



Railway Ramblings



Issue 161

December 2023

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



On the North Norfolk Railway, 12th August 2023, the Class Y14 no. 564.
The same loco that featured on last month's cover, but 50+ years later.

Photo: John Dossett

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 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 **Industrial Action** *Geoff Plumb*

This replaces the previously advertised presentation by Mike Bunn, who is unable to attend on 19th December for personal reasons.

During January 2024

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

9th January **Hitchin, 2013 to the Present Day** *Richard Allen*

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

30th January **Steam in the Kings Cross Area in the 50's & 60's** *David Percival*

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.

Presentations Offered by Neighbouring Branches

Make the most of your RCTS membership. The following details have been provided by those RCTS branches which are geographically closest to us.

CAMBRIDGE

The Swifts, Haggis Gap, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB21 5HD
- Meetings start at 19:30

12th December Branch AGM & Members Contributions

9th January “March” with Richard Munns

SOUTH ESSEX

Shenfield Parish Hall, 60, Hutton Road, Shenfield CM15 8LB
- Meetings start at 19:30

18th December “World Travels Cambodia to Argentina via Alaska & Morocco”
(A virtual presentation)

15th January “Transforming Rail Travel across East Anglia, The Greater Anglia
Story” (A virtual presentation)

MILTON KEYNES

Network Rail, The Quadrant, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN
- Meetings start at 19:30

7th December Branch AGM

WATFORD

Beechen Grove Baptist Church, Clarendon Road, Watford WD17 1JJ
- Meetings start at 19:00

5th December Members Presentations

2nd January “Northampton Gateway Strategic Railfreight Interchange”
With George Collinson (A virtual presentation)

6th February “Railways in & Around the Second World War”
With Robin Mathams (A virtual presentation)



Chairman's Platform

With the Christmas & New Year break nearly upon us, may I wish you all a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year".

With Christmas now just a few weeks away, the restored/heritage lines are busy with their variants of the "Santa Specials". The festive season provides these railways with a sizeable portion of their annual income and if you are still looking for a seasonal outing for children, grandchildren, or just for yourself, why not have a railway treat? Although many services will be fully booked by now, there are no doubt opportunities still left.

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 is now keeping an eye on the list of attendees at each meeting and additional badges will be prepared for those who become more frequent attendees. If you already have a lanyard-type badge we would now like you to retain it – and try to remember to wear it when attending meetings. 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. Personally, I feel that the early experience with badges is helping to alter the "tone" of our meetings.

Looking forward, thanks to the work of Dave Elsdon, our Branch Secretary, we now have a full and exciting programme for 2024. You will find details in this issue of *Railway Ramblings* on pages 9 and 10. Printed programmes will also be available for you to pick-up at Branch meetings. From this month, you will also see that we are listing presentations being offered by neighbouring RCTS branches – they would be pleased to see you join them.

Of course, I hope that you will find plenty to interest you in our own 2024 programme and will now be adding our meetings to your 2024 diary.

Finally, during January we would like to encourage you to "bring a friend" to our meetings by offering them admission at the member donation rate. All you need to do is to register their name as your guest.

Steve Lacey

Cathedrals of Steam

Derek Boothby has kindly advised us that Christian Woolmar will be giving a talk at Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Road, Hitchin, on 21st January 2024.

Christian Wolmar writes mainly about transport, with newspaper articles, books and radio and television contributions. His 2020 paperback is "Cathedrals of Steam".

This talk will feature London's twelve major railway stations: how their development and decline has influenced the City, and he will share enjoyment of recent station transformations, blending old and new styles.

Derek advises that talks at Holy Saviour Church usually start at 3:00pm and cost around £12, including tea & cake.

Further details should be available in time for the January 2024 issue of *Railway Ramblings*.

A Visit to the North Norfolk Railway – John Scorer

Not having been on the North Norfolk Railway for some while, a visit was made on Saturday 30th September 2023. This was a normal operating day, with one diesel locomotive and one steam locomotive in operation.

It was a question of pot luck as to which locos would be working. On arrival, I asked about which would be the diesel, and was informed 'a big one'. I surmised that this would be the railway's English Electric Type 3, but it turned out to be BR Class 14 'Teddy Bear', no. D9537 and named '*Eric*'. This loco is normally based on the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway and was visiting the NNR by courtesy of the D9537 Loco Group.



D9537 arrives at Holt with empty stock, prior to working the 10:20 to Sheringham.

As it turned out this was fortuitous, since I had never (to the best of my memory) had a ride behind one of this Class before.

D9537 is an 0-6-0DH and was built in 1965 at the British Railways Swindon Works. It was in service for BR a little more than three years, before being sold to British Steel for use at its Corby works. The Class 14 was intended for shunting duties, trip working movements between local yards and short distance freight trains. The good all-around visibility from the cab and dual controls, in conjunction with a Paxman 650 hp engine and a top speed of 40 mph, suited them for these types of working, and nowadays also makes them useful for service on heritage railways, on which a few examples are to be found.



Class 9F 92203 makes an atmospheric start from Weybourne with the 10:31 to Holt.

The steam locomotive in operation was BR Standard Class 9F no. 92203, with double chimney. Interestingly, this loco was also built at Swindon, but in 1959. After withdrawal from BR service in November 1967 (less than nine years after construction, what a waste!) she was purchased by the artist David Shepherd who named her '*Black Prince*', a name still carried. 92203 is now owned by the NNR. This class was most successful, being capable of hauling heavy fast goods trains and, on occasion, fast passenger trains – a speed of 90 mph was recorded on one instance. The double chimney, which was fitted to the last 9Fs built, further improved their performance. Not surprisingly, 92203 made easy work of her light train, the exhaust beats could hardly be heard.



D9537 awaits departure from Sheringham with the 14:30 to Holt.

So here is an instance of where a steam loco, built at a time when such a mode of motive power was planned for being phased out, had a longer working life for BR than a later built loco of a different motive power mode intended to supersede it. So much for BR motive power policy of the era.



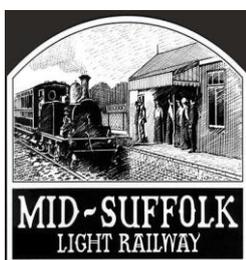
92203 runs into Weybourne with the 14:35 from Holt. The tablets are about to be exchanged to permit the section to Holt to be cleared for the D9537-hauled train (on the left) and that to Sheringham to be cleared for 92203's train, both departures scheduled for 14.46.

Both trains comprised BR Mk.1 main-line stock. The steam-hauled rake included a buffet car, which was doing a good trade. Also in this rake was the Gresley buffet car, included in trains for when "Cream Tea" and "Fish & Chip" services, on which a bar or servery is needed, are operated. Therefore, its buffet was not open on this occasion, but the car could still be used by passengers, indeed I had a run in it for one of my journeys. This vehicle, running in its early BR guise as E9128E in Crimson and Cream livery, was used for a time on the Cambridge Buffet Expresses until the 1970s, so it is possible that I travelled in it at about then - but do not positively recall this.

A very pleasant day spent on this interesting line.

With thanks to Graham E Hukins, Commercial, Business & Administration Manager, NNR, for providing some information without which I could not have completed this report.

John Scorer: Article & Photos.



Mid-Suffolk Light Railway

New Year's Day Steam and Light Festival

1 Jan 2024



A bright start to the new year will be the Steam & Light Festival at Suffolk's only standard gauge preserved railway. Join them on January 1st for your first steam train ride of the year and a visit to the Historical Lighting Association's display of fascinating vintage oil lamps dating from the Mid-Victorian era and as seen everywhere from grand houses to practical work places.

Visitors can enjoy the unique atmosphere created at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, Suffolk's award-winning heritage railway. During the day you will be able to ride the trains as often as you like, and the genuine Great Eastern Railway Victorian four-wheeled coaches are a historical experience for any passengers, especially children.

The Tea Room will be open for tasty New Year treats and beverages and the museum

which tells the story of the old 'Middy' will also be open to complete your visit.

Tickets are available from the booking office in the Middy Shop when you arrive (no advanced bookings for this event).

(Santa Specials are sold out)

Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR

The 2024 Branch Programme - Hitchin

Evening meetings, held at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Hitchin

9 January

Hitchin, 2013 to the present day- *Richard Allen*

13 February

Edward Thompson, Wartime CME - *Simon Martin*

12 March

Branch Annual General Meeting, followed by Life with David Cole - Living and Working with Trains

Richard Cole (David's son)

9 April

Cambridge Area Railways Yesterday and Today Part 1 - *David Scudamore*

14 May

Steam in the 60's. Part 2 - *Chris Wright*

11 June

A Decade of Change 2011 Onwards - *Peter Robins*

9 July

The Deltics - Worthy Successors to the A4s? - *Michael Smyth*

August

Outdoor Visit or Something Different - The Branch Committee invites suggestions

10 September

A Driver's Eye View - 48 Years on the Railway - *Andy Grimmett*

8 October

Mandarin Madness - Solo Travels in China - *David Longman*

12 November

The 11th Colour Rail Journey - *Paul Chancellor*

10 December

Five Go to Swansea. Part 2 - *Chris Jones*

Plus festive snacks in the interval

The 2024 Branch Programme – Welwyn

Afternoon meetings, held at Digswell Village Church Hall, Digswell.

30 January

Steam in the King's Cross Area in the 50's & 60's - *David Percival*

27 February

East Anglia in the 2020's - *Iain Scotchman*

26 March

Tunnel Vision. The History of the Metropolitan Railway - *Colin Brading*

30 April

That Was The Year That Was 1971 - *Geoff Plumb*

28 May

Railtours and Specials. Part 2 - *John Day*

25 June

The History of the 125 High Speed Train 1975 to 2023 - *Richard Morris*

30 July

A Further Western European Miscellany - *Rob Freeman*

August

Outdoor Visit or Something Different - The Branch Committee invites suggestions

24 September

Through Kirton Tunnel, Kirton Lindsey to Cleethorpes - *Stephen Gay*

29 October

Travels Around the Ukraine by Steam - *Michael Smyth*

26 November

Colchester in the Age of Steam - *Dave Goodyear*

17 December

Railway Preservation in France - *Mike Bunn*

Plus festive snacks in the interval

The December Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell a seasonal message:

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| 1. Station between Redruth and Chasewater |
| 2. Name of locomotive D816 |
| 3. Highland Junction for Strathspey line to Grantown |
| 4. Locomotive depot with code 33C |
| 5. Location of curved track on ECML by the river Ouse near Huntingdon |
| 6. Manufacturer of diesel engines used in Deltic locomotives |
| 7. Name of locomotive 46249 City of ? |

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| 8. Sir Nigel ? GN and LNER locomotive engineer |
| 9. Station between Wickford and Hockley |
| 10. SR locomotive and carriage works |
| 11. Cake in Norfolk? |
| 12. Station between Dawlish and Newton Abbot |
| 13. Summit near Shenfield |
| 14. Locomotive depot with code 34E |
| 15. Junction station for line to Ross on Wye and Hereford |
| 16. Name of locomotive W20 |

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As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 18. No cheating!

Martin Elms

RCTS OFFICERS CONFERENCE 2023

The RCTS Officers' Conference 2023 was held on 28th October 2023 at the Danum Gallery, Archive & Museum in Doncaster. Branch Chairman Steve Lacey and Branch Secretary Dave Elsdon attended the meeting on behalf of the Branch. Leaving Stevenage at 07:00 they had an easy drive north on the A1 & A1(M) arriving in good time for the 10:00 start.

Following the welcome by Society Chairman James Milne, there was the President's address by Reverend Canon Brian Arman and a couple of other formalities. The delegates then split into groups to attend one of the three workshops arranged to complete the morning session. These three workshops were designed for Branch Treasurers, those dealing with the digital-website & updating the Branch web pages, and an introduction for new/recently appointed officers.

The afternoon session was slightly more formal, with Digital Officer Matthew Shaw explaining about the Digital Archive (including the GWR & SR series of books, loco & coaching stock books) plus the scanning that is taking place for inclusion into the Society's archive at Leatherhead. There were also short discussions on the new Health & Safety Policy and Guidance by Callum MacLeod, along with Branch Liaison Officer Irene Rabbits discussing and explaining Branch Attendance Statistics, the initial findings.

There followed a general discussion led by the Chairman on subjects raised by the delegates. The meeting closed at 15:30 and, after a brief look around the museum which housed many locomotive and station nameplates plus two LNER locomotives, V2 Class 4771 *Green Arrow* and 4-4-2 Ivatt C1 Class. 251, we made our way back to Hertfordshire.

Dave Elsdon



Bluebell Railway – Extra Notes – John Dossett

Last month I wrote an article about a recent, enjoyable, visit to the Bluebell Railway. Here I add a few additional notes on other locomotives seen in operation that day.

Class 09



350HP Diesel shunting locomotive No. 09018 was purchased by a consortium of members who set up a company to manage the locomotive, which is hired by the Bluebell Railway as and when it is needed.

The 09 Class of diesel-electric shunters were a Southern Region version of the ubiquitous 08 Class, geared for slightly higher speeds. D4106 was built at British Railways' Horwich Works, completed on 13 November 1961. It was renumbered as 09018 on 31 December 1973. On the Bluebell it initially retained

HNRC orange and grey livery, with the lettering removed, since the priority was the acquisition of a pool of spare parts. Owned by B350 Ltd.

Class 73/1



Known latterly as Class 73s, these were electric locomotives for the Southern Region's third-rail system, but incorporating a 600 hp diesel engine, similar to those used in the Southern Region's DEMUs, intended for use in sidings and other non-electrified areas. Six prototypes, the 'JA's, were designed and built at Eastleigh in 1962 using English Electric equipment. They were built to the narrow 'Hastings Gauge', giving universal track access across the region.

43 more Electro-diesel Locomotives, 'JB's in Southern Region classification, were ordered from English Electric, built between 1965 and 1967, to operate on the newly electrified Waterloo to Southampton/Bournemouth line. Initially numbered E6007-E6049, they differed slightly from the 'JA's, most notably having higher tractive effort and a 90mph maximum speed.

73133 (as E6040 had become in 1973) was named '*The Bluebell Railway*' in September 1990, and ran onto what is now Bluebell property two years later at the ceremony passing ownership of the viaduct at East Grinstead to the railway.

The locomotive just escaped being scrapped in 2004, entered preservation, but returned to main-line use in 2013 and having been used as a shunter at Bournemouth Depot and more recently at Eastleigh Works, was privately purchased from there in December 2022 by a member of the Bluebell Railway's locomotive department. It was refurbished at his expense at Eastleigh Works in early 2023, prior to moving to the Bluebell Railway.



Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway

Benefits from HS2

The Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, the heritage line across the Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire border, looks likely to gain redundant track materials resulting from Network Rail works for the High Speed 2 rail line.



The nearby railway between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury, which carries passenger trains operated by Chiltern Railways, is currently closed so that part of it can be realigned where the new HS2 line is to run underneath. New track is being laid on the diversion, and some of the old track materials are being passed by Network Rail to the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, which is a local charity and entirely run by volunteers.

The redundant concrete sleepers becoming available date back several decades, and are not suitable for re-use on the National network as they don't fit modern rail which is heavier and of a different profile more suited to present day speeds and loads. The 25mph heritage railway will be using them to relay part of a stretch of track just outside Princes Risborough which was closed by British Rail in 1989 and became derelict – its wooden sleepers rotted away and trees grew through it!

The old steel rail being lifted won't be re-usable, as it is already well worn and will be cut into short lengths to speed the removal process. The Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway is running a fund-raising campaign to allow it to source replacement rail, hundreds of tonnes of ballast, and the rest of the materials needed. The C&PRR has been operating steam and heritage diesel trains between Chinnor and a location ½ mile from Princes Risborough since

1993, and was extended in August 2018 to serve a 4th platform at Princes Risborough station which was rebuilt by its volunteers. Additional track and signalling systems have been installed, and the “listed” signal box is being restored too. Access into Princes Risborough station was enabled by agreement with Network Rail to allow C&PRR trains to share one of their sidings, diverting around the derelict track mentioned above, but only when the siding is not otherwise required! Completion of the relaying of this stretch of track will give the C&PRR its own independent line into the station, a key development ambition for the charity.



Information reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR



Santa Specials – The Inside Story



Anyone looking for our Branch Chairman?

Here we see Santa (and one of his ever-helpful elves) taking a well-earned rest between Santa Specials on the Nene Valley Railway.

A Foggy Journey – a short story by Martin Elms

I was standing at the south end of Platform 5 at Peterborough awaiting the arrival of 3E45, a Christmas parcel traffic extra service from York to Liverpool Street via Ipswich. Bright sunlight in mid-December made it very pleasant to wait, even with the windchill. I was rostered to relieve the driver from York. The station announcer advised passengers to “stand clear of platform five as the train approaching is not in public service.”

Looking northwards along the congested platform particularly near the footbridge I saw 3E45 approaching hauled by a Class 37 diesel locomotive. Passing the impatient passengers, it came to a stand beside me. The driver I was relieving soon opened the cab door and climbed from the loco onto the platform. We exchanged greetings and he advised me of the weight, length, and maximum speed restriction of the train. He informed me the locomotive was running well. I did not need to be reminded that this was one of the growing breed of driver-only operated services. However, in his few moments of conversation with me he made that point clearly. He bid me farewell and hurried away through an impatient crowd waiting to join trains at this platform and the adjacent Platform 4. I assumed he would travel from Peterborough to York on the cushions.

I climbed into a pleasantly warm cab, locomotive number 37234. I placed my driver's bag, containing personal and work-related items, safely under the Second-man's seat. I adjusted the left-sided driver's seat for my position and went through the statutory safety checks. This included looking at the timings of the service on a printed sheet given to me by the driver I had just relieved.

Peterborough depart 11:00
Whittlesea pass 11:11
March Arrive 11:24 depart 11:34

I didn't read further - anything could happen to affect the running of this extra service. With pathing enroute this additional special train was not a priority. Additionally, I checked the TOPS train consist details sheet which had been left by the previous driver. It was on the control column. This verified the train details he had hastily given me.

Whistles on the platform reminded me that me and my train were not welcome to stand in the platform too long - My reporting train 3E45 was delaying an expected service to Nottingham. On hearing the whistles, I opened the cab window and, looking down towards the rear of the train, saw some of the station staff frantically waving green flags whilst continuing to blow whistles. This was an attempt to hasten my departure.

Sounding the horn and releasing the brakes, I obliged them by swiftly accelerating the train from Platform 5 South, passing Nene carriage sidings on my left, Rail World, and the terminus of the Nene Valley Railway on the right and, keeping at a sedate 20 mph hour round the sharp left-hand curve, passed under the East Coast Main Line. I saw a Deltic-hauled train heading north towards Peterborough station. I wondered if the driver I had just relieved would travel on it. A diesel unit, approaching me on the opposite line travelling from the direction of March, passed me. I assumed this was the train I had delayed. Passing the remains of Peterborough East, I eased the throttle open and 37234 rapidly accelerated to the maximum permitted train speed of 60 mph. I settled down to enjoy the journey on this perfect winter day.

Suddenly a dense fog bank appeared and the train entered rapidly into it. Visibility immediately dropped to less than fifty yards. I wasn't particularly concerned, knowing the

route well. The AWS magnets at distant signals would allow me to drive the train normally. The fog was just an inconvenience!!

Suddenly, in swirling fog, I felt the train was traversing a right-hand curve. With my route knowledge I was more than confident a right-hand curve was not part of the infrastructure and line of route! Suddenly it was possible to see, through the fog, to the left and then to the right, stone walls. Railway boundary on both sides with features like this are not seen in Fenland Cambridgeshire. I was puzzled. What was happening? I almost said out-loud, until appreciating I was alone in the cab of a driver-only operated train. I was travelling through a stone cutting and before I could absorb this bizarre image the train entered a short tunnel. The locomotive exhaust echoed off the wet stone walls. Tunnels in the Fenland rural country?

I was very concerned about the nature of this journey. My railway route knowledge in East Anglia was excellent but I did not know my location! It definitely was not the Fen Line between Peterborough and Whittlesea. I was now very concerned, troubled, and somewhat frightened at what was occurring. The unknown environment, without knowledge of gradients and speed restrictions, caused me to brake the train hard, reducing speed to thirty mph. In continuous dense fog I felt more in control of the train at a lower speed and with the knowledge that AWS would indicate signals to me I decided to continue at this cautionary speed until arriving somewhere I recognised. A signal box or station was a feature to look for, to stop and enquire. What would I say about my situation? I was unsure!!

The cab bell rang and I almost jumped out of my seat. The train passed a green colour light signal, its beam piercing through the fog towards me. Controlling the brakes and staring through the fog I greatly reduced speed alongside a signal box that was just visible through the fog. I applied the brakes fully and brought the train to a standstill and I sounded the horn. There was no response from the box. I opened the cab door and shouted for attention towards the signal box. I was shocked to see it boarded up. It was obviously closed and had been for a considerable period. I left the loco cab, climbing down to ground level. In the process I accidentally stepped into a red and grey coloured thick, muddy puddle. Cursing, I ventured forwards to get a clearer look at the signal box. I was looking for its name. Above the door I noticed a board with faded capital letters the single word "Kellshall".

"Where the hell is this place, where am I" I shouted out in shock and disbelief at what I saw. I really missed the presence of a guard or a second-man on my train. I needed their support in this dilemma - assistance in deciding what further action I should consider. A rabbit scampered away. This appeared to be the only sign of life here. Feeling even more anxious I decided to return to the relative sanctuary of the loco cab.

Wiping as much of the mud off my boots as I could on some damp grass, I climbed back into the cab and banged the door firmly to close it. Breathing heavily, I leaned against the door almost shaking in shock, torment, and worry. I sat down, taking the flask of tea from my bag. I was wishing for something stronger and calmed myself down to think. I decided to leave this deserted place. Not even a phone available. To add to my problem and shock I was experiencing, the cab-to-shore radio had stopped working when I entered the fog. With the signals protecting the rear of the train I decided to drive on at a safe speed, in the manner I had done since encountering this horrific experience. Although I did not know the route at least I could stop in an emergency until I arrived at a familiar location. I also wished I could run out of the fog.

I released the brakes and cautiously drove forward in trepidation, confident to a degree that this was the best plan to confront this serious problem. I had not received anything in training or rules to prepare me for this. Looking at my watch I was horrified to see it was 11:45. The

journey continued, crossing over a high viaduct. Beneath I could see a tumbling, very full, stream. Now I was expecting anything!!

Having travelled about ten miles I was concerned that I hadn't passed any trains from the opposite direction. As far as I could see there was no sign of habitation. The next feature was passing a dense forest of pine trees, steeply sloping away from the tracks. It was now well after twelve – high noon! I had concluded that I may never finish this journey or be seen again.

Suddenly the AWS bell rang again, and again. I almost had heart failure. I prepared myself to stop at whatever signal box controlled this colour light. I watched intently and, staring ahead, was alert for what I hoped and wished would be an end to this traumatic experience. Without warning the fog suddenly cleared. Driving into the same bright sunny atmosphere I had left at a time which now seemed to be a lifetime ago. Suddenly I recognised my location. The train entered a slight left-hand curve. "This is the approach to Whittlesea. I know where I am" I shouted out-loud. Punching the air was my instant reaction. Trying now to forget all the concerns and worries I immediately decided that, with normality returned, I would carry on with the booked journey, I decided not to stop here. What could I say to the Whittlesea Signaller? The late running, I could probably explain, given time for a good think, probably placing the blame on the locomotive.

I was now in a much happier frame of mind. The cab radio sprang back into life. I throttled up the locomotive and as the track straightened out into familiar Whittlesea station with its level crossing. I felt extremely cheerful, I never thought I could be so happy here. I asked myself what had happened to Kings Dyke Level crossing and Signal Box? We didn't appear to have passed them!! Another mystery on this more than unusual journey.

Noisily passing the signal box at almost sixty miles per hour was perfect train running performance. The sun shining into the cab added to my now joyful demeanour. I could not resist giving the signalman a toot on the horn and a friendly wave. I was pleased to see he responded in the same way.

Glancing at the cab floor I noticed the muddy red footprints. My boots, despite hasty grass-cleaning efforts, still had an extensive coating of mud on them. Something else to explain later. I then looked at my watch to see how late 3E45 was running now. If my eyes could have popped out, they would have done. I was amazed and gasped at the time. It was 11:11. The Christmas parcel traffic, an additional service from York to Liverpool Street via Ipswich was on time!

Martin Elms

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 11):

1. **S**corrier. 2. **E**clipse. 3. **A**viemore. 4. **S**hoeburyness. 5. **O**fford. 6. **N**apier. 7. **S**heffield.
8. **G**resley. 9. **R**ayleigh. 10. **E**astleigh. 11. **E**cclcs Road. 12. **T**eignmouth. 13. **I**ngrave.
14. **N**ew England. 15. **G**rango Court. 16. **S**hanklin.

Solution: SEASONS GREETINGS

Martin Elms

The December Presentations (1)

A Decade of Home and Away

- David Jackman

12th December at Hitchin



43277 approaches Oakleigh Park with a southbound express on 15th September 2016 in the days of the short-lived Virgin Trains East Coast when HSTs were still part of the core ECML fleet.

Photo: David Jackman

In "A Decade of Home and Away" David Jackman will illustrate some of the things that have changed, as well as some that haven't, on the railway over the last decade or so - starting in the UK and then moving to Europe.

The Festive Break

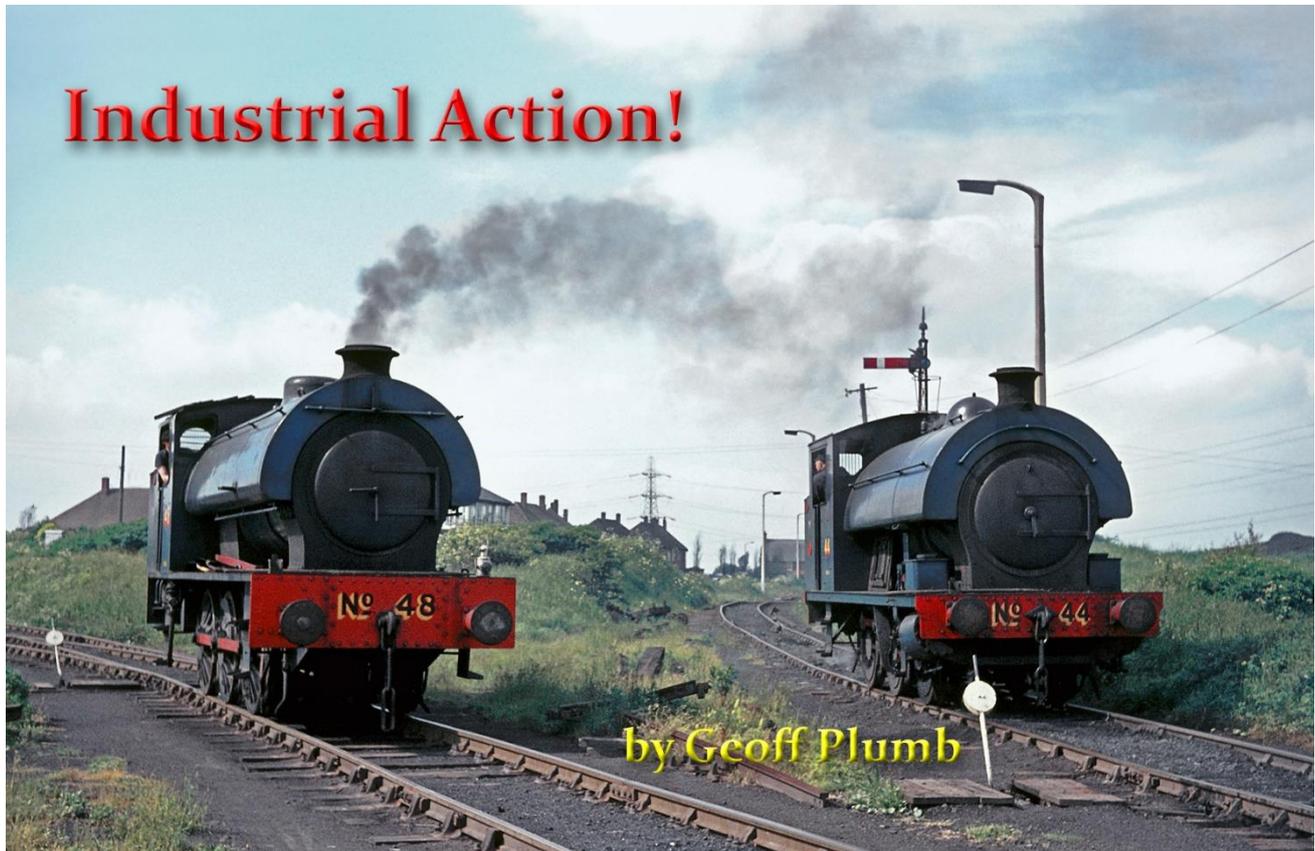
At both of the December meetings we are promised "festive snacks" in the half-time interval !!

The December Presentations (2)

Industrial Action

- Geoff Plumb

19th December at Digswell, Welwyn



Austerity 0-6-0ST (IC) NCB No. 48 (Hunslet 2864/1943) has left its wagons in the BR exchange sidings at Backworth (Earsdon) and is returning to join 0-6-0ST (OC) NCB No. 44 (RSH 7760/1953) which is waiting on the line approaching the level-crossing over the BR Blyth & Tyne line.

The signal box controlling the crossing can be seen behind No. 48, the signal protecting the crossing is still adorned by a NER finial on top of the post. Once the engines have coupled, together they will return bunker-first to Eccles Colliery, the other side of the crossing. Photo taken in June 1969.

The presentation will look at some industrial systems around the country, including steelworks at Corby and Staveley, paper mills in Kent, cement works in Essex and a visit to Avonmouth Docks. It will also cover some colliery workings in Derbyshire, Yorkshire, County Durham, Northumberland and South Wales, plus slate in North Wales, together with a few other oddities! A variety of steam and fireless locos are seen hard at work and at rest, plus the odd diesel. These will be presented in chronological order from 1962 to 1971.

Geoff Plumb



Epping Ongar Railway

Epping Ongar Lights Express

Various dates in December and January



The Epping Ongar Lights Express is an incredible light show, on and in a steam train, consisting of thousands of coloured LED lights and interactive LED wristbands, creating a kaleidoscope of different colours and flashing patterns. The train looks amazing, inside and out!

Featuring "Voiceover Man" (as heard on Britain's Got Talent and X-Factor).

Stunning neon views - A fully immersive lightshow to music.

Sound to light fun for the whole family to get you in the party spirit

Join the festive action on board and get in the party mood with a festive DJ mix of music the whole family will love. Each passenger will receive their own interactive LED wristband which is synchronised to the music, meaning you become part of the show! Sing, dance and cheer on this magical journey.

The Epping Ongar Lights Express departs from Ongar station.

For more details and bookings visit the EOR website:

[Epping Ongar Lights Express | Epping Ongar Railway \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://Epping Ongar Lights Express | Epping Ongar Railway (eorailway.co.uk))

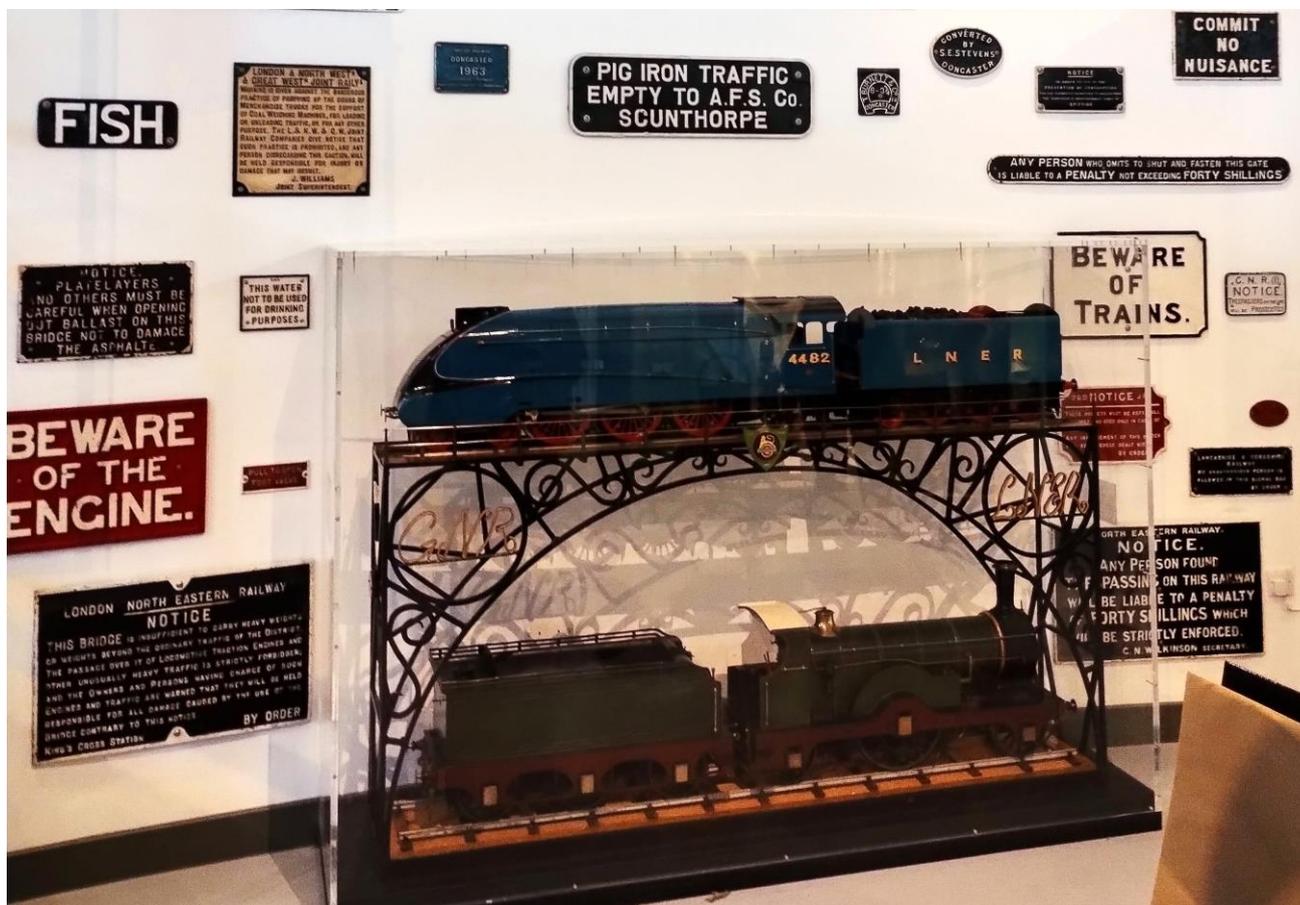
Reproduced courtesy of the EOR

Newsletter Distribution

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Danum Gallery Archive & Museum

More Photos from the RCTS Officers Conference Visit



Photos: Dave Elsdon

From a Previous Year:



Photo: Steve Lacey

Just seemed an appropriate photo to put at the end of the December issue.

Merry Christmas.

John Dossett

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) and John Dossett (Newsletter Editor). The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered with the Charities Commission.