

Railway Ramblings

Issue 160

November 2023

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



At Sheringham, on the North Norfolk Railway, c1970, the J15 since restored as a Y14 and numbered 564. How this line has come on since the 1970s.

(Article coming in December issue).

Photo: John S Scorer 2003

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 November 2023

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

14th November **Five go to Swansea** *Chris Jones*

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

28th November **An A-Z of Switzerland** *Steve Ollive*

During December 2023

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

12th December **A Decade of Home and Away** *David Jackman*

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

19th December **A Lifetime of Railway Discoveries** *Mike Bunn*

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 October, we started to provide our more frequent attendees to branch meetings with a lanyard-type name badge (continuing with labels for others). Our Branch Secretary will keep an eye on the list of attendees at each meeting and additional badges will be prepared for those who become more frequent attendees. At least for the present, we ask that those with the badges hand them in at the conclusion of each meeting. The aim of the badges is to “put names to faces” and, also, make it easier for the “regulars” to help newcomers (those with labels) feel more welcome.

Another issue, but one that we are not making much progress with, is that of finding a new venue for the Hitchin meetings. Hiring the Tilehouse Street Church hall is expensive, it is larger than we really need, the acoustics are poor, and car parking can be rather chaotic when we compete for spaces with others using the site. We have made enquiries of some 21 possible venues which soon reduced to a handful and these have been followed up. However, each has its drawbacks. So, at least for the time being, the decision has been taken to stay put.

With Christmas not that many weeks away, the restored/heritage lines are busy getting ready for the “Santa Specials” (and the numerous variants on the theme). For my part I am checking that the costume still fits! These festive weeks provide these railways with a sizeable portion of their annual income and if you are looking for a seasonal outing for children, grandchildren, or just for yourself, why not have a railway treat? Some of the offerings appear in this issue of *Railway Ramblings* – don't leave booking to the last minute or you may be disappointed.

Finally, on the next page you will find the reminder to members that it is time to renew your RCTS subscription.

Steve Lacey

New Member

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

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



Membership Renewal

Membership renewals will open around 1st November. Once again, our Society will use email to send out notifications so please look out for them. As a reminder to those members using direct debit, we now use GoCardless to collect payments.

Print and postage costs have risen considerably since the membership rates were last amended, whereas digital costs have not. Our chairman James Milne provides the following explanation for the new rates that will apply:

A year ago, I was a Trustee party to the debate in September 2022 that considered what should happen with 2023 subscription rates. Amongst other inflationary pressures, the costs of producing The Railway Observer were being predicted to show increases on the previous year's figures, but overall just some 4% ahead.

This led to the decision to hold subscription rates unchanged, rather than seek a very modest increase to assist Members with the cost-of-living crisis that was starting to have an effect on UK household disposable incomes. However, there was a threat of increased postal charges in April 2023, and a rise in printing costs, which have been somewhat mitigated by a change of printers.

So, it is perhaps unsurprising that both these issues are now being fully felt in our accounts, such that it is being predicted by our Treasurer that The RO production costs will have seen a 13% increase over 2021/22 when our year end concludes in October.

A decision made in September last year was to retain a 72-page monthly RO, and this has been re-endorsed at the latest Trustee meeting for 2024. The Trustees felt that this one of the Society's flagship products should not be devalued by deviating from its long-established standards of quality production and photographic content.

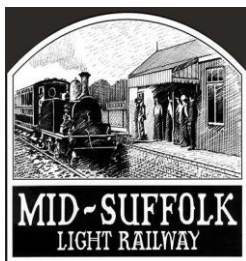
The Society has a long-established maxim that the costs of The RO should be covered by the membership fees, and that aim has been compromised by a combination of last year's decision to hold rates, and the anticipated increase in printing costs despite changing to a more economic printer, and the inevitable increased postal costs, about which we cannot negotiate specific rates with the Post Office.

All these very real cost inflations are associated with the printed version of The RO subscription rate, and therefore reluctantly it was decided by the trustees to increase printed subscription rates for 2024 by £5 to £38 per annum. This still represents outstanding value-for-money judged against the very high quality photographic and text content of your RO and equates to a very reasonable percentage increase in membership rates over the past two years.

As these twin increases in printing and postage do not directly affect the costs of digital subscriptions, it is pleasing to report that 2024 digital subscription rates will remain unchanged at £20 a year. Members can renew their 2024 subscription through the website from 1st November, and I encourage you to do so immediately, and take advantage of the Direct Debit discount if you have not already done so.

Thank you for reading through this rather lengthy explanation, but I believe in being transparent, straight talking and presenting the facts as they are.

James Milne (RCTS Chairman)



Mid-Suffolk Light Railway

26th November and the Santa Specials

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.

Santa Specials

For 6 days there will be Santa Specials at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway. Dates: 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th December.



For a magical Christmas treat for children up to 10 years-old, a trip on a Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Santa Special "is not to be missed".

Steam trains run from Brockford Station to 'North Pole Halt', for an individual visit to Santa at his Christmas Guards Van and each child receives a present. The stations, Brockford and 'North Pole Halt', and the Museum and cafe, will all be decorated in full 'Christmasy' style. On their return from the Santa visit passengers will find Christmas crafts, hot drinks, festive finger food all available to purchase.

All visitors, but especially children, can enjoy the unique atmosphere created at Suffolk's only standard gauge award winning railway museum. The Santa Special's genuine Great Eastern Railway Victorian four-wheeler coaches are a historical experience for any passengers. Early booking is recommended.

On each of the 6 days there will be 8 trains (first train 10.00) with compartments for 2 – 8 people priced at £15.00 per person, minimum 2 passengers – £30.00. For larger parties email: events@mslr.org.uk

Train times: 10.00, 10.45, 11.30, 12.15, 13.30, 14.15, 15.00, 15.45. Visitors are asked to arrive 15 minutes before their train is due to depart

Advanced booking only. Tickets now on sale.

For Santa Special bookings, or more information, visit www.mslr.org.uk/bookings or call [01449 766874](tel:01449766874). NB: Children under one year old will be free unless a present is requested then the normal £15.00 fare would be required.

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. Last month we featured the redevelopment of Ongar, this month it is North Weald. Both stations have seen long over-due investments in their infrastructure in the efforts to undertake an authentic restoration of the branch.

North Weald



Taken during our Branch visit 6 August 2023
(Photo: John Dossett)

Whilst Ongar has been repainted in GER colours, North Weald has been repainted in LNER / BR (E) (1940s-1960s) colours.

The track for nearly 600m was renewed, with the platform height being corrected from the LT standard to that for UK standard stock, and provision of points and track re-laid through the original Platform 1 (Up loop), and as well as into the bay platform. This 2-coach bay platform has been restored (Sept 2013) for passenger use, to enable 3 operational platforms to be used at North Weald.



North Weald Track Plan – Taken during our Branch visit 6 August 2023
(Photo: John Dossett)

Thanks to the signalling connected to the original 1888 signalbox, both Platform 1 and 2 are fitted for bi-directional working (trains can arrive/depart from either platform, in either direction), and the King Lever has been retained so the signalbox can easily switch out when it is not required. The signalling and revised track layouts also enable access to improved siding facilities and enable safer and more efficient shunting.

Inside the station, the rooms have been comprehensively restored, a 1980s ticket machine room removed to open up the waiting room to its original layout, and extensive restoration in the Ladies Waiting Room, Toilets and Ticket Office. The station has been completely rewired, and fitted with period-style lights to replace the LT surface ducting and florescent fittings. Disabled access ramps have been installed to both Platforms 1 and 2.

The original concrete footbridge at North Weald had become unsafe, and has been replaced by a GER latticework example, which was saved from further down the Central Line near Woodford.

The Future

All of the essential infrastructure improvements (both track, signalling and rolling stock) that have and continue to be undertaken help to widen the variety and frequency of heritage services, and are all key parts towards the central goal - to once again run trains to connect at Epping; both to preserve our transport heritage and to enable the running of services for the wider benefit of the local community, restoring this important link in our transport network.

Details reproduced courtesy of the Epping Ongar Railway

The November Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell the name of the L&SWR and SR General Manager:

1. Locomotive depot with code 55A.	
2. Name of locomotive 61001.	
3. ? And Hornsby loco manufacturers based in Lincoln.	
4. North Cornwall town and end of branch line from Halwill Junction.	
5. Junction station for branches to Lossiemouth and Rothes.	
6. Name of locomotive D9000.	
7. Name of Pullman express that ran from Kings Cross to Newcastle.	

8. Name of preserved railway from Alton to Alresford.	
9. John ? locomotive superintendent of L & Y Railway 1886–1899.	
10. Water troughs located between Belford and Newham.	
11. Highland town at end of branch line from Dingwall - for the Isle of Skye.	
12. Name of Locomotive D232.	
13. Name of Locomotive 35003.	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 21. No cheating!

Martin Elms



Nene Valley

Santa Express Experience



Take a step back in time with the NVR Traditional Santa Express Experience - All Santa Express Trains depart from Wansford Station.

Service Dates: 25th & 26th Nov 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd & 24th December.

Santa Express Departure Times: 10:00 or 13:10

Your Christmas experience will start before your train departs. Arrive approximately one hour before your train's departure time to give you time to park, get checked in, your tickets stamped and, most importantly, visit Father Christmas in his Grotto.

The NVR team of Christmas Elves will be there to show you where to go and to introduce you to Father Christmas himself. Each child will receive a special gift when they visit the legendary man himself in his Cosy Grotto. Then, it's time to board the train for your magical festive journey through the Nene Valley. On board you will be joined by Father Christmas, who will walk through the train to say "Hi" one more time.

Choose between seating in First Class open-seating carriages, a Private Premier Compartment which seats up to 6 people, or the St. Nicholas Lounge which seats up to 16 people (only 1 x St. Nicholas Lounge is available per service). Each table in the open First Class carriages seat up to 4 people. If your booking is for more than 4 people, your booking will be spaced out over multiple tables for 4.

If you book a table of up to 2, or a table for up to 4, in First Class open-seating you can add a Festive Sweet & Savoury Box which will serve up to 4 people, at time of booking. Please select Standard or Vegetarian at time of booking for your Festive Box.

All passengers will receive a Christmas Cracker, drink & mince pie for adults/sweets for children. The included drinks are Tea/Coffee plus a soft drink or festive tipple for all adults & a soft drink for children. Drinks will be served to your table from the on-board Christmas drinks trolley once the train departs.

Festive food is included in all Private Premier Compartments and St. Nicholas Lounge bookings.

For full details and to make a booking go to:

[Traditional Santa Express | Nene Valley Railway Ltd \(nvr.org.uk\)](http://Traditional Santa Express | Nene Valley Railway Ltd (nvr.org.uk))

Details courtesy the Nene Valley Railway

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

Due to pressures this month, I have decided to be a bit lazy and focus on the unsung heroes of the Nene Valley Railway, mainly in pictures rather than words, as these speak far louder than the words I can write!

1. The Wagon Group.

They are an independent group at the NVR that have raised funds and restored a rake of goods vehicles, producing a convincing freight train. This is used at galas and photo shoots, to the pleasure of many. Led by Tim Hobman, they have worked miracles on seeming “basket cases”.

They are running a fund-raising photo shoot on Monday 30th October, using the “Austerity” and their van train to recreate the Boston Dock’s scene of old. I have my ticket, to support their work.



In the past, *92 Squadron* has supported them on previous photo charters by letting them use *92 Squadron* at special low rates.

In the next photo, Tim Hobman, leader of the Wagon Group. is the policeman!



2. The Permanent Way Gang.

Without them we would have no railway, but their work behind the scenes mean that I don't have a picture of them at work!

Instead, you will have to make do with a shot of their equipment.



The yellow wagon is for ballast, with doors at the bottom and side to spread new ballast.

The shot of the TASK machine and flat wagon loaded with sleepers was taken during an intensive period of work on the Fletton loop. In order to allow *Sir Nigel Gresley* to access the NVR via our connection to the mainline, they changed-out over 500 sleepers in 3 months! Respect. They also keep sight-lines for signals and crossings clear, by cutting back vegetation along over 7 miles of track, 14 miles when your count both sides!

3. Signal and Telegraph Department.

Again a vital part of the railway, without whose work we could not operate. From vital maintenance work on signals and points, to repairs following cable thefts, not to mention the destruction by fire of Orton Mere signal box. They work tirelessly to keep us going, even when not allowed into the mess room after they have been greasing points! They also look after our historic Great Northern somersault signals at Wansford, a relic of the past, still operating at the NVR (along with a number of relics such as myself).





4. The Rail by Mail Group.

Based at Overton, they look after the exhibits there and the TPO (travelling post office) coaches and line side equipment. They run demonstrations of the line side equipment at galas. You try writing a safety-case for picking up 25kg leather pouches of letters at 25mph using a net, not to mention catching a similar pouch from the train into a stationary line-side net. What could possibly go wrong!



5. The Carpenters and Building Maintenance.

I will gloss over these as they have featured in previous articles, including work renovating the toilets, repainting the signal box, renewing the crossing gates and a myriad of other projects.

At present they are installing a purpose built disabled toilet, by the car park.



6. The Gardeners.

These unsung heroes source and plant the foliage around the railway stations. They spend hours watering, to keep plants alive in the hot summers we have been having and then dead-heading and trimming back when they are successful.



7. The Platform Staff and Ticket Inspectors.

Without these no train is despatched. Passengers are told where to go (politely!) and revenue checked. Safety is a main concern with doors being closed and opened for passengers brought up with sliding doors and buttons to press....yes, I kid you not!



Photos & Article: Steve Lacey



I had to add this photo of Steve resting in his "92 Squadron" office.

Editor.



Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway

Santa Steam Train Specials



Santa on the platform at Chinnor

All trains will begin their journey at Princes Risborough Platform 4 (SatNav HP27 9DN) with Santa's Elves welcoming everyone onboard. Then travel on Santa's steam train to see the Great Man-in-Red in an enhanced Workshop and Grotto at his North Pole station, where the train will halt-a-while for refreshments and a much anticipated visit to see Santa - chat to him and take some great photos for the album - and pick-up that important Christmas present!

On the return journey the Elves will pass through the carriages to ensure all the young folks are pleased with their presents. The whole experience from leaving Princes Risborough Platform 4 to arriving back again will take around one and a half hours.

Santa has named the 1950s railway carriages after his favourite Reindeer and they are called 'Rudolph', 'Blitzen', 'Dasher', and 'Prancer'. Seats are booked at tables, always trying to seat groups together. The C&PR volunteers will do their best to provide all of the traditional elements of a Santa Special experience: the steam train ride to visit him at the North Pole station, hot and cold beverages accompanied with mince pies or biscuits when you arrive, and the opportunity to meet Santa in an enhanced experience and for every Child 0-12 years their all-important present from Santa!

For full details and bookings, visit

<https://www.chinnorrailway.co.uk/product.php/414/santa-steam-specials>

Information reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR

Bluebell Railway Visit – 24 July 2023 – John Dossett



Being in East Sussex for an 80th Birthday celebration, Jean decided a visit to the Bluebell Railway was a good idea. So, we stayed overnight in Cuckfield and were able to make an “early” start for Sheffield Park, which has a large car park and is, effectively the HQ for this railway.

After a brief look around Sheffield Park, noting what we could look at later in the day, we caught the second train of the day to East Grinstead. This train, formed of five corridor coaches, was headed by SECR 01 Class No.65, looking extremely smart.



“No.65”

This SECR 0-6-0 was built at Ashford as an “O” class locomotive, it received a rebuild to Class “O1” in 1908, and ran on until finally withdrawn (as 31065) in 1961. In 1963 it was obtained by the late Mr Lewis-Evans and kept at Ashford Steam Centre until its closure. Thereafter its location was something of a mystery until it was brought to the Bluebell Railway for overhaul, and was returned to steam for the centenary of the amalgamation of the SER and the LCDR in August 1999. It was then operational until 2009. After further restoration work, at Sheffield Park, it returned to service in 2017.

Leaving Sheffield Park, our train stopped at Horsted Keynes and Kingscote before arriving at East Grinstead, some 11 miles and 40 minutes later.

Horsted Keynes Station was built in 1882 by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway. It was a large junction station in the 1930s, with a line branching off to Haywards Heath via Ardingly. Today, the station has been restored to the Southern Railway period – mid 1920s. It is currently undergoing further major restoration work, as part of the Bluebell Railway “Jewel in the Crown Project”.



This station is particularly popular with film and television companies, and used as filming location for *Downton Abbey*, *The Woman in Black* and *Muppets Most Wanted*.

One of the station platform signs at Horsted Keynes.

At East Grinstead the Bluebell has a rail connection to the national network, facilitating the transfer of locomotives and rolling stock.



No.65 sets off to run round the train at East Grinstead.

Not wanting to visit the town of East Grinstead, we took the same train back to Sheffield Park and took lunch in the station restaurant before visiting “*Steamworks*” and the museum. Both were very enjoyable and deserved much more time spending in them than we had allowed.

Being a “fan” of the GWR we just had to top-off the day with a further run to East Grinstead and back, this time behind visiting BR (GWR) Hall Class 6989 *Wightwick Hall*. This train included a buffet car – with two attendants!



BR (GWR Design) No. 6989 ‘*Wightwick Hall*’

Designed by Frederick Hawksworth, this is a development of Charles Collett’s earlier Hall Class. Built in March 1948 at Swindon Works, ‘*Wightwick Hall*’ spent its working life around Hereford. and Gloucester. It was withdrawn in June 1964, and was one of the locomotives rescued from Barry scrapyards, moving to Quainton Road in January 1978, and restored to operational condition over the following 40 years.

The most recent overhaul was completed in March 2019 and it arrived, on loan to the Bluebell Railway, in June 2022. This locomotive is owned by The Quainton Railway Society.

Our return to Sheffield Park was the last train of the day, arriving back just after 5.00pm.

It had been a great day out and probably because of a poor weather forecast the trains were not at all busy. Indeed, Maurice, the buffet car attendant on our final train, commented that the low number of visitors had most likely not even been sufficient to pay for the coal!

Despite the weather forecast of a rainy day, the reality of the weather was that it only started raining just as we drove out of the car park at Sheffield Park.

John Dossett

The Pilotman – a short story by Martin Elms

I am the driver of 1E45 the 07:45 from Paignton to Newcastle train. I have been rostered to drive from Bristol to my home station of Derby. At Ashchurch the train has been diverted to the Reddish branch platform. It is usually signalled straight through to Birmingham via the Lickey incline. Puzzled at the diversion I brought the train to a stand at the semaphore signal which was held at danger on the north end of the branch platform at Ashchurch station. I applied the brakes fully and exited the cab to contact the signalman using the nearby lineside telephone. I saw him at the levers within the signal box which is in the triangle of tracks about fifty yards away. He advised me that due to a recent freight train derailment on the main line my train was to be diverted via Reddish, returning to its booked route of Birmingham New Street, then to Derby and terminating at Newcastle.

I explained that I had not signed for the route knowledge required for the diversion. He informed me that I would be provided with a Pilotman who was on the way with another diverted train from Birmingham. He was expected at Ashchurch in about 30 minutes.

My train guard Joe was now on the platform. The Ashchurch Stationmaster was with him. Many small stations had staff immaculately dressed in railway uniform and Ashchurch was no exception. The Stationmaster here portrayed an air of greater importance than the role they actually performed. The impression of expectation that VIP's or even Royalty would be travelling was the style of clothing. Joe and the Stationmaster joined me beside the train locomotive - D175. We discussed the situation whilst waiting patiently on the platform in warm June evening sunlight.

"I suppose we will be about one hour late into Birmingham, or even more due to this diversion" mused Joe. They should hold or provide connections. I will go back into the train and tell the punters."

He walked a short distance from me. There was a worried expression on his face.

"Good luck to that" I added jovially.

"Second thoughts" said Joe. "I think I'll wait until we're on the move again" He was hesitating in his speech and appeared to be stalling for time.

The train we were waiting for, with Pilotman working, from Birmingham eventually arrived. It was hauled by another Class 46 and slowly negotiated its way around a curve and across many points. It was brought to a stand alongside us. I saw the figure of a person leave the cab and go into the cress. Using this, correctly by the rule book when walking on or near the line, he made his way beside the track towards the front of the loco. He waited as the driver of the locomotive on the train he had Piloted sounded the horn and accelerated away to continue its substantially delayed journey. This man was obviously the Pilotman I was expecting to assist me drive forward on the diversionary route. After completing the railway version of "The Green Cross Code" he approached me.

Joe and the Stationmaster had now left me to speak with the Pilotman. Hopefully, I could soon depart with our train.

The Pilotman was dressed immaculately in train drivers' uniform complete with waistcoat from which a chain was visible from what I guessed was a pocket watch. His boots were the most highly polished I had ever seen. A regulation "grease" topped drivers railway cap complemented the pristine uniform. On his left arm and clearly visible was a metal badge

proclaiming him to be a "Pilotman." A well-groomed moustache was outstanding. As an alternative to the regulation neck-tie he sported a bright red coloured bow tie. He walked with an air that complemented his smart and confident appearance. His uniform and demeanour were a credit to himself and the railway industry. I did not know what to expect when he spoke with me, but I was startled to hear a strong West Midlands accent when he introduced himself.

"Good afternoon young man, I am Bertram Miles Oswald from Birmingham, Saltley depot. I am your pilotman today. I am known by my friends as Birmingham Bertie" Shaking me by the hand I was amused at what I had seen and heard!

I looked back along the train and saw Joe with the Stationmaster preparing for our departure. Train doors were open with inquisitive passengers on the platform enquiring the nature of the delay.

Bertie and I climbed into the cab. He took the second-man's seat after carefully dusting it, wiping his hands on a green spotted cloth he produced from a waistcoat pocket. He then informed me of the relevant details of the diversionary route. Looking back from the cab I saw Joe waving us the right of way. This was repeated by the Stationmaster who was halfway along the platform. I sounded the horn, released the brakes and under instructions from Bertie we set off threading through the forest of semaphore signals. The insignificant station we were leaving had an extensive number of signals. I was amazed at the track layout. This was my first journey along this loop line.

Bertie maintained the rule of only speaking of the current journey. He provided information of the speed restrictions, signals, and gradients of the line. We were now travelling in gathering dusk. I saw the line was mainly surrounded by fields and woods. We only passed a few widely scattered hamlets until arriving at the significant larger Evesham. Passing here at a greatly reduced speed as we climbed over the Great Western line to Worcester. I was pleased Bertie had provided me sufficient notice of required speed changes in passing here. Later in the journey I was required to brake considerably more than I wished for at a very tight twenty mile per hour check railed curve which continued through a station I learnt was Reddish. This had been a hard brake application and not the best performance from me driving a passenger train. Bertie informed me this location had been the scene of a dreadful accident many years earlier. There had been considerable number of fatalities. This was the only non-current comment he made throughout the journey.

The line of route beyond Reddish was through a more urban environment with an increasing number of larger and better maintained stations. Industry was in the vicinity of the railway. We had entered the suburban train services network of West Midlands.

Eventually, upon returning to the train's booked route, my confidence returned. It was pleasing to be on the familiar line of route on which I was passed out to drive trains. Bertie had now completed his Pilotman duties. In silence, he lit a small cheroot, selected from an ornate decorated gold cigarette case from his waistcoat pocket.

Running almost two hours late we travelled into the always dark and gloomy subterranean Birmingham New Street. Upon arrival Bertie offered another handshake and left the train cab. I glanced from the cab window. I expected to see him, but he had vanished in the shadows. I was keen to leave Birmingham New Street and was intent to see if I could recover some of our late running.

A few days later during my rest day I met Brian, a friend who previously had been based at my depot in Derby. We talked railway matters over a convivial pint at the railway social club. I had the opportunity to inform him of my "excursion" via Reddish. He was interested that I

had been diverted and added that he had driven the alternative route many times in his career. Having signed his route knowledge card, he thought I could have the opportunity to gain my route knowledge on this line. Future engineering work would require many diversions along it in the future. Brian also told me of the crash briefly mentioned by Bertie.

Next day Brian visited me carrying a book.

“This is a history of the Reddish loop. It contains a copy of the accident report which you may find useful. I know you are interested in general railway topics” he said handing me the book.

Later, I read through the book. It was, as Brian said, interesting. Especially reading the reason how the tight curve the scene of the accident had been engineered. Two different railway companies amalgamated at that station. This was similar practice to other locations that I knew. Shepreth in Cambridgeshire near to my former home at Royston was connected in a comparable way.

The accident report of some thirty years earlier was, as expected, very detailed. The train driver of the diverted train felt unwell. Contrary to the rules he left the cab to travel in the train. The Pilotman took over the driver's duty. For an unexplained reason, which was even more inexplicable because he would know the route intimately, the Pilotman drove the train without authority. The train entered the twenty mile per hour speed restricted curve at Reddish station at over sixty miles per hour. This derailed the train resulting in the death of eighteen passengers, the Pilotman, and the fireman. The train driver, being in the second carriage, survived.

Also included was a newspaper article from “The Birmingham Post” which gave graphic details of the accident, I suspect suitably embroidered, and included in the report was a list of the fatalities., their age, occupation, and hometown. It was sad to note that it included members of the same families.

But one name almost sprang out at me - that of the pilotman.

Bertram Miles Oswold, 45 years of Birmingham Saltley Depot.

Martin Elms

Puzzle Solutions

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

1. Holbeck. 2. Eland. 3. Ruston. 4. Bude. 5. Elgin. 6. Royal Scots Grey. 7. Tees–Tyne Pullman.
8. Watercress Line. 9. Aspinall. 10. Lucker. 11. Kyle of Lochalsh. 12. Empress of Canada.
13. Royal Mail.

Solution: **HERBERT WALKER**

Martin Elms

The November Presentations (1)

Five go to Swansea

- Chris Jones

14th November at Hitchin



Kings Dock signal box - R and SB Railway



The same box - today

This presentation is about the seven termini in Swansea and the five railway companies that were involved. (If you count The Mumbles train as a railway. It did carry freight.)

The stations will be looked at, as far as possible, and we also take a trip along the lines from each. Chris is expecting to include some shots of the present sites and has been in Swansea during October to do just that, although many have been obliterated but not, the surviving one of course, Swansea High Street.

The November Presentations (2)

An A-Z of Switzerland

- Steve Ollive

28th November at Digswell, Welwyn



Jungfrau Bahn units 212 and 213 starting their ascent out of Kleine Scheidegg on their way to Jungfraujoch.

In the second of three parts describing the Railways of Switzerland, Steve will cover the Railways from D to M (inclusive), starting with the Dolder Bahn in Zurich and ending with the Transport Montreux-Vevey-Riviera, now part of the MOB organisation. As with part one Steve will give a brief overview of the history of the railway and a map of the route, followed by some 21st Century photographs of the rolling stock, along with any updates about changes to the stock.

Reminder - The Welwyn Meeting Venue

For those who decide to come to this presentation a reminder 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".

North Norfolk Railway Notes on Locomotive 564

(pictured on cover page)

Great Eastern Railway's Y14 (LNER J15)

The Great Eastern Railway's Y14 'small goods' class 0-6-0, was designed by TW Worsdell and introduced in 1883 to haul coal trains on the newly opened GN-GE Joint line from Doncaster. They were very successful, and construction was continued until 1913, when the 289th appeared from Stratford Works, making the Y14 numerically the largest class on the GER.

Due to their very low axle loading (13.5 tons) they could work on almost every GER line. 272 Y14's were passed on to the LNER in 1922 when they were reclassified as J15's. A total of 127 survived until nationalisation and were allocated the numbers 65350-65479. The last survivors were not withdrawn until the end of steam in East Anglia.

GER Y14 – 564

This historic engine was built as GER no. 564 and left Stratford Works on 22 February 1912. It spent most of its working life in Norfolk and Suffolk. In 1922 and 1936 it was allocated to Norwich Thorpe and also spent time at Yarmouth. After the grouping, the loco was renumbered 7564, then 5462 in November 1946. In October it was transferred to Lowestoft and stayed here for 13 years. In 1949, as a consequence of the nationalisation of British Railways, it became 65462. Both the LNER and BR painted the loco plain black.

65462 was allocated to Norwich Thorpe in June 1960 and then moved to Stratford in January 1961. In January 1962, 65462 was retubed at Stratford, before joining the few other remaining London based J15s on standby and Liverpool Street station pilot duties.

The last four J15s (including 65462) were finally withdrawn on 16th September 1962, when steam was eliminated from East Anglia, having outlived many other more modern types of locomotive. It was purchased by the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway Society. It ran for a while in the guise of a J15 locomotive, however an overhaul by the Society which cost more than £350,000 has seen it return to service in a condition closely matching that when it entered service as built by the Great Eastern Railway.

Graham Hukins, Commercial, Business & Administration Manager, NNR believes that the photo is probably from 1970 as the loco is still in blue paint that was purchased from Woolworth's, also that the platform had not been re-laid.

(Information from the NNR website, and John Scorer)

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.