, including removing newer partition walls, and opening up original doorways and fireplaces. The Parcels Office became "The Buffet Stop" cafe complete with history boards on the walls, and the Gents Waiting Room a Gift Shop. The station has been completely rewired, and fitted with period style lights to replace the LT surface ducting and florescent fittings. The volunteers were delighted to have won the "Volunteers Award" at the National Railway Heritage Awards Dec 2012.

A signalbox (formally from Spellbrook) has been brought to the railway, and installed at Ongar to safely control and signal the layout. This has been sited at the end of the main platform, and restored, complete with the original signal frame (donated by Ongar Railway Preservation Society).

In addition to the main platform, the milk dock is being restored into a bay platform (Platform 2) which will be ideal for diesel multiple units, and just to the north of the old cattle dock will become Platform 1. There may also be space for improved refreshment and shop facilities to be built in future years when funds allow.

*Next issue: North Weald*

# The October Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell the name of an East Anglian Coastal town station:

1. The manufacturer of the unique boiler used in Gresley's "Hush Hush" locomotive	
2. "Tartan ?" 1960's BR train parcel service from London Kentish Town to Glasgow Bridgeton	
3. Name of the cross-country rural railway system started by BR in 1982	
4. ? Wharf the main coal and heavy goods import and distribution centre on the Isle of Wight	
5. Norfolk Broad with north and south stations	
6. Experimental diesel locomotive built by Armstrong Whitworth in 1933 and trialled by the LNER for a brief period	
7. Nickname of LBSC class A1 0-6-0T steam locomotives	
8. Locomotive depot with code 66C	

9. South coast terminal of Somerset and Dorset Railway	
10. Name of locomotive D816	
11. Station between Dingwall and Garve	
12. ? Valley and Halstead Railway	
13. Ex S.E and C Railway London Terminal	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 16. No cheating!

*Martin Elms*





# Nene Valley Miniature Railway

Saturday 14th October, Thursday 26th October ("Miniature Train and Tea") and Saturday 28th October ("Miniature Wizards Express")



The Miniature Railway is based at Wansford Station just behind the Miniature Railway & Wagon Group Shop (which is where you purchase your ticket to travel on the Miniature Railway), the 5" Gauge railway runs along the side of the car park and can provide train rides to Adults and Children alike. On these October dates they will be operating Steam and Battery electric locomotives.

The Miniature railway boasts two stations, turntable, locomotive shed, goods sidings, signals and everything which is "Main Line in Miniature". A small charge is made for a ticket to travel on the Miniature Railway. The Miniature Railway is fully supported by donations and Ticket Sales.

If you want to celebrate with a difference, why not come to the Miniature Railway. The Miniature Railway can be privately hired for Children's Parties and other celebrations at Wansford.

Refreshments can be added from the NVR Cafe - and of course bigger train rides are also available from Wansford.

To enquire about a Miniature Railway private hire please email [miniature.railway@nvr.org.uk](mailto:miniature.railway@nvr.org.uk)

*Details courtesy the Nene Valley Railway*

## 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](mailto:gricersteve@hotmail.com)



## Reader Photos – Share yours



*Pitchford Hall 4953*, resplendent in gleaming black livery, safely loaded at North Weald, on the Epping Ongar Railway, and ready for the journey to the Didcot Railway Centre where she participated with their collection of GWR 4-6-0s in the Autumn Steam Gala on 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> September.

*Simon Watson  
EORVS*



At Slipe Lane, Broxbourne, on 26 July 2023. 37175 heads (with 37254 at the rear) a test train (1Q01) from Liverpool Street to Ferme Park. This was cancelled at Cambridge and returned to Derby from there.

*Mikki Hart*





# Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway

## Behind the Scenes - FREE Guided Tours



On Sunday 15 October adult-only visitors are invited to see parts of the railway that are rarely accessible to the general public! In addition to the “Behind the Scenes” FREE Guided Tours the Standard Steam and Vintage Diesel train services will operate throughout the day with the regular range of adult discounts and concessionary fares.

See what goes on beyond the end of the platform at Princes Risborough and down the tracks past the crossing gates at Chinnor.

Guides will be on hand at both Chinnor and Princes Risborough platforms from 11.00 until 16.30 to show you around and answer your questions, including about the benefits of becoming a member and volunteer. (All of the staff you see at the C&PRR are unpaid volunteers, and maybe you too could become a volunteer.)

Please note: For safety reasons the tours will be arranged between train movements at both stations. Also, because of the nature of the tours they are adult-only, limited to those who are aged 16 years and over. You may be walking over railway ballast and other uneven surfaces for part of the tour, and so you are asked to wear sensible and robust footwear.

For further information use this link:

[See Behind the Scenes on our FREE Guided Tours: « Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway \(chinnorrailway.co.uk\)](http://chinnorrailway.co.uk)

*Information reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR*

# The Ghost Train – a short story by Martin Elms

“Would you like to hear my Ghost Train Story? I asked Paul, a railway signaller who has just arrived to relieve me at 06:00 in Waterbeach Signal Box. “Yes O.K.” he replied – appearing genuinely interested. My home is about ten miles away at Long Stanton. There is time at the end of a shift to speak with the early shift Signaller before driving home. When I am on this shift, I like to make my wife breakfast before she travels to Addenbrookes hospital, where she is a nurse. I have a few hours’ sleep before preparing our evening meal. Then it is my next night shift.

I made Paul a cup of tea and settled down in the chair to relate The Ghost Train Story to him. During this time Paul had to attend with signalling duties

I began “A few years ago“, then paused because Paul began writing in the Signal Box Train Register. Concentration and discipline are paramount for safety reasons. Continuing when Paul had completed his record in the register, “I was a relief signalman in the Spalding district before moving to Cambridgeshire. One of my duties was to operate a signal box near Spalding. This had been constructed to serve Ministry factory sidings. It was usually switched out of use but, from time to time, was specially opened to move a train from the factory. This was a munitions factory built to supply the armed forces during the last war. It was highly secret. The by-products manufactured were probably highly dangerous to say the least. They were only transported in specially constructed wagons to another highly secret disposal facility near Thetford. They would be made safe at this point. After the war, the factory remained open until the early sixties. It was decommissioned, over a period of a few years, with remaining materials removed by an occasional special train. It was considered high risk to move the material by road safely for final secret disposal, so the siding and signal box remained until the factory was finally vacated. Today a ground frame would be adequate, but this facility had been equipped with a fully operational signal box which was strictly opened on special instructions from the Defence Ministry via our control.”

I sipped my tea, because Paul was engaged with train running. Even at this early hour of the morning Waterbeach has train running operations. I continued after his signalling duties were completed.

“To reach this box involved driving to Spalding station. Then a walk along the cess for about two miles. On this day I received instructions from control to open the box by midday. I drove to the station car park at Spalding in the rain. Carrying my meal and tea was fine for the 2 mile walk. However, the box had no running supply of water and it was necessary to take a large can of water for my shift. I was unhappy lugging this lot as wearing waterproof clothing made for an awkward load along the muddy, slippery cess to the Signal Box. Unfortunately there was no convenient train at this time to beg a lift from. The walk along the cess to the box was my lot and I set off, the walk seemed never ending. Eventually, through the now very heavy rain, I reached the signal box. Climbing the slippery steps, I found the key “hidden” above the door and thankfully entered the dry but cold operating area. Fortunately, the stove had a large supply of coal. There was plenty of paraffin oil for the “Tilley” lamps. They were the only source of lighting and, on this dreary day, they were essential.

After domestic preparations, I “opened” the signalling up. When closed the box required leaving all signals clear to travel through a longer section. I was required to liaise with the adjacent boxes to advise them I had opened. This was successfully achieved. I entered the



information in the Train Register appropriate for this signal box. This was retained out of harm's way in a locked drawer which also contained a "securely" hidden key – in the tea pot!

Looking at the Train Register, I saw the last departure of the "special" train had been a week earlier. It was clear to see that train running was now becoming less frequent. I formed the opinion the train operation might well cease in the next few months.

The stoves in these types of boxes take a long time to heat up but I knew from previous visits that it would be very warm by the time my shift finished. I would then have to extinguish the fire because I was not going to be relieved. With skilful arrangement of the coal, I could at least boil a kettle up quickly.

I enjoyed sipping the refreshing tea, cupping my hands around the mug, as I looked out of the back window of the box. The rain was streaming down the glass. I saw activity beyond the security gate. A Land Rover had stopped, and two soldiers got out from the vehicle, appearing to examine the locks on the gate.

I then became involved in signalling the usual timetabled trains which passed. Unexpectedly, I then received the special bell code that indicated to me to expect the arrival of a locomotive booked to enter the sidings. On arrival in the depot, it would perform the necessary shunting before departing with the loaded wagons. After departure and the train out of my section I would close the box and leave clear signals. Then the trudge back to Spalding.

A few minutes later, locomotive D5545 appeared with some empty wagons which were to be placed in the sidings for a future movement. I was engaged in the shunting by changing points, clearing the appropriate signals and then hand signalling the loco behind the box as it made its way. Its squealing journey along rusty rails, together with weed covered sleepers, through the now fully opened gate was awesome to watch. It was accompanied by a cheerful smiling waving train crew who were accompanied by a Traffic inspector to ensure the operation went as planned.

One hour of shunting to make up the departing train formation and stable the empty wagons was then undertaken. The locomotive, now coupled to five special bright yellow-coloured wagons, drew up to the departure signal. The rain was easing as the second man from the loco came running over to my box. He climbed the stairs, two at a time, and after a cursory knock entered my domain.

He informed that the train was ready to depart and needed my assistance. I entered the relevant details in the important Train Register. After being assured I would soon release the signal for departing the second man left the signal box, almost falling down the steps in haste, to return to the warm loco cab. I registered the appropriate bell code with the next box and cleared the signal. With a sound of the horn the train departed, with more friendly hand waving and cheery smiles from all the crew. The loco cab was considerably steamed up and probably very cosy, a big contrast to the weather conditions at this time. The train formation was one of the few running without a guard's brake.

I was going through the closing down procedure with the adjacent boxes and smothering the stove fire in preparation to leave the now cosy and warm box when the external telephone rang. Answering it, I was surprised to hear it was Control. I was very startled and stunned by what the controller said to me.

"Hello Signaller. Sorry to tell you that the special freight today has been cancelled by the Ministry. The wagons are not ready for departure yet. Sorry about your wasted journey and shift. At least you will be paid. Bye now".

The telephone line was abruptly cleared. I did not have the opportunity to speak with the Controller to express my disbelief to what had been said. I was amazed at what I had witnessed, with the recent movement of the train and the content of the conversation with Control being completely at odds with that.”

Paul looked just as puzzled as I had been.

*Martin Elms*

## The October Presentations (1)

Steam in the 1960's

- Chris Wright

10<sup>th</sup> October at Hitchin



Class B17/6 No 61664 'Liverpool' leaves Yarmouth  
with the 15.14 departure to Liverpool Street in April 1957

*Photo by E. Alger, Colour-Rail*

Chris Wright, a native of Gorleston-on-Sea, spent many school holidays 1959-1965 spotting in Hitchin. In a two-part presentation, the first Tuesday 10th October, the second Tuesday May 14th 2024, he will talk about his early spotting ventures in Norfolk; the end of steam in East Anglia; spotting at Benslow bridge; and the many trips he took from Hitchin, in the company of local spotters in pursuit of steam. Starting in the 1950's, he will also talk about the increasingly frenetic drive to visit the last outposts of steam during 1965-1967.



# The October Presentations (2)

## The Severn Valley and The Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railways - Richard Morris

31 October at Digswell, Welwyn



GWR Castle Class 4079 *Pendennis Castle*  
*Photo: Richard Morris*

The Severn Valley Railway was one of the first heritage railways to rise from the ashes of the wholesale closure of branch line railways in the 1960s and has developed into one of the country's premier heritage railways. It was up and running 6 years or so before the line which now forms the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway was closed by BR! The current fortunes of both are really rather different - we take a look at developments of both railways and bring the story up-to-date.

## Reminder - The Welwyn Meeting Venue

For those who decide to come to this presentation, please remember that meetings in the south of our area have moved from Welwyn Garden City to Digswell Village Church Hall, Digswell, Welwyn AL6 0DH

Digswell Village Church is located in Warren Way, Digswell. Apart from the car park there is on-street parking available in Warren Way and other nearby roads.

For those travelling by train, Welwyn North Station is a short five-minute walk away.

Note:

This is "Digswell Village CHURCH Hall" - NOT "Digswell Village Hall".

# How It Started - Alan Cheetham

As some readers may know, I mainly follow current UK rail operations, particularly the East Coast Main Line and West Country areas. My interests also extend to some of the standard gauge heritage railways.

Growing up in Welwyn Garden City during the 1960s, I was fortunate enough to observe the final few years of steam traction and the early diesel years. During the early to mid-1960s it was not uncommon for some 20-odd enthusiasts, of all ages, to gather on Saturday mornings at WGC in the former long-stay car park adjoining the bus station. Information on workings, notably rail tours advertised in the railway press, was scarce and often inaccurate. To my knowledge there was no organised railway society in the area at that time.

## End of steam on the Great Northern

Steam traction officially gave way to diesel south of Peterborough during June 1963 with the closure of Kings Cross Depot (34A).

At a young age, bus rides to WGC station were on Saturday mornings or during school holidays. I recall that a notable early morning highlight was the Up Cleethorpes service, often headed by an Immingham Britannia Pacific. I noted 70036 *Boadicea*, 70037 *Hereward the Wake*, 70038 *Robin Hood* & 70040 *Clive of India* as regular performers. I think these were a batch allocated to Immingham Depot.

One grey afternoon (possibly 1963), I watched 70038 head what was thought to be the last steam-hauled Down Cleethorpes service. A gentleman from the London area had travelled out to WGC especially to photograph it. To this day, I have not seen his photograph published anywhere or even learned of his identity. Subsequently, the Cleethorpes services were worked by English Electric Type 3 (later Class 37).

Steam gave way to diesel traction with English Electric Types 4 (Class 40) & Type 5 (Class 55) joined by the numerous Brush Type 4 (Class 47). As the newer Brush 4s were introduced some briefly had pink / purple windscreens and white roof radiator grilles.

## Notable 1960s GN line unusual workings

From my notes:

The privately owned 60103, restored at Doncaster Works as LNER 4472, made a number of appearances, latterly with a second tender.

- |                 |                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09 June 1963    | Kings Cross to Doncaster rail tour, hauled by 46245 both ways.                                                                                         |
| 04 October 1964 | Kings Cross to York rail tour, headed by 70020 ' <i>Mercury</i> ', glimpsed from afar!                                                                 |
| 24 October 1964 | Kings Cross to Newcastle ' <i>Jubilee Requiem</i> ' rail tour, headed by 60009 <i>Union of South Africa</i> .                                          |
| 16 October 1965 | Leeds to Kings Cross to Leeds BR trial run with a Midland Blue Pullman 6-car set (M60090 / M60091). I saw the return working passing WGC around 16.30. |



21 October 1966     35026 *Lamport and Holt Line* light engine Southern Region  
(Nine Elms ?) to York.

22 October 1966     35026 light engine York to Southern Region (Nine Elms?)

I was amongst several local observers who gathered, on that cold wet Saturday night at WGC station, to view 35026 running back to the Southern Region after working a York to Newcastle to York rail tour earlier in the day. Memory says it was running tender first at WGC, having possibly been turned at Peterborough, can anyone confirm this please?

The Kings Cross to York and York to Kings Cross legs of the tour were worked by 4472 *Flying Scotsman*..

During autumn 1967 the privately owned 7029 *Clun Castle* was an unusual visitor to the GN line.



GWR Castle Class 7029 *Clun Castle* at Kings Cross - 17<sup>th</sup> September 1967

Prior to the two rail tour duties, it undertook clearance tests and even used the Hitchin turntable. Does any reader know of any pictures of this happening?

17 September 1967     Kings Cross to Leeds rail tour, with 7029 *Clun Castle*  
09 October 1967     Kings Cross to York rail tour, with 7029 *Clun Castle*

Interestingly, photographs of these two runs north can be distinguished by the position of the smokebox door handles:

Using a clockface:

For 17 September the handles were approx 09.35

For 09 October the handles were approx 11.35

I paid no attention to either!

Local word was that 7029 would come on the trains at Peterborough. After one of the runs a local newspaper carried a picture of 7029 passing Hatfield! But that was the way it was then - No internet, not even a Man on the Moon!

The accompanying photograph of 7029, taken in 1967, was subsequently acquired from a car boot sale. It is not attributed to a photographer but if anyone can identify whose work it is, please get in touch.

Coming to the present day, as I write 7029 *Clun Castle* is advertised to work Kings Cross to Lincoln on Saturday 30 September 2023. The likely outward route via Peterborough & the GNGEJ to Lincoln, returning via Grantham & Peterborough.

Finally, a piece of nostalgia familiar to some readers:

This permit is issued subject to the depots remaining available for public visits. In the event of any depot being closed to the public, organisers will receive as much notice as possible.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BOARD  
BRITISH RAILWAYS

B.R. 19141/1  
Permit No. 2692

Your Reference  
Our Reference PR3/V 756 KS/SB  
Public Relations & Publicity Officer  
York.

24th January, 19 68

Dear Sir,

In accordance with your request, I have been pleased to arrange for your visit(s) to Motive Power Depot(s) as shewn below, and I hope you have an instructive and enjoyable visit.

On arrival at the Depot, this letter should be presented immediately at the Depot office and a responsible member of the staff will conduct you round.

In the interests of safety, no person under 16 years of age will be allowed to visit a Motive Power Depot unless accompanied by an adult, and the visit must finish before dark. The only luggage allowed in the Motive Power Depot will be cameras, and photographs may be taken for private collection only.

Yours faithfully,  
G. S. KNOX

ALL MEMBERS OF THIS PARTY  
ARE OF BRITISH NATIONALITY

Motive Power Depot to be visited	Date	Time	No. of Persons
York	Thur. 13.6.68	15 00 hrs.	27

To:— W. Hague, Esq.,  
c/o Divisional Manager,  
King's Cross.

ATTIMORE HALL SCHOOL PARTY  
Combined Schools Educational Excursion,  
Welwyn Garden City to York.

Alan Cheetham

*Editor: If any reader can help Alan with his questions, he can be contacted by email on [cheethamsw442@yahoo.com](mailto:cheethamsw442@yahoo.com), or at a Digswell meeting.*

## Puzzle Solutions

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 6):

1. Yarrow.
2. Arrow.
3. Regional Railways.
4. Medina.
5. Oulton.
6. Universal.
7. Terrier.
8. Hamilton.
9. Bournemouth West.
10. Eclipse.
11. Achterneed.
12. Colne.
13. Holborn Viaduct.

Solution: YARMOUTH BEACH

Martin Elms

# Branch Visit – Epping Signalling Museum

The visit planned for 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023 was cancelled. The museum would have been opening especially for us and we did not have sufficient confirmed participants to make the visit viable. Naturally, those who had put their names down were a little disappointed. Others may have been disappointed that the date was not convenient for them.

For anyone who would like to visit, there is another option – from now until the end of October the museum has public opening days. The museum is open every Saturday from 10:00 to 16:30. Admission is free but donations are naturally welcome. The museum will then be closed until April 2024.

Full details can be found on their website - use this link to get there: [Epping Museum Visit Us](#)

## Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

You were let off a contribution from me last month, but no such luck this month!

So, what is new? Well at long last, the external repairs to the Wansford signal box are complete, with the exception of the new staircase, which remains as a flat-pack produced by the Nene Valley Railway carpentry team. This meant that a couple of weeks ago, the scaffolding was removed and we can now once more use Platform 3 and run round at Wansford. The scaffolding had fouled the Platform 3 road. That meant you had to run through the tunnel to the Yarwell loop, just to do some simple manoeuvres!



Now the box is waterproof, with a new roof and windows that slide, as opposed to judder and stick. The signaller thinks he has gone to heaven! Earlier today, I learnt that English Heritage had insisted that replacement glass had to be greenhouse glass, as this was the nearest equivalent to the original being slightly wavy, making sighting the most distant signals an optical challenge!





We also have a new arrival on the NVR in the shape of Austerity saddle tank 3193 "The Norfolk Regiment". This is in WD livery and has been hired in from its last home, The Northampton and Lamport Railway. It was previously at the NVR 3 years ago. The locomotive is privately owned.

In early September we had *Lady of Legend* visit for 2 weekends. This is a GWR Saint Class (all of which were scrapped) assembled from parts of other GWR loco's,

to replace the missing class. As I was away and it was the wrong colour green for me, I did not get a picture! Courtesy of the NVR website, I have found a picture to illustrate the point. Not bad for a replica loco, but she was not popular with the crew the day the heavens opened as they ran back from Peterborough tender first.....no shelter provided by Churchward in an open-back GWR cab, unlike a cosy Bulleid cab!







At present we have a visiting diesel, 37688 *Great Rocks*, due to leave on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Built by English Electric at the Vulcan Foundry works in 1963, it was initially shedded at Llandore, then Cardiff Canton, Eastfield and Polmadie. Subsequently bought by a preservation group, it is mainline certified and was here in connection with a Royal Scot rail tour.



The last thing to report is the Pacer driving experience at the NVR. Despite my best endeavours, my son James likes diesels more than steam trains! Though an obvious failure as a father, I did arrange a great boost in his respect for me by suggesting the family bought him a Pacer Driving Experience for his Birthday. It was not entirely altruistic, as he invited me along as his guest! Friday 22 September saw us at the NVR for a 13.00 course. We started with a visit to the signal box at Wansford where Roger Thorpe (the duty signaller) gave us a tour of the box and an opportunity to pull signals and work the crossing gates.

You share the hour's driving experience with one other driver (on this trip a lovely lady called Jill) and of course the instructor, on this occasion Terry Lee. Terry was great at calmly instructing and letting the trainees really experience driving the Pacer. I can honestly say both trainees smiled the whole time. One drives one way and the other returns. The door to the cab was open all the way, giving the driver's guest a good view of the line ahead and plenty of opportunities to take pictures. At the end you get a certificate and an "I Drove the Pacer" mug, with a warning that you are NOT a qualified driver! I will let you judge for yourselves how happy my son was.....



James Lacey at the controls of the NVR Pacer

*Photos and article: Steve Lacey*

## Our Book-Table



A familiar feature to those who attend branch meetings, the book-table. 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.

*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.*