

Railway Ramblings

Issue 163

February 2024

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



34053 Sir Keith Park on the Spa Valley Railway, 17th October 2020
Published as a tribute to Michael Bunn, who sadly passed away in January 2024
A good friend of our branch

Photo: Michael Bunn

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 email advising the details of the change.

During February 2024

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

13th February **Edward Thompson, Wartime CME** *Simon Martin*

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

27th February **East Anglia in the 2020's** *Iain Scotchman*

During March 2024

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

12th March **Branch AGM**
followed by
The Son of a Rail Enthusiast - My Life on the Railway
Richard Cole
(David Cole's son)

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

26th March **Tunnel Vision – The History of the Metropolitan Railway**
Colin Brading

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 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.

New Member

We welcome John Bachelor, of Stevenage, as a new member of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City branch.

Presentations Offered by Neighbouring Branches

Make the most of your RCTS membership. The following details are for those RCTS branches which are geographically closest to us.

CAMBRIDGE

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

13th February That Was the Year That Was, by Geoff Plumb

SOUTH ESSEX

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

19th February Railways Remembered: North East England by Charles Roberts
(A virtual presentation)

MILTON KEYNES

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

1st February Members' Presentations

WATFORD

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

6th February "Railways in & Around the Second World War"
by Robin Mathams
(A virtual presentation)



Chairman's Platform

Our first meeting of 2024 was our first challenge of the year! Hardly had the January issue of *Railway Ramblings* been dispatched before we heard that Richard Allen would, for personal reasons, be unable to give his "Hitchin, 2013 to the Present Day" presentation. Fortunately, Dave Elsdon was able to make arrangements for an alternative speaker (not me!) – thereby saving the day. Then email rode to the rescue enabling me to notify you all about the change (providing you read my messages). My best wishes to Richard and his family – hopefully we will still have his presentation one day.

Not long now until the branch AGM. I appreciate that this is not usually a very exciting event but it is an important part of branch activity and a formal opportunity for you to be able to raise any issues or concerns about the way the branch operates – we need this feedback from our members (Non-members are also welcome to be present.) As last year, we will have a "proper" presentation following on from the AGM.

A reminder that during February (and March) 2024 RCTS members can bring a friend to presentations at member donation rate.

Also, a reminder about badges - If you don't yet have a lanyard badge (and feel you have been overlooked) then let me (or Dave Elsdon, Paul Holloway or John Dossett) know and we will get one ready for your next attendance. It could be that there is already one waiting for you – there should be a list at the registration desk so that you can check. 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.

Steve Lacey

Branch AGM

The Branch AGM will be held at Hitchin on 12th March 2024. The agenda, the minutes of the 2023 AGM, together with the usual Officers' reports for last year (2023-24) are published as a supplement to this, February, issue of *Railway Ramblings*. I hope you will give these a read and will be attending: I would really like as many as possible to be there. If you have any questions, advance notice (to me) will help the Officers to give a considered reply.

The formal part of the meeting is usually fairly short in duration and will be followed by a presentation "The Son of a Rail Enthusiast - My Life on the Railway". As many of you know, David Cole was a Vice President of the RCTS and a regular attendee at our Hitchin meetings, having been a founder member of our branch. The presentation will be given by his son, Richard, who has been a railwayman himself.

Steve

Michael Bunn

It is with sadness that we report the passing in January of Michael Bunn, one of our regular speakers since we started meetings in WGC. Michael had been booked for our Welwyn presentation on 17 December 2023 but, as you will recall, due to ill-health he couldn't come. We will miss him and his enthusiastic presentations about railways in France. We extend our condolences to his family.



Epping Ongar Railway

Kids for a Quid

and

Winter Country Bus Event

February Half-Term - 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24 and 25 February



The following fares apply:

Adult: £18. Child: £1.

Under 3s are free - no ticket needed.

These fares give unlimited travel on our trains and vintage buses all day long!

For further details: [Kids for a quid | Epping Ongar Railway \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://eorailway.co.uk)

February 25

The "Winter Country Buses Event", features the green buses of London Transport and London Country Bus Services between the 1930s and 1970s.



Expect a wide selection of vintage London vehicles, plus possibly some interesting guests, on display and in service operating additional routes in the local area. Steam and diesel train services will also be in operation, together with the EOR route 339 bus service, providing connections to Epping Underground station (Central Line, zone 6).

For further details: [Winter Country Buses Event | Epping Ongar Railway \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://eorailway.co.uk)

Reproduced courtesy of the EOR

The February Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell out a famous locomotive construction works :

1. Name of Locomotive 60538	
2. Station between Barnstaple and Yeoford Junction	
3. Locomotive depot with code 64H	
4. ? Bowen Cooke L & W R locomotive superintendent 1908 – 1920	
5. Tunnel on ECML near Retford	
6. City with station termini named City, Thorpe and Victoria	

7. Name of Locomotive 45607	
8. Station originally at eastern end of the Central Line	
9. Name of Locomotive 61028	
10. Station between Inverness and Elgin	
11. L & S W R locomotive superintendent 1895 – 1912	
12. Station on branch line from Denver to Stoke Ferry	
13. Vale of ? Railway	
14. Locomotive depot with code 72C	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 14.

Martin Elms

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

In this update about the goings-on at the Nene Valley Railway, following my sojourn as Father Christmas, there is quite a lot to report, mainly you may be glad to know in picture form!

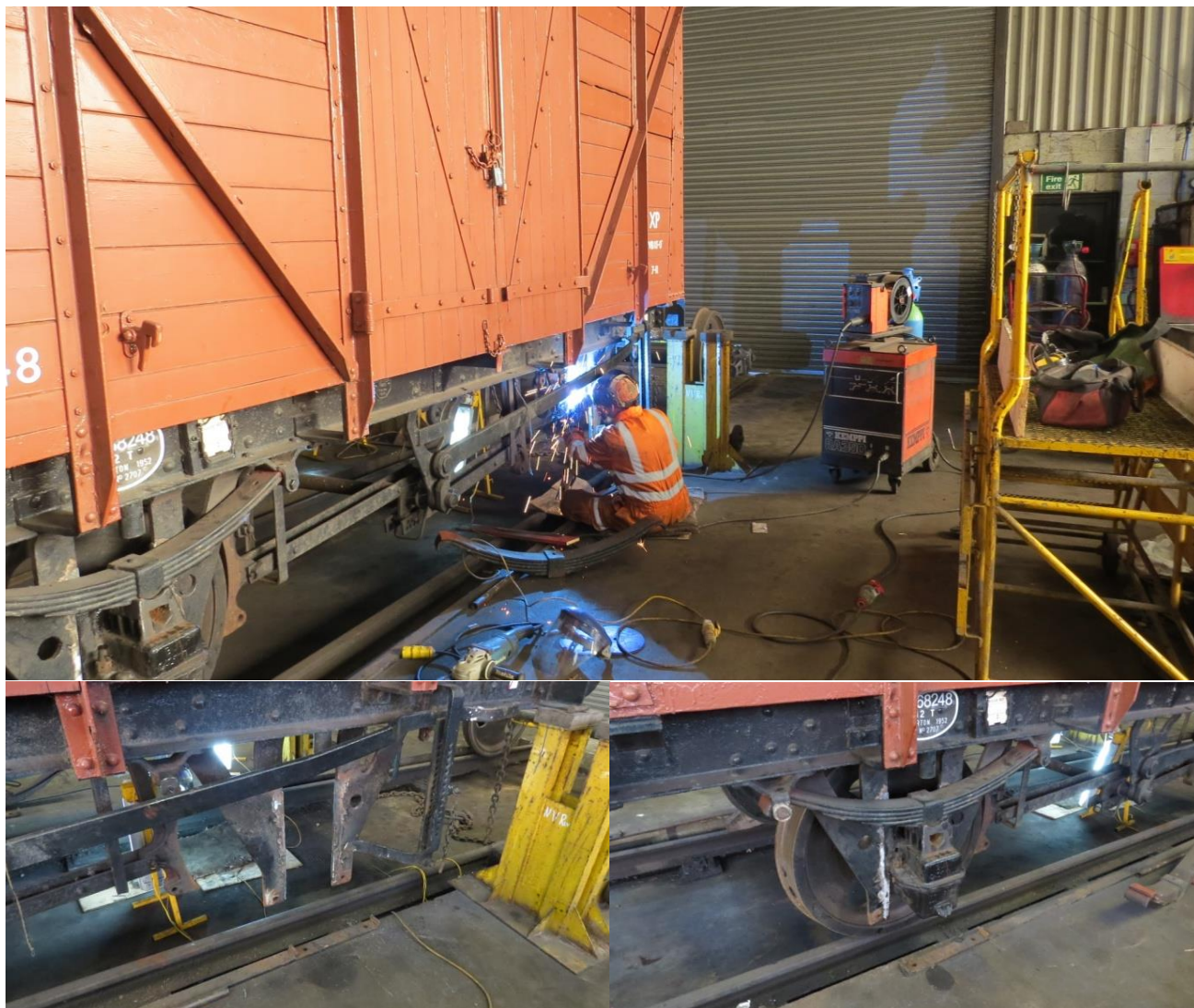
Firstly, *City of Peterborough* has finally been re-wheeled, but sadly this is only to make the chassis mobile, rather than a huge step towards completion. As previously reported, the boiler repair is still several years away from completion, in a queue, off site!



Secondly, *Blue Circle*, which has been one of the most reliable steam engines, has now come to the end of its ticket and was dismantled, prior to its transport away to have boiler work done. It did however, give some unique views of the workings of this unusual locomotive.



Thirdly, the wagon group has been improving the rake of vans, by fitting brake cylinders to a number of its wagons , in order to have a fitted head. This gives more flexibility to the locomotives used on it's freight charters/driving courses. They have also been building up, with weld, some of the wasted horn guides.



Fourthly, the Norwegian coach has arrived in the main workshop, for restoration to running order, as a very suitable pairing with the Danish F Class, which is undergoing final trials before entering service. Initially looking not too bad, stripping has soon revealed some rot and seized window mechanisms. This was as a result of storage outside, under the A1 bridge for a number of years and a broken window after a filming role!



The Norwegian coach:



Inside the 72-seater coach there are “tram-style” bidirectional seats, some ancient electrics, a beautiful set of ashtrays (now thankfully redundant on our railways).



There is also a definitely Norwegian-style of emergency cabinet contents!

I guess fallen trees and snow are a big hazard on Norwegian railways in winter; hence the two wood saws and an ice axe!



Even 92 Squadron gets a mention (of course), as on 17th January she had a warming fire in, prior to a hydraulic test on the 18th.

I asked, why a fire for a hydraulic test? The answer, you should not subject a boiler to hydraulic pressures (up to 350psi in our case) when the steel is below 7deg c. Hence, a warming fire to raise the water temperature enough to be able to do the test without damage.

We all learn something new every day!

Steve Lacey



All photos: Steve Lacey

Rampton Level Crossing

– a short story by Martin Elms

I was on my grocery delivery trip on 3rd June 1968, proceeding on my usual route from Long Stanton to Oakington and then along a side-road adjacent to RAF Oakington which had closed some four years previously.

To my right was the railway branch line, now only from Cambridge to St Ives and with just a basic timetable of a DMU about every hour. I followed the road, glancing at the empty disused airfield on the left, now slowly being returned to farmland, although there is a persistent rumour of a future new town on the site.

The road branched, I followed the right-hand road away from the airfield and stopped at the user-worked Rampton Road accommodation level crossing. Following the rules, I left the van checked both ways for no trains, crossed over and opened the far gate away from the line. I retraced my steps, fully opened the near gate and, checking again, drove over. Then I closed both gates before continuing to Cottenham to complete my deliveries.

About an hour later, I returned to the level crossing to continue back to Long Stanton, again carefully following the gate opening procedures. I noticed a Permanent Way gang at work on the line on the Oakington side of the crossing. One of them glanced up at me and waved. I returned the greeting and crossed back to the van. Checking again, I drove over, noticing the gang on my left busy with something on the track.

I stopped clear of the gate and had my attention drawn by a series of load whistles and, in my wing mirrors, I saw a passenger train, hauled by a steam loco, from the Oakington direction screech over the crossing with clouds of dust rising from the protesting brakes. The train stopped on the Long Stanton side of the crossing with the last coach just clear.

I got out of the van and ran back to the crossing as the train guard started to climb down from the coach as he looked despairingly towards the PW gang. I also looked, two men appeared to be crouching over and attending to others still on the track. It looked as if they have been hit by the train which I am convinced wasn't in sight when I looked the few moments before I crossed and, anyway, what was a steam loco hauled train doing on this dead-end branch? I returned to my van switched the engine off and returned to the crossing to see if I could help or get assistance.

I entered the crossing and looked left. The train had vanished and looking the other way so had all the PW gang!!

Looking to my left, in the quiet atmosphere of the tranquil location after the RAF station closed, I saw travelling from the direction of Longs Stanton to Oakington a DMU approaching. It was gently rolling and swaying in manner I was accustomed to on the now very lightly used railway.

The driver sounded a friendly whistle and gave an acknowledging wave of this hand in recognition of my presence as the DMU passed over the crossing. I saw the few passengers looking vacantly out.

Soon all was quiet again except for the engine noise of a tractor busily ploughing on the airfield, with a flock of seagulls following it, and the sound of a blackbird in a nearby tree - all normal.

What had happened, where was everybody? I closed the crossing gates which I had left open in my haste to help. Slowly, I walked back to and got into my van - and had a long think about what had happened. After a while I restarted the van and, somewhat in a dream, prepared to drive, turning back towards Oakington. I saw a vehicle approaching. The road being narrow I concentrated on keeping well to the left, leaving room for the vehicle, which I noticed was a RAF lorry in World War II camouflage with covered headlamps. The driver in brown overalls and beret acknowledge me and the lorry rumbled by. It must be a preserved lorry done up in war colours I thought, probably from Duxford Museum which was about ten miles away.

As I drove on my way, I heard the really loud noise of an aircraft. Looking to my right over the airfield, I saw a Lancaster bomber climbing away towards me, the noise of its straining engines filling the van with sound and vibrations. I knew I had a 35mm camera in the glove compartment, which I used for the chance of catching anything unusual on my travels – so far it hadn't been used much!!

Something else to do with Duxford I thought. I reached into the glove compartment grabbed the camera and exited the van in less time than it takes to tell. I stood and prepared to focus the camera at the aircraft ready for "the picture of the year."

Nothing in sight.

Just the continual sound of the tractor and the blackbird.

Martin Elms

Steve Nackoneczy Bequest - Book Collection

Barry Noble, a colleague of Steve Lacey at the Battle of Britain Locomotive Society (owners of the infamous *92 Squadron*), has a substantial number of railway books recently bequeathed by Steve Nackoneczy.

If anyone is trying to find a particular book then they might want to contact Barry to see if it is in this collection. Email Barry direct on barry@brookhilldesignstudio.co.uk.

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

East West Rail

Track Progress (at end-2023)

“Track laying is nearly finished along first connection stage of East West Rail (EWR) as the New Track Construction (NTC) train completes its 58th and final shift.

Once complete, there'll be 66km of new track between Bletchley and Bicester with the final welding, stressing and ‘tamping’ (track alignment) works to be completed in the new year.”



Installation of the signalling and telecoms equipment needed to operate the railway is also well underway, and once completed, will be followed by dynamic train testing before the railway reopens in 2025. Once open, this section of line will provide direct passenger services between Oxford, Bletchley and Milton Keynes for the first time in over 50 years.

New Track Construction Train



This phase of the project is being delivered by the East West Rail Alliance which was appointed by Network Rail to construct the Bicester to Bletchley section of new railway. The track itself has been laid by a state of the art NTC train, one of only two such machines in the whole country.

The NTC train uses an automated track laying system which is faster than using conventional track laying methods and can lay up to 1km of new track a day. Use of the NTC train has also helped to remove around 4,000 lorry journeys from local roads during the construction period.

(Credit: EWR News Release 19 Dec 2023)



NVR - The Home of Thomas



Thomas being named by Rev W Awdry

The 0-6-0T engine No. 1800 was built by Hudswell Clarke in 1947 at about the time when Rev. W Awdry wrote his second book in which Thomas appeared. The little blue engine spent its entire working life at the British Sugar Corporation Peterborough factory pushing wagons of sugar beet up an incline, until the day came when a diesel engine replaced the steam power of Thomas.

The Peterborough Railway Society purchased this delightful little engine on 9th September 1973 and he was moved to the Nene Valley Railway, where he has since delighted his friends and children of all ages.

Reproduced courtesy of the NVR.

Puzzle Solution

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

1. Velocity. 2. Umlerleigh. 3. Leith. 4. Charles. 5. Askham. 6. Norwich. 7. Fiji.
8. Ongar. 9. Umseke. 10. Nairn. 11. Drummond. 12. Abbey. 13. Rheidol.
14. Yeovil Town.

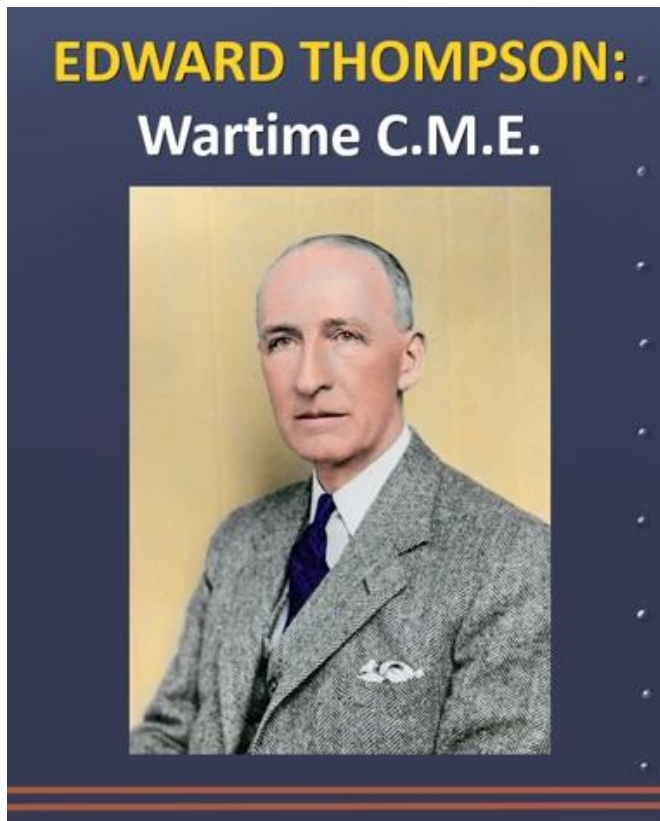
Solution: VULCAN FOUNDRY

Martin Elms

The February Presentations (1)

Edward Thompson, Wartime CME

- Simon Martin



"I have much to do, gentlemen, and little time in which to do it".

These words are attributed to Edward Thompson and have been taken in the past as meaning little time in which to enact change, specifically to the work of his predecessor, Sir Nigel Gresley. How far was this true, was the question posed by Simon A.C. Martin when he started his research on the L.N.E.R.'s second C.M.E. over a decade and a half ago.

13th February, at Hitchin

Edward Thompson: Wartime C.M.E.

This presentation showcases the research Simon has put together, and examines the primary evidence available to the general public, together with an analytical approach to the statistics held at the National Archives at Kew. We look closely at Edward Thompson's decision-making in the full context of the time on the railway from the period from just before Gresley's death, to the years after and the way in which he handed the baton on to Arthur Peppercorn, after these tumultuous war years.

We then examine each of the designs produced under Thompson, and the work carried out on his predecessor's locomotives in relation to the aim to bring the best out of them using the resources available at the time. Finally, we will have a group discussion on the documents found, their relative importance, and ask the question "do you feel differently?" at the end, after the discussion.

Simon's published work on Edward Thompson is available from Strathwood Publishing Limited. <https://strathwood.co.uk/products/edward-thompson-wartime-cme-due-in-december-2021-pre-order-today>

The February Presentations (2)

East Anglia in the 2020's

- Iain Scotchman



27th February at Digswell, Welwyn

From the presenter:

My presentation covers from 2020 to date and is biased to the southern part of the area - as that's where I live (Shenfield)!

During this period, with its numerous lockdowns and restrictions, Greater Anglia transitioned from loco-hauled coaching sets to EMUs on its InterCity services and to Stansted Airport. It completed the transition from the previous mainly BR-era DMUs on regional services to the Stadler bi-modes and the EMU fleet, with some temporary augmentation, replaced by the Class 720s and the Class 345s of the Elizabeth line.

On the freight side, various changes have occurred, including the new Tilbury 2 port, replacing/augmenting existing infrastructure and new flows such as ballast from Lowestoft.

Hopefully a good coverage which will be of interest!

Iain Scotchman

From the Archives - Mid-Suffolk Light Railway



A Special Day on the MSLR

It was a wonderful day (26th February 2022) as “Shreddie”, the ex-Shredded Wheat Factory diesel shunter, glided into Brockford Station at Wetheringsett, where the Heritage Railway Association CEO, Steve Oates, presented the MSLR with the *HRA Morgan Award for Preservation 2021* for the restoration of “Shreddie”.

(Presentation of the award had been much delayed by Covid-19 restrictions).

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. 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.

Railway Ramblings

AGM Supplement

February 2023

Branch 2024 AGM Notice and Agenda

The RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch 2024 AGM will be held on 12th March 2024 starting at 19:30. The venue will be The Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin SG5 2EE

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
- 3 MINUTES OF 2023 AGM
- 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES
- 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
- 6 SECRETARY'S REPORT
- 7 TREASURERS REPORT & SUMMARY
- 8 ANY QUESTIONS FROM THE OFFICERS REPORTS
- 9 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2024 / 25
(Members of the 2023 committee are prepared to continue)
- 10 RAILWAY RAMBLINGS, Review and Comments
- 11 THE FUTURE OF THE BRANCH
- 12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dave Elsdon
Branch Secretary

Minutes of the Hitchin & WGC Branch 2023 AGM

Held on Tuesday 25th April 2023 at Ludwick Way, Welwyn Garden City, prior to the branch meeting.

Present; Steve Lacey (Chairman), Paul Holloway (Treasurer), Dave Elsdon (Secretary), John Dossett (Newsletter), plus 30 members

1. Introduction

Chairman Steve Lacey started the meeting by introducing and thanking the members for their attendance and thanking the committee for their work in the past year. He particularly praised John Dossett for his efforts in producing our monthly newsletter, keeping members updated on the forthcoming meetings and other items of interest.

Steve briefly explained the current financial position of the Branch, also the difficulties we were experiencing with exhibitions, which were currently producing far less funds than expected and have just recently been reduced to three.

He also thanked our ladies who help with the tea and coffee at meetings.

2. Apologies for Absence - None.

3. Minutes of 2022 AGM

The minutes from the 2022 had been circulated to the membership, these were agreed. (Proposed by George Howe, seconded by David Holdstock)

4. Matters arising from those minutes - None

5, 6 & 7 Officers Reports

These, also had been circulated to the membership. and were agreed. (Proposed by John Curry, seconded by Barry Smith)

Treasurers additional verbal report:

Paul explained the financial difficulties the Branch was currently experiencing. He told members that, following a recent survey carried among members, from 1st May, entrance donations to meetings would be rising to £3.00 for members & £5 for non-members

8. Matters Arising from these Reports - None

9. Election of Committee

All members were prepared to carry on and be re-elected. Member Alan Cheetham volunteered to join the committee

All were elected to serve for 2023. (Proposed Barry Smith, seconded by George Howe)

10. The Future of the Branch

The Chairman explained the situation. He told members about the reasons for the donation increase for meetings and that, as from the next meeting in Welwyn Garden City, we were changing venues in an effort to reduce expenditure. In future, WGC meetings would be held in Digswell Village Church Hall.

11. Any Other Business - None

The Officers 2023 Reports in Detail -

Chairman's Report 2022-23

First, I must pay tribute to the Branch Committee without whom we could not function. I do the easy bit, standing at the front talking! Without my colleges providing the "script" I would be lost. I also wish to thank John Dossett for his tireless work on producing what is widely regarded as the best branch newsletter around. I also wish to thank Dave Elsdon and Vic's wives for providing our refreshments since our return to live meetings following Covid. This was supposed to be a temporary arrangement, but to date nobody else has volunteered. If you are able to help, please let us know, as we cannot expect others to help out indefinitely. Being the last to submit their report to the AGM leaves me little unique to say, so perhaps I should concentrate on the "bigger picture".

All railway clubs (and indeed other clubs) are suffering decreasing memberships and attendances over the last few years, worse since Covid. The number of members in the RCTS has held up better than most, in part, due to an active attempt to recruit more members, especially in the younger age groups. I acknowledge the help given in this by members of your committee, who helped at Open Days and exhibitions. Locally, we have tried to keep the meetings as accessible as possible, with a choice of venues and time of day. We have also recently sent out a questionnaire to try to gauge your views on how to best serve your needs. The results of this are being analysed and will form the basis of the way forward for this Branch. Nationally there are suggestions of amalgamations and working in association with others to consolidate the future of railway enthusiasm. Clearly Covid has concentrated minds and change is afoot, but we must be careful not to "throw the baby out with the bathwater".

Finally, whilst all of the committee are willing to stand again, we are also happy to stand aside and let new blood take over if any of you wish to put yourselves forward. Thank you for supporting the Branch, without you there is no club.

Steve Lacey
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Chairman

Secretary's Report 2022-23

I must start by thanking the other committee members for all their time and effort they have put into keeping the running the Branch in such a successful way. Steve for all his help with organising all the meeting equipment and books plus their storage and transport whenever we need it. Paul for his accounting skills and keeping the Branch on a steady course financially, I have never known such superb accounting records in all my time with the Society, and John who keeps us so well informed about meetings and events in our area. All are doing a great job. Roger our other committee member has been extremely unlucky in the past year with illness, which is why primarily the four of us are keeping the Branch running. In addition, I must thank Vic Wood and his wife Janet for helping with the door registration and the refreshments at Hitchin and my wife Jill for being tea lady at Welwyn Garden City.

Our attendances at meetings have recently been improving as the year went on, let's hope they continue to do so with the better weather coming making travelling easy I have tried to be much more selective where I sort our speakers from trying to choose majority from within easy travelling distance and who are possibly Society members as this helps to keep expenses down.

We had a very successful outing to the Nene Valley in August 2022 thanks to Steve's efforts there and his contacts within. Although we could not hold him responsible for the beautiful summer's day we all enjoyed.

Finally, I am always willing for assistance when trying to find speakers, so if you have any contacts who could help I will be grateful to hear from you.

Thank you all for your support.

Dave Elsdon
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Secretary

Treasurer's Report 2022-23 & Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2022

Yet another year has passed when I have had to report a loss for the year. If only I could see a profit at some time in the future.

Attached to this report is the Income and Expenditure report for the year in two formats — the first shows comparison with last year and the second splits the year being reported by location. The result of the coronavirus pandemic has affected the figures for both years as the number of members attending live meetings has not returned to pre pandemic levels.

We attended one exhibition in the year at Welwyn Garden City in April and it was good to get back to the old routine. We currently have two exhibitions booked for the current year — Luton on 22nd April and Welwyn Garden City on 29th April.

The door donation money per meeting currently is £2.00 for members and £3.50 for visitors has remained the same since September 2019. These rates will be reviewed by the Committee prior to September 2023 as the increased cost of hall hire makes some increase unavoidable.

In the closing balances the funds shown as held by the Society are there as we, as a branch, are not allowed under Society rules to keep any funds in excess of £2,500 with the balance being transferred to the Society and held by them in a ring-fenced account. This means they cannot use it and it is available as and when we need to call some down. Any interest earned on these funds is retained by the Society but at 0.02% would only have given us 70p in the year. The reduction in funds held by the Society reflects the sum of £750 drawn down by the branch during the last year to give us day to day funds. It is anticipated that a further sum will be drawn down in the current year as the lack of income from exhibitions remains.

Let's hope the current financial year will show some signs of positivity.

Paul Holloway.
Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Treasurer

Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2022

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH

INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2022

	Year to 31/10/2022	Year to 31/10/2021
INCOME		
Sales and Donations	207.52	39.50
Exhibitions	153.45	-
Zoom meeting donations	72.00	88.00
Annual outing	190.70	-
Door monies/Raffle	626.95	105.00
Total	1,250.62	232.50
EXPENDITURE		
Room Hire	981.00	327.00
Speakers Fees/Expenses - live	438.25	167.35
Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom	60.00	190.00
Zoom meeting/licence costs	57.56	-
Exhibition expenses - stand fees	20.00	-
Postage, stationery etc	13.24	23.40
Programme printing	24.00	-
Refreshments	33.15	7.38
Annual outing	217.80	-
Bank/Credit card charges	65.51	-
Total	1,910.51	715.13
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR		
BRANCH BALANCE		
As at 31 October 2021		
Held by Branch	1,181.51	1,588.90
Held by Society	3,568.41	3,643.65
	4,749.92	5,232.55
As at 31 October 2022		
Held by Branch	1,271.62	1,181.51
Held by Society	2,818.41	3,568.41
	4,090.03	4,749.92
Movement in year	- 659.29	

Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2022

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH

INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2022

	Hitchin	Welwyn GC	Exhibitions & Outings
INCOME			
Sales and Donations	115.00	92.52	
Exhibitions			153.45
Zoom meeting donations	36.00	36.00	
Annual outing			190.70
Door monies/Raffle	267.00	359.95	
Total	418.00	488.47	344.15
EXPENDITURE			
Room Hire	486.00	495.00	
Speakers Fees/Expenses - live	115.00	323.25	
Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom	30.00	30.00	
Zoom meeting/licence costs	28.78	28.78	
Exhibition expenses - stand fees			20.00
Postage, stationery etc	6.62	6.62	
Programme printing	12.00	12.00	
Refreshments	16.58	16.57	
Annual outing			217.80
Bank/Credit card charges	32.76	32.75	
Total	727.74	944.97	237.80
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	- 309.74	- 456.50	106.35
SPLIT EXHIBMONS & OUTINGS 50/50	53.18	53.17	
REVISED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	256.56	- 403.33	

- End of 2023 AGM Minutes -

Reports for the 2024 Branch AGM

Chairman's Report 2023-24

I know it is normal practice to start these things by thanking the Committee for their work in supporting me throughout the year, but I really mean it! Without the work of David Elsdon producing an interesting and varied programme, you would be stuck with me droning on about 92, so think yourselves lucky. Without Paul Holloway, we would not be financially viable and without John Dossett, you wouldn't know what we were doing, or have had a summer outing to the Epping & Ongar Railway! I would also like to thank the unsung heroes Vic Wood and his wife Janet, for manning the door and providing refreshments at Hitchin and David Holdstock for taking on the refreshments at Welwyn, tasks appreciated by us all.

Overall, this last year has been one of gradual recovery from the nadir of Covid, but we really do need to recruit new members and attract back those who used to attend. To this end we have attended National and local model railway shows with varying degrees of success. If any of you know of a potential new member, please bring them along to a meeting. Don't forget to introduce them to our selection of reasonably priced books, which help keep us solvent!

At the 2023 AGM we were pleased to have Alan Cheetham join the committee. However, during the year, for personal reasons, Alan resigned. This is a loss to us and I thank him for his contribution during that short period as a committee member. If anyone feels they would like to join the committee please let us know, as extra help would be gratefully received.

Lastly thanks to all who come to meetings, otherwise I would be showing the position of the fire exits to myself!

Steve Lacey
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Chairman

Secretary's Report 2023-24

Again, I must start by thanking the other committee members for all their time, effort and support they have put into keeping the Branch running in such a successful way. Steve for all his help with organization of all the equipment required and books, plus their storage and transport whenever we need it. Paul for his accounting skills and keeping the Branch on a steady course financially, and John who keeps us so well informed about meetings and events in and around our area. All are doing a great job for the Branch. In addition, I must thank Vic Wood and his wife Janet for helping with the door registration and the refreshments at Hitchin and to David Holdstock for running the kitchen at our Welwyn Garden City meetings plus the other things he is willing to help with.

Our attendances at meetings have recently been fairly stable and have remained so throughout the year, but as always we always hope for larger attendances. I have again tried to be more selective where I source our speakers from, trying to choose majority from within easier travelling distances and who are possibly Society members, as this helps to keep expenses down. I hope you enjoy this year's selection. I must add that our move to the new venue seems to have worked out well and I thank you all for continuing to support us in Digswell.

We had a very successful outing to the Epping Ongar Railway in August 2023 thanks to John's efforts and his contacts within. Fortunately for us it was another warm dry day.

Finally, I am always looking for assistance when trying to find speakers, so if you have any contacts who could help or give a presentation, I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Once again, if you can help, please think about joining the committee, I can assure it is not onerous and just takes up little time. We hold 3 or 4 committee meetings per year, plus occasionally a little back up assistance at meetings and exhibitions

Thank you all for your support.

Dave Elsdon
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Secretary

Treasurer's Report 2023-24 & Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2023

Wonder of wonders, I'm able to report a PROFIT for the financial year. I have a feeling that this may be a one-off occurrence.

Attached to this report is the Income and Expenditure report for the year in two formats – the first shows comparison with last year and the second splits the year being reported by location. The profit this year is almost equal to the loss last year so in two years we have managed to stay still.

The profit has been made for three reasons:

- 1) Savings on hall hire costs following the move from Ludwick Way to Digswell for the Welwyn meetings.
- 2) Increased attendances - at Digswell in particular.
- 3) Finally, the sales of books donated to us by the Cole family following the sad death of David Cole, our branch founder. The increase on book sales and exhibition income are down mainly to these books. We continue to hold some of these books in stock and these are available at our meetings.

The door donation money per meeting currently is £3.00 for members and £5.00 for visitors. We do not foresee any increase in the current financial year.

In the closing balances the funds shown as held by the Society are there as we, as a branch, are not allowed under Society rules to keep any funds over £2,500 with the balance being transferred to the Society and held by them in a ring-fenced account. This means they cannot use it and it is available as and when we need to call some down. Unlike the previous year we have not drawn down any funds and I do not see the need to do so in the current year.

For once I can see the branch being financially viable for the next few years.

One final point, if any member is interested in becoming assistant treasurer, please let me know.

Paul Holloway
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Treasurer

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH					
INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT					
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2023					
				Year to	Year to
				31/10/2023	31/10/2022
INCOME					
	Sales and Donations			770.86	207.52
	Exhibitions			588.20	153.45
	Zoom meeting donations			10.00	72.00
	Annual outing			399.32	190.70
	Door monies/Raffle			1,331.30	626.95
	Total			3,099.68	1,250.62
EXPENDITURE					
	Room Hire			1,140.00	981.00
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live			542.60	438.25
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom			-	60.00
	Zoom meeting/licence costs			-	57.56
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees			85.00	20.00
	Postage, stationery etc			77.72	13.24
	Programme printing			34.00	24.00
	Refreshments			81.40	33.15
	Annual outing			398.40	217.80
	Bank/Credit card charges			78.93	65.51
	Total			2,438.05	1,910.51
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR				661.63	- 659.89
BRANCH BALANCE					
	As at 31 October 2022				
	Held by Branch			1,271.62	1,181.51
	Held by Society			2,818.41	3,568.41
				4,090.03	4,749.92
	As at 31 October 2023				
	Held by Branch			1,933.25	1,271.62
	Held by Society			2,818.41	2,818.41
				4,751.66	4,090.03
	Movement in year			661.63	- 659.89

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH					
INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT					
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2023					
			Hitchin	Welwyn GC	Exhibitions & Outings
INCOME					
	Sales and Donations		287.93	482.93	-
	Exhibitions		-	-	588.20
	Zoom meeting donations 50/50		5.00	5.00	-
	Annual outing		-	-	399.32
	Door monies/Raffle		519.00	812.30	-
	Total		811.93	1,300.23	987.52
EXPENDITURE					
	Room Hire		660.00	480.00	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live		230.75	311.85	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom		-	-	-
	Zoom meeting/licence costs		-	-	-
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees		-	-	85.00
	Postage, stationery etc		38.86	38.86	-
	Programme printing		17.00	17.00	-
	Refreshments		13.73	67.67	-
	Annual outing		-	-	398.40
	Bank/Credit card charges		39.46	39.47	-
	Total		999.80	954.85	483.40
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR			- 187.87	345.38	504.12
SPLIT EXHIBITIONS & OUTINGS 50/50			252.06	252.06	- 504.12
REVISED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR			64.19	597.44	-

- End of 2024 AGM papers -