

Railway Ramblings

Issue 164

March 2024

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



*Local Hero – Thomas
at home on the Nene Valley Railway*

Photo: Courtesy of the NVR

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 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

During April 2024

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

9th April **Cambridge Area Railways – Yesterday & Today**

David Scudamore

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

30th April **That Was The Year That Was - 1971**

Geoff Plumb

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 Members

We welcome Rob Fairhead, of Letchworth Garden City, and John Atkinson, of Ware, as new members of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City branch.

We also welcome back David Cornelius, of Stotfold, who has decided to rejoin the RCTS.

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

12 th March	Cambridge Area Railways, Yesterday and Today (Part 3), by David Scudamore.
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SOUTH ESSEX

Shenfield Parish Hall, 60, Hutton Road, Shenfield CM15 8LB

- Meetings start at 19:30

18 th March	AGM and Members Slides
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MILTON KEYNES

Network Rail, The Quadrant, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN

- Meetings start at 19:30

7 th March	Britain's Railways Through the Lens by Jack Boskett.
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WATFORD

Beechen Grove Baptist Church, Clarendon Road, Watford WD17 1JJ

- Meetings start at 19:00

5 th March	That was The Year That Was - 1973 By Geoff Plumb.
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Chairman's Platform

This month (on the 12th March) it is our Branch AGM and I hope that you will try to attend – although largely a formal process it is key to the operation of the branch and an opportunity for you to be able to raise any issues or concerns about the way our branch operates. There is no requirement to give any pre-notice about issues/concerns but if you do let me know beforehand then I am more likely to be able to give you a considered response at the meeting. As has now become our normal practice, the AGM (which I anticipate will be of reasonably short duration) will be followed by a presentation. Details of the presentation, by Richard Cole, can be found in this issue of *Railway Ramblings*.

With Easter at the end of the month the various heritage lines start their main 2024 season, after a couple of month's winter break/reduced operations, and their March offerings feature in this issue. If you are able to support them I am sure you will have a great day out.

Recent branch meetings have seen an increase in numbers attending, and I remind you that during March 2024 RCTS members can bring a friend to presentations at member donation rate.

Also, a reminder about badges at our meetings - 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) were published as a supplement to the February issue of *Railway Ramblings*. I hope you have given these a read and will be attending: I would really like as many as possible to be there.

The AGM is also the time to elect your committee for 2024-25. The present four committee members offer themselves for re-election and an additional member would be good to have. That could be you! Nominations can be accepted at the meeting.

Although only RCTS members should vote, all are welcome to attend the AGM. 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.



Easter Egg Hunt

29, 30, 31 March & 1 April

A day out with the children/grandchildren: Find all the eggs that the Easter Bunny has hidden along the line. Running the length of the railway track, from Ongar through to Coopersale, the distance covered is equivalent to 131,579 eggs placed end to end! You will need to hop on and off the EOR steam and diesel trains to find them all!



You can start your journey at any of the EOR stations, or on the vintage London bus service from Epping Underground or Shenfield stations. (The bus services are included in your fare.)

The following great value fares apply:

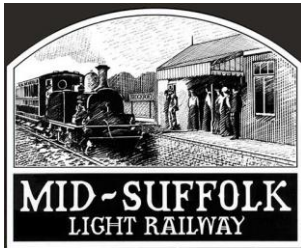
Adult: £18, Child: £10, Family (up to 2 adults and 3 children): £47

Children under 3 are free - no ticket needed!

Tickets are valid all day long and offer unlimited travel on all EOR steam and diesel trains and vintage London buses on the date of your visit.

For further details see: <https://www.eorailway.co.uk/events/easter-egg-hunt/>

(Reproduced courtesy of the EOR)



Mid Suffolk Light Railway

Easter Steam-Up

The duty locomotive for 2024 will be Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST works no 1219 and named *Caledonian Works*. 1219 was built in 1910 making her 114 years old. Nonetheless this tough little shunter is more than capable of hauling MSLR two and three coach trains.



1219 seen here at Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway.

Subject to final boiler certification and contract, *Caledonian Works* will be arriving at Brockford week commencing 18th March ready to undergo familiarising turns with the Operations Dept. and crews in time for the first public outings during Easter weekend 31st March and 1st April.

‘We are delighted to obtain this pretty little loco for the season – a real asset for the Middy this year,’ said John Durrant MSLR Locomotive Superintendent, ‘Although her type never ran on the original line, she is very much a contemporary Edwardian machine and suits our period perfectly’.

1219 was delivered new to Stewart & Lloyd Ltd at their Clydesdale Works in Mossend near Motherwell. In preservation the locomotive has been living at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway. She was restored on the West Somerset Railway at Williton and was returned to steam in early 2016 before taking up residence at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway.

(Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR)

The March Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell out the nickname of a southern preserved branch line -

1. GW and SR station on Dorset coast	
2. Unfortunate (?) name of locomotive D600	
3. Name of complex junction system near Derby	
4. Sir ? Missenden, Southern Railway manager	
5. Sir Vincent ? - NER locomotive superintendent 1910 – 1922	
6. Closed station south of Inverness	
7. Name of locomotive 6869	
8. Closed station between Peterborough and Grantham	
9. Manufacturer of 1398 diesel engines used in many classes of BR diesel locomotives including Class 26	
10. Name of narrow-gauge railway that used to run east of Halesworth	

11. Name of locomotive 60067	
12. L&SWR North Devon resort	
13. ? and Brecon Railway	
14. Locomotive depot with code 65A	

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 16.

Martin Elms

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

News from the Nene Valley Railway

Since I last wrote, the Danish Class F tank has entered service, *Thomas* has been earning his keep and 92 *Squadron* has taken further steps towards being back in service.

But first, the Norwegian coach has had further work undertaken, which has revealed more work is needed than was initially envisaged. Fortunately, this is mainly woodworking. As edging strips have been removed, underlying rot has been revealed, due to a long period of storage outside, under the A1 bridge west of Wansford station. As seasoned timber is hard to come by, some of the non-visible repairs have been achieved using soft wood, which is cheaper and more available, much to the annoyance of the purists. What do you want, a serviceable coach, quickly and economically repaired, or another part completed project?



The Norwegian coach, showing some of the new softwood supporting timber, replacing rotten original timbers.

Next the “successful” re-entry into traffic of the Danish F Class tank 656. During the restoration there was intense speculation as to how much use 656 would be, as she is air-braked and, in the past, had a reputation for being always short of water. During the overhaul, it was discovered that a balancing valve between the 2 tanks had been incorrectly installed, meaning she had been working on one side tank. Not surprising then, that she was short of water!

There were also those who felt she might be limited to only a couple of coaches. I pointed out though that I had ridden behind her sister engine 658 in Denmark, hauling 3 coaches with ease. Her return to service proved she could handle 4 coaches, although one of her first outings was slightly marred.



The firebox on 656 is very different to others on the NVR. It is long and narrow, which combined with poor quality fuel (you get what you can nowadays!), and a trainee fireman was a recipe for disaster! An overloaded firebox, combined with poor coal, resulted in poor combustion (a black fire), producing lots of black smoke and little steam. Eventually they brought the fire round and she has performed well ever since.

Thomas has also been back in traffic following problems with his injectors. This would appear to have been mainly due to accumulated detritus in the injector, in engineering terms “crap”! Having had this cleared, she seems to be back in action, though at present being used on Yarwell shuttles to keep coal and water consumption down and stresses limited, as well as being not too far from a fitter, just in case!

As you will see from the following photograph (next page) and that of 656, the snowdrops on the bank of the River Nene are beautiful. It is also true to say that the banks of the river are at present a little difficult to define, due to recent high rainfall. This has resulted in closure of the footpath beyond the bridge, unless you are wearing waders!



Finally, you would expect me to mention *92 Squadron*!

We had some very sad news from Locomotive Maintenance Services. The very talented coded welder, Adam, who had repaired *92 Squadron*'s firebox so beautifully, had committed suicide. This came as a great shock to us all and we pass on our condolences to his family. It was a fitting tribute to him that on 14th February, *92 Squadron* passed a "private" steam test with no issues whatsoever and we look forward to the "official" steam test on 22nd February. If all is well, we will then put in the brick arch and be ready for a return to revenue earning service.



The steam test on Wednesday 14th Feb 2024. *92 Squadron* giving it both barrels! Sorry for poor picture, but by the time I got closer the pop valves had shut again!

PS The official steam test was passed with no issues on 22nd February.

Steve Lacey

The Unknown Wagon and Load

– a short story by Martin Elms

I am the assistant yard master at Whitemoor Yard, March, in Cambridgeshire, and I wish to relate to you a strange happening that occurred in this yard in December 1952.

I had received a call from the up-hump yard supervisor, Tom, at about ten in the morning.

“Sir, we are about to hump-shunt the four-o clock from Toton and there’s something queer with one of its wagons” he said with a strange note in his normal placid Cambridgeshire accent.

I set off for the hump right away, as it was unusual for Tom to show any feelings.

The hump shunter 15003 stood rumbling to itself, buffered up to a brake van and a single wagon beyond it, with the loco driver Vince, Tom and his assistant Bob looking all at it.

I joined them and looked bemused at it.

It was a long-wheelbase wagon, seemingly coloured blue although as I moved about it the colour seemed to change to green then silver. It had conventional instanter-couplings with buffers and vacuum brake. There wasn’t an identification number on it, however a works plate from an unreadable works had 112321 on it and there was a label attached to the chassis. I read it out loud -

... ship parts for NUSP at Land Centre (WR).

“Whatever does that mean and where is Land Centre” I asked the others. I looked at their blank faces.

“What is it made of?” Tom asked, giving it a sharp tap with his shunting pole and hearing a dull thud.

“I don’t know, looks like a type of steel, but what a colour, and I can’t work out where it was made.” I replied.

“All I can understand is that the destination is somewhere on the Western. I’ll ask Toton what they know about it.”

“Anyway, we shall send it to Acton, on the Western Region, on the two o-clock via Temple Mills. There’s no chance that the Cockneys there will have anything to do with it! They will just send it on to Acton, as any enquiries from them could delay their after-work trip to The Queen Vic or Nags Head” I jokingly stated.

Tom nodded in agreement and knocked his pipe out on one of the wagon springs, a sudden gust of wind then blew the ashes back over him - accidental or what?

15003 pushed the wagon over the hump and we watched it head over the retarder in a cloud of dust-and-rust and trundle along number twenty road to couple up to the other western destined wagons.

I returned to my office and rang Toton. I asked them about the wagon. “What did you say the number was?” said the yard master there. I repeated 112321.

“No such number I’m sure and also the last wagons on the four o’clock were a bogie bolster and the brake van no long-wheelbase”. In 1952 there was no straightforward way of checking the individual number of one of BR’s million-plus wagons. (BR would have to wait until 1974 and TOPS to be able to rapidly check wagon details)

The story continues, later, with the yard master at Acton, Western Region – who related the following continuation of this tale –

I examined the mystery wagon that had arrived on the trip from Temple Mills at seven o’clock, having previously checked with Toton and Whitemoor and with my head office at Paddington for any clues, drawing blanks all round. Paddington suggested that we should open it to find out more. Therefore, I summoned the local BT policeman to witness us and with a large jangling bunch of keys attempted to locate a keyhole on the door, which was a sliding type. But neither I, nor my assistant Fred or Richard, the policeman, could find any way in.

The next plan of action was to use a hammer and chisel – with Richard’s permission via his sergeant.

Charlie, the wagon fitter, hammered at the chisel and made no impression. The chisel kept sliding off the smooth surface, and attacking the hinges or handle also achieved nothing apart from frustrating Charlie.

“Next”, I said “is to burn a hole around the handle area”.

Josh was summoned with oxygen acetylene gear, causing Richard some concern as to where the situation was going – another call followed by a visit by his sergeant,

The flame hissed at the lock for at least five minutes. With a startled exclamation from Josh after this time, the surface was still stone cold - and no effect was seen on it!!

“I’ve had enough of this” I said, the others nodded. Sergeant Jones then told me of a local firm that possessed an immensely powerful diamond tipped drill that he has “used” to gain entry to a damaged safe after a botched robbery.

“Worth a try, if you can get permission “ I said.

Later that day, a white van appeared with a workman, called Doug, clad in a smart white suit. He told us at great length how powerful his drill was “will cut into anything” he said.

He set up the complex apparatus and started.

The drill skidded off the surface then, on the next attempt, vibrated so violently that Doug was pushed away and landed in a painful heap. He was taken to the local first-aid centre, then off to the local hospital - with concussion and arm injuries.

That ended our attempts to open the wagon!

I rang Paddington and they suggested the wagon be sent to Swindon on the nine a.m. trip tomorrow.

So, the wagon was shunted into the goods shed ready to be forwarded tomorrow, and we went home totally baffled by the whole situation.

The following morning, Fred and I entered the shed. The wagon stood there with its door wide open and it was empty.

“How did this happen?” I asked.

Meanwhile, Fred went into the wagon.

“Here! “, he shouted “it’s huge inside”.

I followed him into the wagon. It was indeed truly vast inside - but normal outside, another mystery. (This was a good ten years before Doctor Who and the Tardis, with its large interior and Police Box exterior.)

We still dispatched the wagon, with the door wedged shut, to Swindon for their perusal.

What had been in the wagon?

On arrival at home that night, I picked up the local newspaper. A local Police patrol had observed, in the early hours of that day, a strange cigar-shaped object hovering around the Acton area. It then accelerated away and vanished. It had not been registered on Heathrow radar, but seen and reported by a few other members of the public. Was that connected with our mysterious wagon?

Perhaps, dear reader, you have another solution? What do you think was in the wagon?

Suggestions: Secret, perhaps nuclear, equipment for the power station under construction at Didcot?

Secret and classified tracking or surveillance equipment on route to GCHQ at Cheltenham?

Props and scenery for a forthcoming science fiction film to be produced at Pinewood studios?

Martin Elms

August 2024 – Branch Outing

A few members have enquired about the Branch outing in August – and a couple of suggestions have also been offered.

At present there is no plan and your committee welcome your views/suggestions. Following the June 2023 presentation given by John Jolly, owner of Mangapps, a visit there is a possibility. Although we visited Mangapps in 2018, we know from John’s talk that so much has changed since.

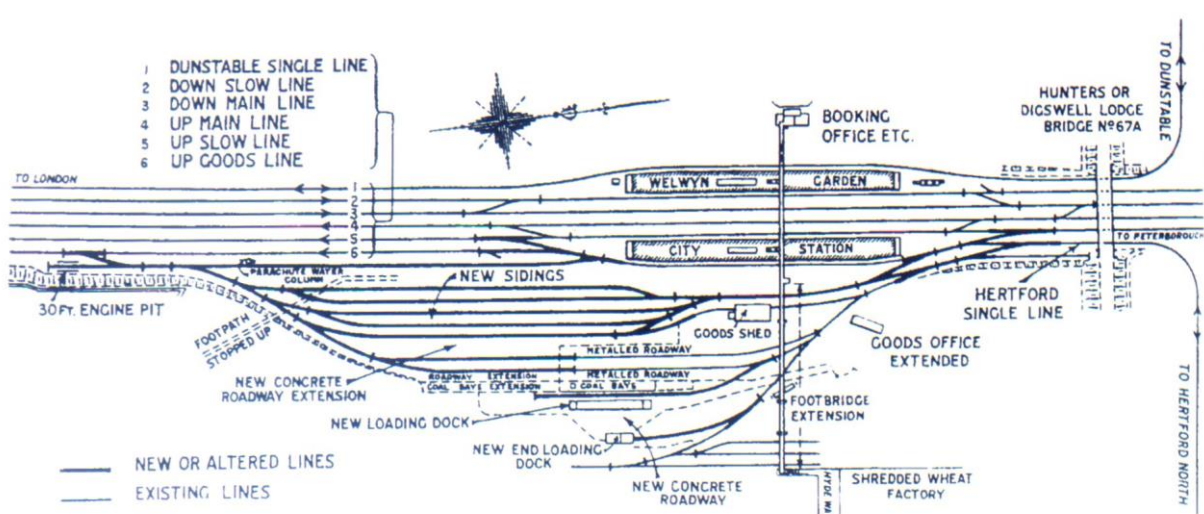
Other suggestions are the Buckingham Railway Centre, or the Chinnor & Princes Risborough railway either of which would be “new” for us.

Please let us know what you think. We are looking for a destination probably no more than about an hour travel and one which, when we investigate further, can offer “extras” on top of what you get if you make a normal public visit. For example, a visit to the C&PRR could include “beyond the signal box” at Chinnor and the North Signal Box (a restoration project) at Princes Risborough.

Shredded Wheat Factory Railway

I recently asked if anyone knew anything about the small industrial railway which used to work within the Shredded Wheat complex beside Welwyn Garden City. I am a little surprised that, so far, nobody has admitted any knowledge of it!

My own “searching” has turned up a track diagram of WGCity station which shows the connection:



There are also a few photos and this is one of them:

(This from Geograph.org.uk)



“Raw products were brought by rail and, evidently, there was the need to have three sidings to handle the demand. The connection to the main line railway is long lost but the rails of the

sidings remain in situ along the west side of the factory, set in concrete as seen from this view across Hydeway from the railway station footbridge”.

I also found the following (on Ourwelwyngardencity.org.uk) :

I worked in the rail section downstairs on the far left of the massive Nabisco building for about 10 years. The railway line was specified for Nabisco delivery time which was from 7:00 to 7:30 every morning, also at 7:20 to 7:45 in the evening. Me and four others lifted the shunter line out of the shed you describe (green & shabby) and ran to the main railway line. We had to wait for the signalman's instructions that we could cross and then we laid the shunter line down. We used to get four continuous deliveries to our shunter line, so the guys lifting the flour from the wagons had to do it quickly. We also had two automatic cranes to help after 1957.

We could have deliveries during the day but instead of laying the shunter line, which would interfere with the normal rail services, the trains then had to use the disused Hertford branch line and then northbound up to Stevenage from Hertford.

Very happy days!

By Richard Milton (15/08/2016)

Can anyone add to this? Please let me know.

John Dossett

Hitchinnewsletter@rcts.org.uk

Puzzle Solution

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 7):

1. Weymouth. 2. Active. 3. Trent. 4. Eustace. 5. Raven. 6. Culloden Moor. 7. Resolven Grange.
8. Essendine. 9. Sulzer. 10. Southwold. 11. Ladas. 12. Ilfracombe. 13. Neath. 14. Eastfield.

Solution: WATERCRESS LINE

Martin Elms

Newsletter Distribution

This e-newsletter, *Railway Ramblings*, is distributed by the Branch Chairman (Steve Lacey). If you do not currently receive a copy directly but would like to do so, provide him with your email address and you will be added to the list. Conversely, if you currently receive a copy but wish to be taken off the distribution list then please advise him accordingly. Steve's email address is gricersteve@hotmail.com



Tornado to Visit the Nene Valley

30, 31 March & 1 April

Visit the NVR to celebrate the return to steam of 60163 Tornado



In 1990 a group of people came together to share an extraordinary ambition – to build a brand new Peppercorn A1 Pacific. They formed The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust and, after 19 years of incredible effort, locomotive No 60163 Tornado moved under its own power for the first time in 2008.

The A1s were designed by Arthur H Peppercorn, the last Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER). They were the last in a line of famous express passenger steam locomotives for the East Coast Main Line, which included the Stirling Singles, the Ivatt Atlantics and the Gresley Pacifics.

<https://www.a1steam.com/tornado/about-tornado/the-build/the-building-of-tornado> tells the story of Tornado's construction, an amazing tale of cooperation, skill and sheer hard graft which defied the critics who said it could never be done.

Tickets:

Adult Rover with free Thomas shuttle Trip £25.00

Child Rover with free Thomas shuttle Trip £15.00

Thomas only £5.00

Reproduced courtesy of the NVR



Chinnor Independent Line (CIL) – Project Prima 2



A second batch of concrete sleepers was kindly donated by Network Rail in November 2023, a project the C&PRR called 'Prima 2' – Princes Risborough Infrastructure Materials Acquisition. It yielded about another 140m of material.

This was handled quite differently from the previous batch now known as 'Prima 1', which had involved 6m track panels with bullhead rails too short to re-use. Prima 2 comprised 9m (30ft) flat-bottom railed concrete sleeper panels. The 30ft rails are considered long enough to be worth reusing, though C&PRR will need to buy a lot of fishplates and bolts. So why handle these panels so differently?

The track relaying machine (TRM) is designed (by British Rail in the 1970s) to carry 60ft (18m) track panels using its twin crane jibs. The short Prima 1 panels had to be handled by just one jib using 4 'slings' (lifting straps), but two could therefore be carried at a time. To stop each load rotating on its hook and hitting the machine, they had to tie them off to the vehicle frame. This was all very time consuming and needed a lot of hands. The 9m Prima 2 panels could be picked up using the track clamps ('bales') which come with the TRM and carried stably between the two jibs with no slings or ropes (see picture). The panels can be accurately placed on the ground just by the operator manipulating the jibs and winches. Very much quicker, and far fewer people needed. Also, the materials were travelling a much longer

distance – from NR's Whitemoor yard in Cambridgeshire – so, for economy high capacity lorries not carrying their own heavy cranes were needed.

So, a completely different plan was hatched. A hired crane was set up in the Chinnor yard gateway. 4 lorries each brought 4 track panels of about 5 tonnes each. The crane moved the panels off the first two lorries onto a sturgeon track carrying wagon, which was then towed to Thame Junction. The TRM met it there and unloaded the 8 panels to stack them on the CIL trackbed. The wagon went back to Chinnor and was reloaded and the cycle repeated. The whole job was completed in just two days on 8th and 10th November.

Laying

The Permanent Way department was busy through November into December laying flat bottom rail into sleepers laid out at the end of the Princes Risborough headshunt, the start of the CIL a while ago. There was already enough for about 90m of the extension. In January the work has continued, laying out some bullhead sleepers from the Prima 1 batch, and some rail from the old lifted track will be lifted in soon. This method is planned to reach round the tight curve as far as the industrial estate bridge.

A second team is working on the other side of the bridge using a different technique, setting up a production line in an assembly area to produce 60ft (18m) track panels from the Prima 1 components and some recovered rail, to then be carried to site (by the TRM) and laid as full panels.

Incidentally the team has been asked why have an old tyre hanging off each end of the TRM. Well, it's just a place to carry them! Sometimes they are rigged to act like fenders on a boat, when carrying a load close alongside; but if they were left on the sides they would collect platforms and gate posts along the way.

(Reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR)



The 2024 Season Starts

Mothering Sunday: 10 March - Mum travels for £8.00

Day Rover Adult tickets are issued at just £8.00 for all Mums on Sunday 10 March. The regular range of discounts and concessions are also available including Kids-for-a-Quid £1.

In addition, you can also have combined travel and Mini Cream Teas in a box available with reservations in the Train Restaurant!

When you buy tickets online the full range of fares is shown together with the Fare Specials - at the checkout simply select the tickets that are appropriate for you.

For full details visit the C&PRR website: <https://www.chinnorrailway.co.uk/>

(Reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR)

The March Presentations (1)

The Son of a Rail Enthusiast - My Life on the Railway

- Richard Cole

12th March, at Hitchin



Richard will be looking through some of his dad's slides and explaining how his passion for railways influenced his life. He will review his 41 years on the railway, touching on various parts of BR such as Red Star Parcels, Railfreight/Channel Tunnel through to the Intercity Express Programme, Transport for Wales and MetroWest schemes.



David Cole
1932 - 2023

The March Presentations (2)

Tunnel Vision – The History of the Metropolitan Railway

- Colin Brading

26th March at Digswell, Welwyn



The story of the Metropolitan, the world's first underground railway. Less than four miles long when it opened - to great acclaim - in January 1863, this 'little acorn' grew as a proud independent company to spread many branches and 'the Met' has shaped and served London's metropolis with great distinction and character ever since.



High Speed from Kings Cross?



A Special Day at Kings Cross

(St Pancras Coal Yard in reality)

Hawker Siddeley Harrier GR1 XV741 piloted by Tom Lecky-Thompson.

Tom Lecky-Thompson was representing the RAF in a Trans Atlantic air race, from the Post Office Tower to the Empire State building, to celebrate 50 years since Alcock & Brown made their historical transatlantic flight. The only other competitor was a team from the Royal Navy. The RAF won the race in 6 hrs 11 mins. The race was sponsored by the Daily Mail and took place in the week 4th - 11th May 1969.

There is a video on YouTube and it shows the Harrier taking off from the St Pancras coal yard amidst clouds of coal dust!

[Lost Footage of 1969 Transatlantic Air Race. RAF Harrier XV741 and Pilot Tom Lecky-Thompson \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

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.