

Railway Ramblings

Issue 176

March 2025

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



Plandampf, from "German Steam" – the March presentation at Welwyn

(Photo: George Howe)

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 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

During April 2025

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

8th April **A Caledonian Collection**

Roger Pidgeon

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

29th April **Sir Nigel Gresley – His Life and Work**

Simon Martin

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 are held at St Mark's Church Hall, St Marks Close, Lancaster Avenue (off Bedford Road) SG5 1UR Note: these are 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

This month we have our Branch AGM (at the start of the Digswell meeting). Although I do not anticipate it taking very long, it is an important part of running the Branch. In the February issue of *Railway Ramblings* we distributed the “paperwork” for the meeting so that you would have plenty of opportunity to read it through in advance. 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. You can, of course, still put questions at the meeting. The meeting will also give you the opportunity to elect the Branch Committee for 2025-26 and it would be great to see a couple of new faces! (Committee members must be RCTS members). After the AGM we will then enjoy a presentation from our own George Howe. I expect to see a good attendance again.

The new arrangements at Hitchin appear to be working well – there are a few things we need to “adjust” but generally it seems to be a great success. With the Welwyn (Digswell) meetings also now well settled-in I feel we are making good progress.

With the change of venues at both Welwyn and Hitchin, I have now completed Risk Assessments for both premises. These are important as they identify potential risks to you and appropriate mitigation – Our Editor will publish them in the next issue of *Railway Ramblings*, but if you want a copy in the meantime let me know (gricersteve@hotmail.com)

Finally, looking well ahead, we need to start considering the August outing. If you have any ideas then talk with us about it – what we ideally need is somewhere within about an hour's travel, with sufficient “content” and where we can probably organise extras above what you can normally expect if you made your own visit there. For those who have taken part in the August outings in recent years I think you will know what I mean. August is still quite a while away but the time will soon pass!

Steve Lacey

Lanyard Badges

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.

Steve Lacey

Hitchin Venue

Anyone looking at our branch pages on the RCTS website may have spotted that the **new** venue at Hitchin does not appear correctly on the events listing page, although the individual events do all show the correct details. I am awaiting assistance from the “webmaster” to get this rectified but as the Society is yet to appoint a new webmaster this may take some time!

John Dossett (Editor)

The March Puzzle – Martin Elms

The first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell a location in Northwest England :

1. ? Valley and Halstead Railway
2. Name of locomotive D9021
3. Station south of Wrexham
4. Locomotive depot with code 24J
5. Name of locomotive D1009 Western ?
6. Summit near Bowes
7. Location for Longmore Military Railway
8. LB&SC Railway Locomotive Superintendent 1905–1911

9. Name of locomotive 60024
10. Station between Ditchford and Ringstead
11. Locomotive depot with code 87H
12. M&GN station east of South Lynn
13. Cheltenham ? Road
14. Name of locomotive 61004
15. ? Aylesbury Tramroad
16. Station on Blairgowrie branch

Best of luck.

My answer to each of the questions and solution to the puzzle are on page 16.

Martin Elms

Bounds Green 1992-4 (Part 1) – Hugh Driscoll

Hugh started his railway career as an engineering trainee with British Rail in 1987. His training took him to many railway locations including both Derby Carriage and Locomotive works, the Derby Railway Technical Centre and Crewe works. He also trained at Stratford depot in the late 1980s, and has already described some of his experiences there in last year's June, July and August editions of Railway Ramblings.

Hugh has now written about his time at Bounds Green, with Part 1 in this issue of Railway Ramblings. Part 2 will appear next month.

I arrived at Bounds Green Intercity Depot in March 1992. Here my first real work began. I was part of the technical office team but I quickly had to learn my way around the traction and rolling stock based at the depot.

Bounds Green Depot site – a brief history

Carriage sidings were installed at Bounds Green when the branch line from Wood Green to Enfield opened in 1871. By the first world war, there were twelve sidings. The original carriage shed at Bounds Green was built in around 1929 (can anyone tell me exactly when?).

To the east side of the carriage shed was Palace Gates station, the terminus of the Great Eastern branch from Seven Sisters which opened in 1878. This branch was connected to the Great Northern Enfield/Hertford North branch in 1929 for goods services.

Palace Gates goods yard became a Charrington's coal concentration depot in 1958. Passenger services on the Seven Sisters branch ceased in 1963 and goods services in 1964. The branch was lifted in 1966. Sidings survived in the Palace Gates station area, near the site of the Great Eastern shed and at the north end of the former station platforms themselves.



Bounds Green Depot in 1974, taken from Buckingham Road bridge looking north. Three-road repair shed on the right. The HST depot was built immediately to its left. Photo: Paul Kearley.

HST Depot expansion

In 1977, when the High Speed Train sets were introduced on the East Coast Main Line, the depot building was enlarged to become the London servicing and maintenance depot with its own allocation of HST sets. The depot was expanded by building a four-road servicing shed (roads 9 to 12) and a two-road maintenance shed (roads 13 and 14). The new buildings were constructed over site of the sidings in the area between the existing three-road carriage shed and the Up Hertford line.

A new admin block was provided next to the country end of 14 road, with supervisors and operations offices downstairs and admin and management accommodation upstairs.

(There is a track plan & general site layout on page 8)

As a result of the depot's location inside the curve of the Up Hertford and the depot avoiding line, roads 9 and 10 were around a coach length shorter than the others, at around 880 feet long. Roads 11 to 14 were around 950 feet long. Roads 9 to 12 were equipped with raised rails mounted on concrete, with centre pits. Side pits and solebar level platforms (between 9 & 10 roads and 11 & 12 roads) facilitated access to different levels by maintenance and cleaning staff.



Bounds Green Depot in 1981, again taken from Buckingham Road bridge looking north. The HST depot was in its fourth year. From left to right: Up slow, Up Hertford, Depot Avoiding line (immediately to left of shed), shorter 9 & 10 shed roads, 11 & 12 roads with south end control cabin in centre, 13 & 14 roads. Three road repair shed to right and end of mess room block far right, just under water tank. Class 31s abound. Photo: Graham Williams.

Roads 13 and 14 were equipped with side pits on both sides and centre pits. These allowed easier all-round access to side and underside equipment for heavier maintenance work.

The original carriage shed was incorporated onto the side of the new HST facility, remaining a three-road repair shed, about 500 ft in length, with two through roads (16 and 17 roads) and one dead end road (15 road), accessed from the London end. The roads in the repair shed mostly had centre pits only or were flat. The repair shed contained jacks (initially on 15 road) and a wheel drop dating back to LNER days (on 17 road).

On the east side of the repair shed were the workshop areas, stores, mess room and washing facilities.

Sidings in the north area of the former Palace Gates station were retained and those in the area of the former coal concentration depot (which closed in the early 1980's) became known as "Charrington's yard". A loco fuel point was provided next to it.

Bounds Green also maintained sleeper and motorail stock until sleeper services ceased on the ECML in 1988. Mk1 and 2 coaching stock continued to be maintained there.

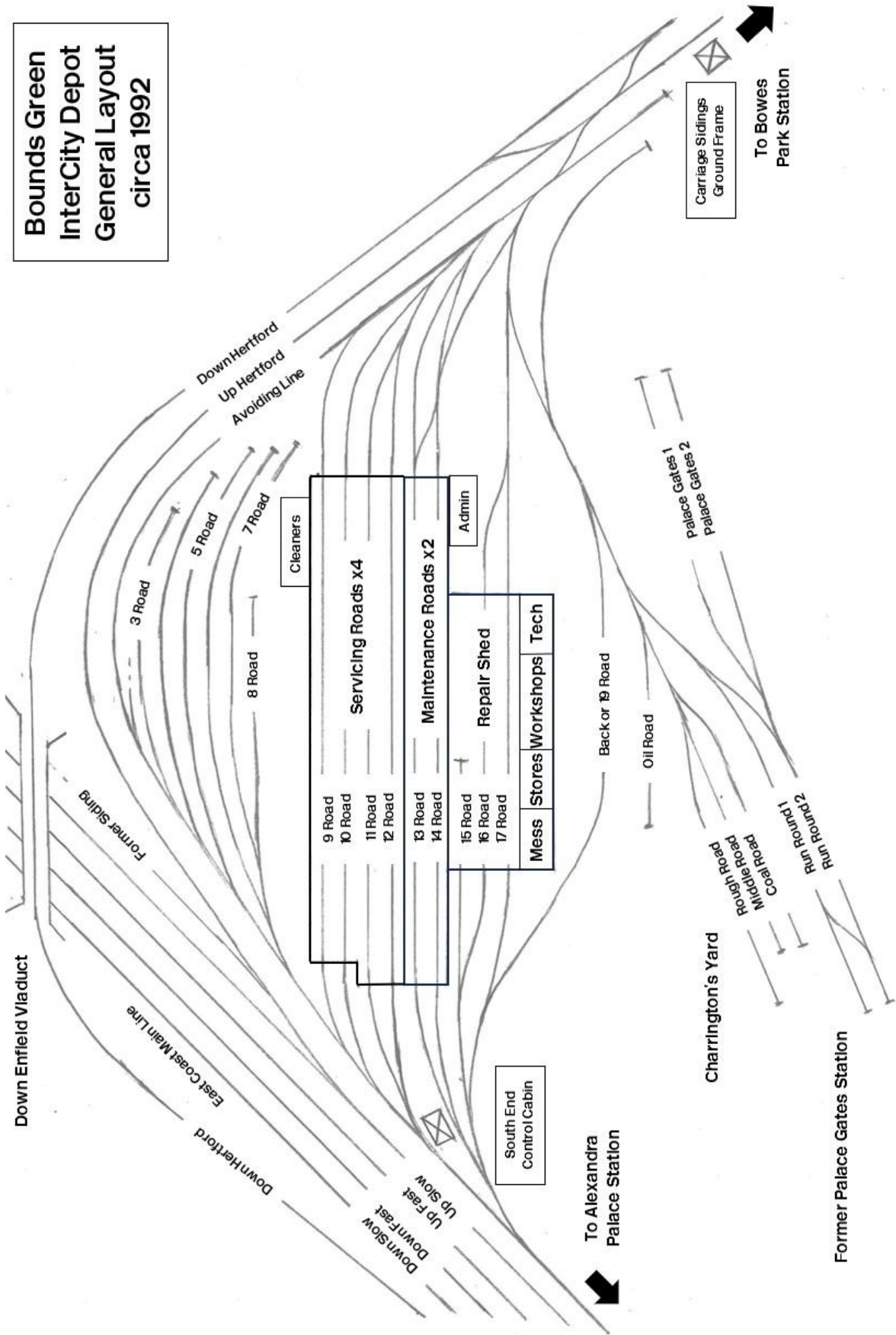


A well adorned HST power car 43 046 on the jacks on 15 road, in the repair shed. Taken during the May 1987 open day. Photo: Jeremy Gould.

Electrification

In 1988, with the forthcoming introduction of Class 91 locomotives and Mk4 coaching stock, the depot, shed roads 9 to 14 and most sidings were equipped with overhead line electrification. The overhead line sections on roads 9 to 14 could each be isolated and earthed by nominated depot staff to allow safe high-level access for locomotive roof examinations and repairs. Roads 9 to 12 were equipped with retractable roof access ladders at the "country" end of the shed.

**Bounds Green
InterCity Depot
General Layout
circa 1992**



Next month, in Part 2, I will continue by describing the general work arrangements during my time at Bounds Green.

Hugh Driscoll



Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway Re-Opens 30 March.



In 2024 a major step forward was made on the Chinnor Railway's extension into Princes Risborough Station, with the acquisition of the track needed.

Good news - There are no ticket price rises in 2025 and there will still be *Kids-for-a-Quid* (3-15 years) for a £1 on all standard travel operating days. Standard Travel Day tickets are issued as go-as-you-please Day Rovers and are valid on every train and all day long. Stay for the whole or half day, just one return journey if you only prefer a taster. Plus you can choose to break your journey at Chinnor or Princes Risborough to explore the village or town, or enjoy a gentle walk or ramble.

No seat reservations are required on any Standard Day - which means that you can choose to sit in any non-dining areas on every train - take a look through the carriages and choose the seats that you like.

The first services in the new season will be on Mothering Sunday - 30 March 2025

(Reproduced courtesy of C&PRR.)



Services Resume in April



A cold wintery scene.

Following a busy 2024 season, and with the last of the successful Epping Ongar Lights Express trains having arrived back at the station, the Epping Ongar Railway is commencing its essential Winter maintenance programme. Steam and heritage diesel services, together with connecting vintage London bus services, will resume in April.

Planned work includes restoring drainage culverts, track repairs and ballast work, as well as ongoing monitoring and remedial work on bridges.

With the amount of work planned, the Railway has taken the decision not to open for passenger services during the February half-term holiday to allow more time to concentrate on these essential works.

(Reproduced courtesy of the EOR).

The March Presentations (1)

1960's Cine Miscellany

- David Percival



11th March, at Hitchin
(An afternoon presentation starting at 14:00)

David will be showing some of the 8mm cine film (now digitised) which he took in the mid/late 1960s. The transfer to digital has 're-edited' the original sequences so the presentation jumps around in no particular order.

However, the clips you see may include Knebworth and Welwyn North, shed visits, Southern and Scottish scenes, Newcastle area, early Flying Scotsman railtours and BR's last A4 railtour between Glasgow and Aberdeen.

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

The March Presentations (2)

German Steam

- George Howe



25th March, at Digswell

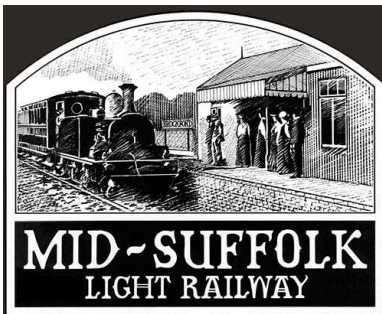
(This presentation will follow the Branch AGM.)

I look forward to taking you all to two Plandampf's, one in 2014 at Neustadt Wienstrasse and, as they were held every four years, the next was in 2018 at Trier.

My first Plandampf I booked through Rail Trail, and was very good, and I soon became aware how well the Germans were organised, and catered for the railway enthusiast. Each day with different locomotives we were taken on various routes and locations. Many photo stops, and opportunities to see the various locomotives that hauled our trains. One evening a visit to see all the loco's lined up around the preserved Round House at Neustadt was all a wonderful experience.

I enjoyed it so much that, in 2018, I went to Trier, this time booking the trip myself. This also was a wonderful experience, and in a different area of Germany.

George Howe



20 & 21 April – Easter Steam Gala Weekend

The first major weekend opening of 2025 will be a Gala Easter steam-up featuring three locos, Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST *Sir Berkeley* and two Andrew Barclay saddle tanks, 0-6-0 *Swordfish* and 0-4-0 *Lady Ingrid*. The MSLR is delighted to have all three locomotives for the Easter weekend Gala.



Sir Berkeley was built by Manning Wardle of Leeds in 1890, and, at 125 years old, is from the generation of engines with no overall cab for crew protection. A genuine part of British railway history, the loco is a real show stopper and a delight to see performing.



The two Andrew Barclays have a strong family resemblance and make a fine picture together. This will be a great opportunity for railway buffs and photographers to see them both in action.

All the Middy attractions, Museum, Restoration Shed, Tea Room and The Middy real ale bar will be open and the Middy will also be hosting the USAAF 34th Bomb Group's display again during 2025 - and their museum will also be open this weekend.

And of course there will be the traditional Easter Bunny hunt for the younger visitors!

Next up, on 25 & 26 May, will be the "Middy in the 1940s" weekend with re-enactors, displays, music, performers, military vehicles, even perhaps a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight flyover and, of course, steam trains. Steam train rides are in genuine Victorian Carriages. The railway is then open every Sunday from 26 May until 31 August.

(Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR)

The Festival of Railway Modelling – Dave Elsdon

On Saturday 8 February I had planned to be collected by my son and taken to the "Festival of Railway Modelling" event in Doncaster, afterwards returning home by train. However, plans changed, Alan was still going to Doncaster, but now from his home in North Yorkshire not from his mother's in Harpenden. I decided I would still go and meet him there. This now meant driving the 143 miles each way. I could have gone by train but from home, Digswell, to Stevenage we had a bus replacement service all weekend and I was unsure what time I could catch the train back. So, on a miserable dull misty morning I set off, the weather did not improve all day. I had an easy run up the A1 / A1(M) arriving in Doncaster Racecourse at 10.35.

The exhibition was well laid-out with plenty of room for everyone, with the number of traders outnumbering the layouts and demonstration stands by two to one. There were some excellent layouts on show, many now available to view on YouTube. Among my favourites were an "N" gauge *Braughing & Standon*, a very modern one (also "N" gauge) of a town centre with vehicles, pedestrians, roadworks, etc. - titled *Pothole City*, a "OO" *Newvaddon Parkway*, which ran a good variety of modern stock with trains running well, showing plenty of action for everyone. The best one for me that was so realistic, also in "OO", was *Daisy Lane TMD*, with sound chips fitted in the loco's. It was typical of a busy diesel depot, the throb of the diesel engines, the grubby conditions that exist in certain areas, unkempt roofs covering the work area, it was everything you might expect of a diesel depot.

The venue itself was very clean, carpeted throughout and well lit. The exhibition covered two floors, beneath the main grandstand. From upstairs the views over the racecourse were excellent which I suppose you would expect when looking out from the main seating area. Access was easy with the car parks directly off the A18 dual carriageway road. We had a good lunch in a large fish & chip restaurant opposite the venue before returning to our respective homes. I passed Doncaster Carr depot on my return but as expected only LNER Azuma units were present. I had a good return journey, making good time arriving home in daylight just before 5 o'clock.

Dave Elsdon



60103 Flying Scotsman Services

1, 2, 8 and 9 March



Stuart Black / 05/19

Flying Scotsman will return to the Nene Valley Railway for passenger services from 22nd February to 9th March. The locomotive will be in public service for six running days, and the NVR are also planning some special static days to get up close and personal to *Flying Scotsman*. Tickets must be purchased in advance for a trip behind this iconic locomotive. The popular “Jolly Fisherman” Fish and Chips service will also be operating, hauled by the locomotive. The locomotive appears with kind thanks to the National Railway Museum, part of the Science Museum Group and Northern Steam Operations.

For more details go to the NVR website: [Best of British - Flying Scotsman | Nene Valley Railway Ltd](#)

Tickets - For 1 Round Trip only : Adult / Senior - £30.00, Child (3 to 15 Years) - £15.00, Family (2 Adults and 3 Children) - £90.00, Carer - £15.00

NOTE: NVR will not be operating services between Wansford and Yarwell during *Flying Scotsman* services. Also due to the number of passengers travelling on the services they are not able to offer platform tickets on *Flying Scotsman* passenger days



Best of British Weekend,

with 70000 *Britannia* on 15 & 16 March



Stuart Black / 04/14

NVR are delighted that 70000 *Britannia* will be a special guest throughout the event, and will be hauling passenger trains during the weekend. The locomotive is attending with thanks to Royal Scot Locomotive and General Trust.

For more details and events being added to the programme go to the NVR website: [Best of British - Britannia | Nene Valley Railway Ltd](#)

Tickets: Adult / Senior - £25.00, Child (3 to 15 Years) - £15.00, Family (2 Adults and 3 Children) - £80.00, Carer - £15.00

Mk1 Coaching stock in use with licensed buffet cars

Wansford Café serving hot/cold food and refreshments from 08:30, Wansford Shop and Second-Hand Book Shop open

(Reproduced courtesy of the NVR)

Exhibitions

Warners Exhibitions - The London Festival of Railway Modelling

Sat 15 and Sun 16 March 2025

Alexandra Palace, Alexandra Palace Way, London, Greater London N22 7AY

OPENING TIMES: SAT 10-5, SUN 10-4.30

ADMISSION: Adults £16.00 Children £8.00 Family £40.00

The 'Ally Pally' show at Alexandra Palace is a major UK railway modelling exhibition featuring over 35 layouts from the Model Railway Club. These layouts span various scales and gauges, originating from the UK, Europe, and the US. The event occupies two halls and hosts 70+ leading retailers and specialist manufacturers, along with the best small suppliers. Visitors will also encounter numerous societies, clubs, and live demonstrations ready to answer hobby-related questions. Additionally, a free shuttle bus service runs between Alexandra Palace Station, Wood Green Station, and the venue, with the last bus departing at 17.15 daily.

Solution to the March Puzzle (page 4)

1. Colne.
2. Argyll and Sutherland Highlander.
3. Ruabon.
4. Lancaster.
5. Invader
6. Stainmore.
7. Liss.
8. Earle Marsh.
9. Kingfisher.
10. Irthlingborough.
11. Neyland.
12. Gayton Road.
13. Malvern.
14. Oryx.
15. Oxford.
16. Rosemount.

Answer: CARLISLE KINGMOOR

Martin Elms

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

As reported last month, the main activity in the Nene Valley Railway workshop revolves around reroofing the Swedish railcar *Helga*. This is proceeding apace and has involved fabricating new "I girder" ribs to support the roof where they had corroded.....damp British winters are worse than cold Swedish frozen ones! This involved laser cutting the curved web of the girder then welding on strip metal to complete the "I " girder shape. This is not easy without deforming the girders and was achieved within 2-3 millimetres of tolerance! There is then a plain sheet metal skin applied, followed by a ridged layer.



Roof stripped and new ribs in place (22 January)

For the more technically minded, "*Helga*" was built by Swedish State railways in 1958 as a Y7 design and numbered 1212. She was brought to the NVR initially in 1984, spent some time away as a static exhibit, then returned to the NVR in 2011 and was restored to running condition. In 2017 it was joined at the NVR by control trailer vehicle 1987, a matching trailer vehicle. The two vehicles usually run push-pull as a pair.

In addition to reroofing, the bodywork has been stripped back to bare metal. Window frames were removed to detect any corrosion and, where needed, remedial work performed. Once all this work is complete the entire vehicle will be repainted in its "sunglasses required" dazzling yellow and orange Swedish Railways livery. I guess the next vehicle into the workshop will be the trailer car, or they will make a very odd pairing!

Much like the Pacer unit, they are very useful off peak, as they are cheap to run and give an excellent opportunity for our school parties to have a view of the cab and line ahead. Many of the children have never even been on a train!



Replacement roof taking shape (12 February)

Meanwhile, up north at the East Lancashire Railway workshop they have been busy with *92 Squadron*. Having completed a successful without-fault (and lucrative for us) Christmas programme and with lots of praise from the East Lancs crews, we went into their workshop for a "refresh". Originally painted 8 years ago, by *92 Squadron* volunteer Roger England with his trusty Purdy sable brush, she shone. Some of our members who live nearby, spent time degreasing her paintwork with white spirit, before the ELR painters lightly Scotchbrired the surface to restore the brilliance of the paintwork, then applied a coat of varnish. Once again, she has regained her sparkling appearance, even in a gloomy shed!



By the time you read this, *Flying Scotsman* will be well into her visit to the NVR, with poor old *Tornado* still under repair in the running shed. *Flying Scotsman* is due to leave the NVR on 9th March, to be replaced by *Britannia* for the weekend of 15/16 March! All of a sudden you can't move for steam traction! I believe tickets for these events have sold well, so if you want to see them, get your tickets soon!

Meanwhile I survived the 120 school children on one school visit and a much more civilised visit by 65 children more recently, who were studying "Thomas the Tank Engine". Luckily we were able to get *Thomas* drawn out of the shed for them to see close up.

We have two more schools in March and then I have agreed to do shed tours on an autism awareness day on the 2 April. Then it is the 92 Squadron AGM on 23 March and I should also give you all advanced notice of the RCTS National AGM at the old Wolverhampton Low Level Station on the 5 April. There will be presentations by Pete Waterman, Gus Dunster MD of the Severn Valley Railway and Mike Lamport from the Rail 200 steering group!

Other than that, my time is my own!

See you all at our meetings

Steve Lacey

Branch Committee

The current 2024-2025 Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Committee

Elected at the 2024 AGM



Steve Lacey
Chair



Dave Elsdon
Secretary



Paul Holloway
Treasurer



John Dossett
Newsletter

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.