

Railway Ramblings

Issue 175

February 2025

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



Bygone Days in the Isle of Man
Preview from the presentation on 25th February 2025

(Photo: Colin Brading)

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 2025

At Hitchin (14:00 – 16:30, doors open from 13:30)

11th February **The Last Decade at Hitchin**

Richard Allen

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

25th February **Remembering My Lines**

Colin Brading

During March 2025

At Hitchin (14:00 – 16:30, doors open from 13:30)

11th March **1960's Cine Miscellany**

David Percival

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

25th March **Branch AGM** followed by **German Steam**

George Howe

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.

The Hitchin meetings will be held at St Mark's Church Hall, St Marks Close, Lancaster Avenue (off Bedford Road) SG5 1UR Note: these are now afternoon meetings starting at 14:00.

Digswell, Welwyn meetings are held at Digswell Village Church Hall, Warren Way, Digswell, Welwyn AL6 0DH

Presentations Offered by Neighbouring Branches

Make the most of your RCTS membership. Why not attend a presentation offered by a neighbouring RCTS branch (Cambridge, Milton Keynes, South Essex, and Watford) The details are available in the *Railway Observer* and on the RCTS website.



Chairman's Platform

What a great start to 2025, seeing so many of you attend the first meeting at our new Hitchin venue. Even the weather was much improved after a particularly cold spell.

It all seemed quite strange – arriving in the daylight, a car park all to ourselves, plus street parking available for those who preferred it, a room full of people, accommodation all on one level with catering no longer elsewhere in the building - and consequently a general buzz of activity. There were a few things we may need to “adjust” but generally it seemed a great success.

For the February 2025 meeting at Hitchin we will not be requesting donations from attendees AND all the pre-loved books on the book stall will be at half the marked price. But do remember it will be an afternoon meeting! To be fair to those who attend at Digswell, we extend the pre-loved books offer to their February meeting as well.

If you are a fairly regular attendee you should by now have a lanyard name badge – and it is good to see you remembering to wear it at meetings. If you have not got a badge and feel “forgotten” then please let me (or Dave Elsdon, Paul Holloway or John Dossett) know and John will endeavour to get one prepared for your next visit. These are available to our non-members as well as members. 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.

In March, at the Digswell meeting on 25th, we have our branch AGM. Appended to this issue of *Railway Ramblings* you should find the paperwork for the meeting. Please try to find time to read the various reports. If members have any questions to raise at the meeting it would be helpful to know of these in advance in order that we can give a considered response. Please also consider if you would be prepared to join the committee – there are only four of us at present. (Only members can stand for the committee). Our AGM is important to the smooth running of the branch but, unless something exceptional arises, it will only take a short time and we can then enjoy a presentation from our own George Howe. I expect to see a good attendance again.

And finally - repeating what I said last month - over the next couple of months we are more than likely going to see a return to really cold weather – during which we will, as usual, try to run our scheduled programme BUT please keep an eye on your emails if you are intending to attend the meetings as messages will be sent to everyone on the email distribution list if weather conditions are such that it seems imprudent to hold a meeting.

Steve Lacey

Hitchin Venue Postcode

Please note that in the previous issues of *Railway Ramblings* and on the website there were instances where I inadvertently transposed the last two characters of the postcode for St Marks Church. The error on the website has now been corrected – the postcode is **SG5 1UR**

John Dossett (Editor)

The February Puzzle – Martin Elms

A Southern theme this month. The first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell a Southern location in Devon :

1. Station near Georgemas	
2. Name of locomotive W29	
3. Watertroughs near Bromfield	
4. SE&CR locomotive superintendent 1899 – 1913	
5. Station between Exeter and Heathfield	
6. Name of locomotive 46245 City of ?	
7. What does the letter L indicate in the SR electric vehicle code MLV	

8. Station south of Melton Mowbray	
9. Name of locomotive 61028	
10. ? and Brecon Railway	
11. Main manufacturer of diesel loco Class 17	
12. Locomotive depot with code 52H	
13. Location between Newtonmore and Dalwhinnie	
14. Name of locomotive D1666	
15. Tunnel near Amberley	

Best of luck.

My answer to each of the questions and solution to the puzzle are on page 9

Martin Elms

The February Presentations (1)

The Last Decade Around Hitchin

- Richard Allen



11th February, at Hitchin

An afternoon presentation starting at 14:00

From the presenter:

I will be presenting Part 2 of recent goings-on at Hitchin, covering the last 11 years or so, where I have tried to record (work commitments, Covid-19 etc permitting!) as much as possible of the happenings on the local railway scene.

Richard Allen

The February Presentations (2)

Remembering My Lines

- Colin Brading



25th February, at Digswell

'Remembering My Lines' is a personal 'photographic potpourri' of many and varied railway themes. On a wide-ranging journey, Colin will share favourite scenes, places and images that span from his early years, with notebooks on platforms to the present-day, reflecting a life-long passion for railways and a fifty-year career as a professional railway engineer.

Colin Brading.

Exhibition Volunteers

We are still looking for members who would be prepared to occasionally assist in manning our RCTS stand at exhibitions. This is not particularly arduous and, of course, gives you free admission to the relevant exhibition. We are not expecting anyone to commit to doing this on a regular basis. If you are interested then talk to me, or Steve Lacey, at one of our meetings.

Dave Elsdon

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

Local Heritage Lines

Regular reports about events on the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, the Epping Ongar Railway, the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, and the Nene Valley Railway will resume in the March 2025 newsletter.

Solution to the February Puzzle (page 4)

1. Hoy. 2. Alverstone. 3. Ludlow. 4. Wainwright. 5. Ide. 6. London. 7. Luggage.
8. John O' Gaunt. 9. Umseke. 10. Neath. 11. Clayton. 12. Tyne Dock.
13. Inchlea Crossing. 14. Odin. 15. North Stoke.

Solution – HALWILL JUNCTION.

Martin Elms

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

I feel a bit lost this month with my dear *92 Squadron* permanently moved to the East Lancashire Railway at Bury. I am, however, heartened by her intensive use at the ELR, bringing pleasure to those who see, operate and ride behind her, not to mention the generated steaming fees rolling into our overhaul fund! She seems to be a popular locomotive with the crews, who are keeping her clean and mechanically well cared-for. I understand they even want to give her a good clean and then varnish to preserve her good looks!

Closer to home, the Nene Valley Railway workshop still contains the rolling chassis of 73050, *City of Peterborough*, the BR standard class 5 MT loco. The boiler has been sent away to join a long queue for repair. Volunteers have virtually completed the lower end. Also, in the workshop at present, is the Swedish railcar *Helga* for reroofing and repaint.



Swedish railcar *Helga*

In the yard, *Tornado* remains with work continuing on the fitting of ETCS, the in-cab signalling system, to allow running on the East Coast mainline. I am guessing most people know that *Britannia* and *Flying Scotsman* are due to visit the NVR soon (details on their website). Apparently 60% of the tickets for *Flying Scotsman* sold in 2 hours! Why is it that some locomotives are so iconic? If I had a pound for every punter who told me their grandfather drove *Flying Scotsman*, even though he was based at Didcot, we would be able to pay for our next overhaul, with cash to spare!

Less spectacular, but more interesting to me, is the fact that the old station Wansford Road, which was on the Wansford to Stamford branch, has started to be rebuilt as the new combined entrance to Railworld and Peterborough NVR station. Built by the LNWR in 1867 it was closed in 1922 and then became a private residence. Recently it found itself in the way of the new A47 widening scheme, but the Highways Agency agreed to move it, mainly at their expense, to the new site. Recently, the foundations have been poured and the walls have started to rise. The inner skin is blockwork (the inside had already been altered for domestic use) but the outside is re-created using the original materials.

The final task related to the *92 Squadron* move is the closure of the shop at the NVR. We have sold the unit to Sarah who runs the charity shop at the NVR. It is independent of the NVR and Sarah decides which projects benefit from the profits. Over the last few weeks we have moved our branded stock (which we will sell at events and through our website) to a store off-site, and started sending books off to auction courtesy of Keith of the Railwayana shop. Although the amounts achieved at auction are low, it is better than seeing books deteriorate in damp storage! The final clearance occurred on Wednesday 15 January and the keys handed to Sarah.....the end of an era.

I continue to work with the NVR education group, trying to introduce children to railways, many of whom have never ridden on a train. At least most recognise *Thomas*! This year, the national curriculum covers the industrial revolution. I now have to adapt my workshop tour to suit this subject for the 120 small children who are visiting on Wednesday 22 January!

Steve Lacey

Branch Committee

The Current 2024-2025 Hitchin Branch Committee

Elected at the 2024 AGM



Steve Lacey
Chair



Dave Elsdon
Secretary



Paul Holloway
Treasurer



John Dossett
Newsletter



Join the Branch Committee

Please consider joining your branch committee.

Anyone prepared to take on the committee role is invited to discuss this with Steve Lacey or Dave Elsdon in the first instance.

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 2025

Branch 2025 AGM Notice and Agenda

The RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch 2025 AGM will be held on 25th March 2025 starting at 14:00. The venue will be Digswell Village Church Hall, Warren Way, Digswell, Welwyn AL6 0DH

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
- 3 MINUTES OF 2024 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 2025 / 26
(Members of the 2024 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 2024 AGM

Held on Tuesday 12th March 2024 in Hitchin starting at 19:30.

Present: Steve Lacey (Chairman), Paul Holloway (Treasurer), John Dossett, Dave Elsdon (Secretary) plus 15 members.

1. Introduction

Chairman Steve Lacey introduced the meeting and explained the forthcoming procedures and formalities. He thanked everyone for their attendance and the committee for their efforts in the past year, hopefully this will continue during the next year.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Derek Ashley

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The minutes had been circulated to the membership. These were agreed unanimously (Proposed Clive Johnson, Seconded Carl Matthews).

4. Matters arising from those Minutes None

5. Chairman's Report

Agreed (Proposed Alan Schofield, Seconded Ray Shakespear-Smith).

6. Secretary's Report

Agreed (Proposed Vic Wood, Seconded David Holdstock).

7. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer explained the turn-around in the expenses since our move to the Digswell venue and that we are back at exhibitions. We will continue our search for another more reasonable venue in the Hitchin area. Agreed (Proposed Clive Johnson, Seconded, Alan Schofield).

8. Matters arising from the Officers Reports None.

9. Election of Committee for 2024 / 25

All current Officers re-elected (Proposed, Clive Johnson, Seconded David Holdstock).

10. Railway Ramblings

Review & Comments: By general agreement, this has now become a valued & well-respected part of the Branch.

11. The Future of the Branch

A suggestion of possibly having Zoom meetings occasionally on subjects such as model railways, garden railways, etc.

Try to target people that are about to retire and encourage them to join your group to help fill in their extra time.

12. Any Other Business None

The Meeting closed at 19:56.

Reports for the 2025 Branch AGM

Chairman's Report 2024-25

What a year! Since Covid, meeting attendance numbers recovered a bit, but remained lower than previously. Sadly, we lost a few members to the pandemic, but many just got used to not going out. Attendances at Digswell seem to be better in the afternoons than those at Hitchin in the evening. In addition, the facilities at the Tilehurst site were not ideal and the hall too large and unfriendly. After a poll of all the members we could consult, it was decided to move to an afternoon meeting at a new venue. Consequently, we started off 2025 at our new venue St Mark's Church Hall Lancaster Close SG5 1UR. The attendance at our first meeting at St Mark's was most encouraging, helped by it being a "local" subject.

Thanks to David Elsdon, we have enjoyed an interesting and varied programme for this year. His help makes my job as Chairman a lot easier. John Dossett produces our excellent newsletter and organised our summer 2024 outing to the Chinnor & Risborough Railway, both well received. Paul Holloway has kept us financially viable and, unusually for a Treasurer, also agreed to things that have cost the Branch money! Looking ahead, we will, as usual, be attending the model railway exhibition at Alexandra Palace on the 15/16 March with a recruiting stand for the RCTS. Offers of help to me please.

David Elsdon has had our programme for 2025 printed (pick up a copy at any meeting, and please distribute to any people you know who have an interest in railways). Event details are also available on the RCTS website. I will continue to send out meeting reminders by email (when I remember!) so no excuses for not attending!

I cannot end my report without thanking Vic Wood for his stalwart door keeping duties, his wife Janet for the provision of refreshments at Hitchin and David Holdstock for doing likewise at Digswell.

Looking forward to another successful year of talks and socializing.

Steve Lacey
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Chairman

Secretary's Report 2024-25

As has become customary for me, I must start by thanking the other committee members for all their time, effort and support they put in to 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 Welwyn Garden City meetings plus the other things he is willing to help with. Thank you.

Please do consider joining our committee as we are occasionally quite stretched and would really like some assistance. Also, we are not a young committee and none of us would like our efforts to fail should anything unfortunate happen to any of us.

We had a very successful outing, thanks to John's organization, last August to the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway with a large number of you enjoying the day out.

Exhibitions helped supplement our finances again, we have a further four arranged for this coming year.

We have finally made a move to a new venue in Hitchin, St. Mark's Church, with the meetings there starting at 2pm. If the first one is used as a guide we seem to be looking forward to a very positive future.

My thanks to you all for your continued support.

Dave Elsdon
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Secretary

Treasurer's Report 2024-25 & Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2024

Once more I am happy to report a profit for the last financial year.

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 has been made for three reasons:

- 1) Savings on hall hire costs following the move to Digswell for the Welwyn meetings.
- 2) Increased attendances - at Digswell in particular.
- 3) The increase in speakers who are not charging us for their attendance which is very much appreciated.

It is hoped that with the change of venue/time of Hitchin meetings that the profitability there increases in the next financial year.

The drop in profit from exhibitions is disappointing but is totally dependent on the attendance there and the quality of books we have to offer.

The door donation money per meeting currently is £3.00 for members and £5.00 for visitors and the committee 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. The balance held by the Society has been increased so that we do not exceed the £2,500 limit locally.

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

INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2024

		Year to 31/10/2024	Year to 31/10/2023
INCOME			
	Sales and Donations	442.76	770.86
	Exhibitions	408.87	588.20
	Zoom meeting donations	-	10.00
	Annual outing	313.00	399.32
	Door monies/Raffle	1,492.25	1,331.30
	Total	2,656.88	3,099.68
EXPENDITURE			
	Room Hire	1,056.00	1,140.00
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live	269.00	542.60
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom	-	-
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees	45.78	85.00
	Postage, stationery etc	75.65	77.72
	Programme printing	36.00	34.00
	Refreshments	79.97	81.40
	Annual outing	313.00	398.40
	Bank/Credit card charges	81.59	78.93
	Total	1,956.99	2,438.05
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR		699.89	661.63
BRANCH BALANCE			
	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
	As at 31 October 2024		
	Held by Branch	1,451.55	1,933.25
	Held by Society	4,000.00	2,818.41
		5,451.55	4,751.66
	Movement in year	699.89	661.63

INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2024

		Hitchin	Welwyn GC	Exhibitions & Outings
INCOME				
	Sales and Donations	121.50	321.26	-
	Exhibitions	-	-	408.87
	Zoom meeting donations 50/50	-	-	-
	Annual outing	-	-	313.00
	Door monies/Raffle	650.50	841.75	-
	Total	772.00	1,163.01	721.87
EXPENDITURE				
	Room Hire	726.00	330.00	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live	91.00	178.00	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom	-	-	-
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees	-	-	45.78
	Postage, stationery etc	47.20	28.45	-
	Programme printing	18.00	18.00	-
	Refreshments	-	79.97	-
	Annual outing	-	-	313.00
	Bank/Credit card charges	40.97	40.62	-
	Total	923.17	675.04	358.78
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR		- 151.17	487.97	363.09
SPLIT EXHIBITIONS & OUTINGS 50/50		181.54	181.55	- 363.09
REVISED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR		30.37	669.52	-

- END OF 2025 AGM PAPERS -