

Railway Ramblings

Issue 178

May 2025

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



61306 at Cambridge North on 31 Aug 2019

(Photo copyright: David Scudamore)

From the May presentation at Hitchin

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 May 2025

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

13th May **Cambridge Area Railways, Yesterday & Today (Part 2)**

Dave Scudamore

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

27th May **That Was the Year That Was - 1972**

Geoff Plumb

During June 2025

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

10th June **A 12th Colour Rail Journey**

Paul Chancellor

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

24th June **The West Somerset Railway – Plus More**

Richard Morris

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

-Your new committee have now met and, apart from the general business of the branch, the August outing was on our agenda. As most of you know, what we ideally need is somewhere preferably within not too much more than an hour's travel, with sufficient "content" for a day out and where we can probably organise extras above what you can normally expect if you made your own visit there. Several of you have made useful suggestions – including the LT collection at Acton, the Post Office railway, Mangapps (visited in 2018), Bressingham (visited in 2019), The Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, the Mid-Suffolk – and these were discussed at some length. Our more recent visits have been Chinnor (2024), Epping & Ongar (2023) and Nene Valley (2022) (of course there were no visits in Covid times). There are, of course, pros and cons for each! We must soon make a decision so any feedback on any of these possibilities, or indeed on any other potential locations, would be really useful.

On other matters, Dave Elsdon and I went to the Members Day/AGM at Wolverhampton and Dave has written a report which appears in this issue. No doubt the "official" report for the day will appear in the *Railway Observer* in due course.

Steve Lacey

New Member

We welcome James Lewis, from Biggleswade, as a new member of the RCTS and of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch. James joined the Society when visiting the model railway exhibition at the "Ally Pally".

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

2025 RCTS Members Day (5th April 2025)

This day, which included the Society's 89th AGM, was held at The Grand Station venue in Wolverhampton. This was previously Wolverhampton Low Level Station, built by the GWR on the London Paddington to Birkenhead route via Birmingham Snow Hill and is a five-minute walk from the present modern Wolverhampton station. It is a superb venue used for many varied events and the Society have used it for a few years now.

Branch Chairman Steve Lacey and myself set off at 07:00. We left at this early time because we needed to be at the venue early, as Steve has a large variety of the Society's new publications to be put on display ready for the members arrival at 10:00. We made it in good time, with a relatively easy drive via the M1 & M6.

The business of the day started with an introduction, to around 90 members, by Society Chairman James Milne. He welcomed everyone and outlined how the day with the meeting & its various speakers would work. After the usual meeting notices our first speaker was to have been Steve Oates, CEO, Heritage Railway Association but, unfortunately, Steve had not arrived, due to his trains from the south running late. We therefore started with our second speaker who was Mike Lamport, from the Rail 200 Steering Group. Mike's talk outlined the many things that were about to happen as part of Rail 200, which we now understand will not only happen this year, but will also run over well into 2026, with many details still to be released. Mike was a good speaker and railwayman, his son is a Great Western driver which makes four generations of his family continuously working on the railway. In a few weeks' time they will become the longest serving family ever of railway workers.

Now our second speaker, Steve Oates then took over with a lively talk about the Heritage Railway scene in the UK, along with the benefits of volunteering, Steve's talk was accompanied with pictures of some of the Heritage railways across the country.

After lunch we proceeded with the Society business "The 89th AGM". This followed the usual AGM protocol. Following the introduction of the Society Trustees to members, Vice President Callum MacCleod read an address to the members from the President Reverend Canon Brian Arman, who could not be in attendance as he is recovering from recent surgery. All other agenda matters went through without any problems.

On to our third speaker, Geoff Dunster MD Severn Valley Railway Holdings, with his subject "From Pendolino to Preservation; The past Present and Future". This was an excellent talk explaining the progress of how a stock moves from being in service to becoming an attraction on a Preserved Railway, with all the problems along the way, obviously including the costs and bureaucracy to be encountered. Once in preservation the difficulties of keeping & storing stock suitable for that particular railway's benefit. I missed most of this presentation as I took myself off the Wolverhampton mainline station, a five-minute walk away, to see some of the new West Midlands trains, Classes 196 & 730.

Finally, I think what several members had come for, was a questions and answer session where our guest speakers were joined by Pete Waterman OBE.

Initially many questions had been submitted prior to the session but there was also time enough for the members present to put some "from the floor". Several were intended solely for Pete Waterman, he clearly gets very emotive about railways and the Government especially about looking long term into the future of the railways. Our Branch Chairman Steve asked Pete if he agreed with him that government had no place in running the NHS and railways, as the Government really only wants to plan for their elected term of five years, as long term plans mean the next party gets the credit for plans that are delivered beyond their period in office. Pete agreed whole heartedly, adding that no Government had ever had a long term rail strategy. He also was questioned about his model railway enthusiasm and how he sees his plans for the future.

A really interesting good day out, we returned home several new publications lighter having had many sales. Our journey home followed the same route as our northbound one, but was slightly faster due to lighter traffic on the M6 in the Birmingham area.

Dave Elsdon
Branch Secretary

The May Puzzle – Martin Elms

Something different for you to try this month. For each block of five questions (below), the first digit of the number (pre-TOPS) of the five locomotives will give you a new 5-digit number. That number should give you the identity of another locomotive!

1. The Princess Royal		
2. Maid of Lorn		
3. Aureol (diesel)		
4. Eton		
5. Newport Castle		
6. Sir Gareth		
7. Rhyl		
8. County of Dorset		
9. Scafell Pike (diesel)		
10. Falcon (diesel)		
11. Blink Bonny		
12. County of Oxford		
13. Loch Quoich		
14. The Garth		
15. Orion		

Best of luck.

My answer to each of the questions and solutions to the puzzle are on page 24.

Martin Elms

Bounds Green 1992-4 (Part 3) – Hugh Driscoll

In Parts 1 & 2, published in March & April, Hugh covered the development of the depot up to his time there and described the work carried out. This month we continue with some of the jobs he undertook:

Class 91 Sanders and Lifeguards

My first job with (what was) the most modern passenger rolling stock on BR was to unblock the sanders on the number one end bogie of a class 91 loco. Not the most technical job, but I had to start somewhere!

A few months later, I assisted the Derby Projects team with a modification to the Class 91 lifeguard (obstacle deflector) and sanding equipment. There had been a couple of incidences of the lifeguard becoming detached at speed after severe impacts (due to vandalism). There was concern that the original design was not robust enough for the job.

Unfortunately, a detached lifeguard presented a serious hazard and would often strike equipment under the train. This included the transformer and its cooling oil pipework mounted under the Class 91 loco, with predictable and expensive results.

The modified lifeguard was much sturdier, and was mounted using more fasteners which were larger and stronger. It also included a bracket for the sander nozzle. I assisted in the trial fit of the modification. We soon discovered that the drilling template for the new mounting holes in the bogie frame did not fit on the left-hand side of the bogie, but that is what trials are for! Another drilling template was made and after a successful trial in-traffic, the fleet was fitted with the new design, which is still in use over 30 years later.

Dragging brakes on Mk4 Service Vehicles

In the first few years of service there had been several incidences of dragging brakes on Mk4 service vehicles (SVs or restaurant cars). This causes overheating of the brake disks, undue wear on brake callipers and pads, and smoke emission from the brake equipment.

There were various theories around the cause, including issues with the tolerances in brake controllers on the class 91 locos and the Mk4 Driving Van Trailers, the time allowed for the use of the brake pipe overcharge at Kings Cross station, the resulting inconsistencies with brake distributor control pressures and even the additional weight of the SVs which had a bearing on their brake cylinder pressures. I was tasked with collecting data on this problem for analysis by the Derby team.

The “Psion Organiser”, an early PDA device, could be turned into a 4-channel data logger by obtaining add-on parts. I instrumented one Mark 4 SV so the air suspension pressure, train brake pipe pressure, brake distributor (control side) pressure and brake cylinder pressure were monitored, using the pressure test points on the equipment. Using HST brake pressure transducers, the air pressures were converted into a 0-10 volt signal, which was then recorded by the Psion.

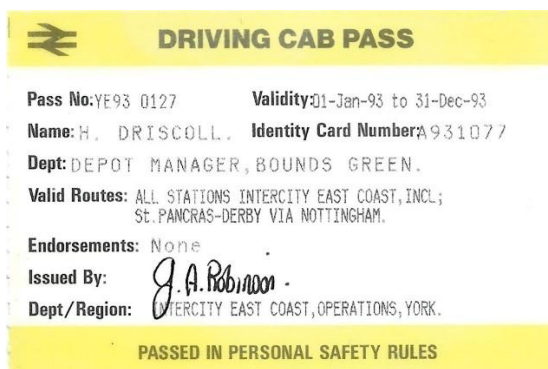
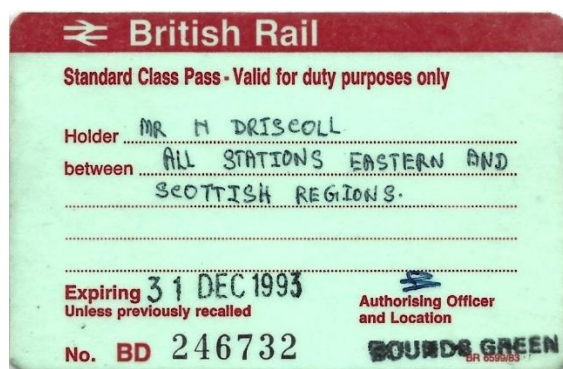
The Psion data memory was limited, but on a run from Kings Cross to Leeds, a data sample of all four pressures could be made every 5 seconds, which gave around 1,500 lines of data.

I set the monitoring equipment up just before a run, usually in the platform at Kings Cross. I always rode with the train on test, in case of an equipment failure.

On one occasion I was scheduled to run a Leeds trip, and I had just set up my test equipment. Unfortunately, an up train from Edinburgh was running late, and my instrumented train was stepped up to cover its diagram. As a result, I obtained an awful lot more data than I intended. I ended the day removing my test equipment in Edinburgh Craiginny depot at around midnight, and spent the night sleeping on the floor of the Supervisor's locker room!

The data was downloaded onto a Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet (remember that?). Our dot matrix printer spent a shift printing out the results, the noise being enjoyed by the whole office. These results were duly handed over to the Derby team for detailed analysis. I understand that the information from the data logger led to clarification of the brake pipe overcharge procedure, which solved the problem of dragging brakes.

Subsequently, I produced an improved air system data logger, using commercially available pressure transducers. I could then pacify the Stores Manager and return the HST transducers to stores! The new kit fitted into a small plastic toolbox. This test equipment was promptly "borrowed" by the Derby team, and I never saw it again! I took this as a compliment...



My Duty and Cab Passes, obligatory for riding trains under test (and for getting back to the depot afterwards!)

Class 91 Vacuum Circuit Breaker fuse problem

One of the later build Class 91 locos had a habit of blowing its vacuum circuit breaker (VCB) control fuse. This resulted in the circuit breaker opening and consequent train failure, the loco being unable to take any power for traction or train supply. Not an ideal situation.

Working with one of the technical supervisors, we fitted a low value resistor into the 110 volt VCB control wiring to provide a small volt drop, so we could analyse any voltage spikes using the Psion organiser logger measuring the voltage across the resistor. Using the time stamp recorded by the Psion combined with any logged control circuit voltage fluctuations, we could (in theory) pin point any problems to a location, as we knew the locomotive location by comparing times with running diagrams and TOPS information. This might help us understand if overhead line features such as neutral sections were contributing to the problem.

As it turned out, there were never any more VCB control circuit problems with that particular loco. The resistor we had inserted was coincidentally limiting any current surges, so we had inadvertently solved the problem, and decided to leave the resistor in the circuit. I later heard that this resistor was retained at the loco's refurbishment in the early 2000s.

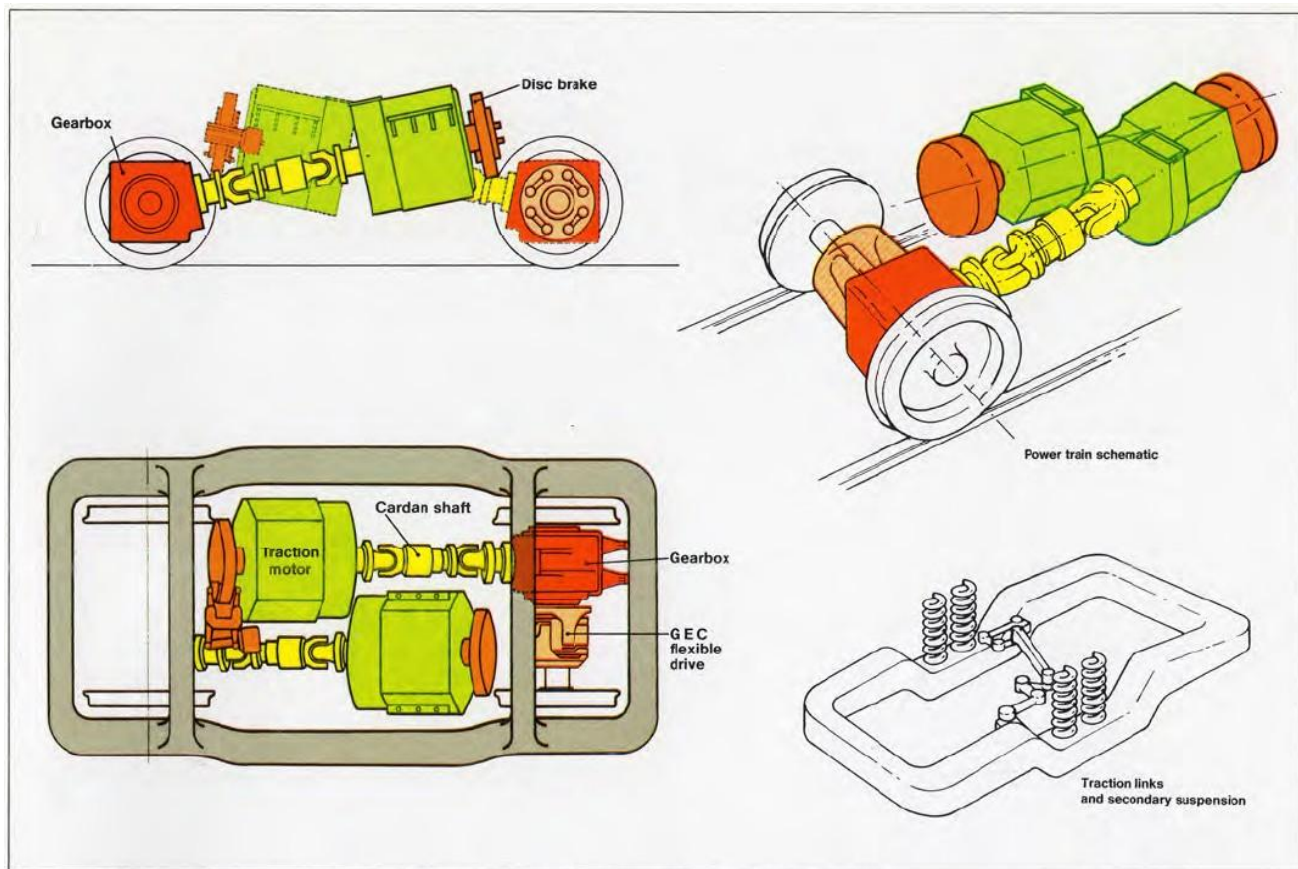
Class 91 Traction motor issues

Working with the same technical supervisor, we constructed a test box for monitoring traction motor voltages via the test outputs on the traction control electronics cards. The GEC G426AZ traction motors fitted to the Class 91s were probably the ultimate DC motor design in use on BR. They were huge compared to other BR traction motors, weighed around 3.5 tons and were continuously rated at around 1,500hp each. A Class 90 traction motor delivered around 1,250hp in comparison.

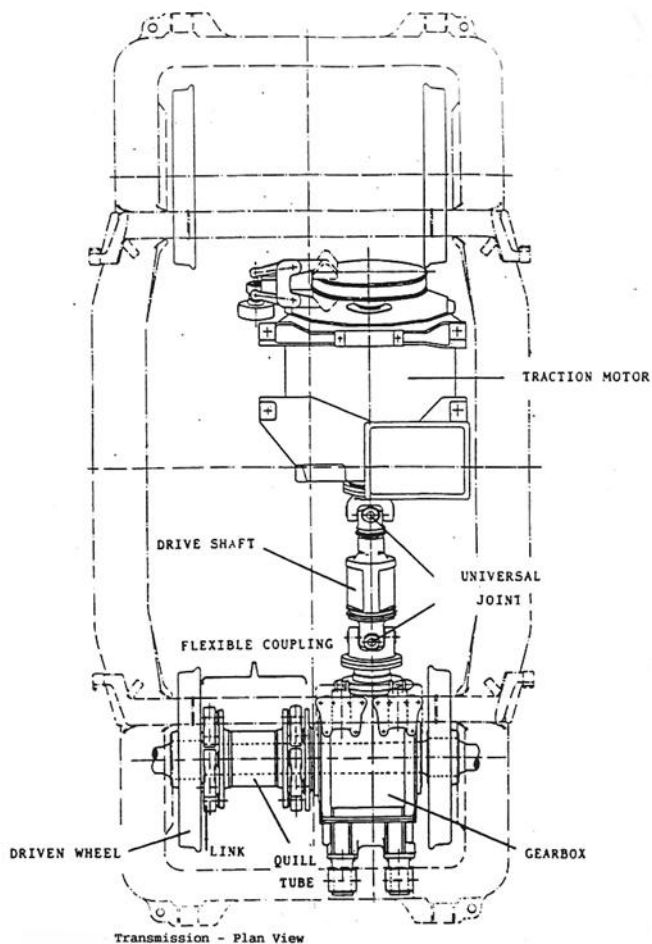
The motors were mounted longitudinally to the underside of the loco bodyshell, reducing the unsprung mass and consequently loads imposed on the track.

Power was transmitted to the wheels via a cardan shaft (a flexible shaft fitted with universal joints at each end of a telescopic "tripode"), and a right-angle drive gearbox supplied either by Voith or David Brown.

The gearbox drove a hollow "quill" tube which was connected to the driven wheel by flexible links. A brake disc was fitted to the "free" end of the motor and a brake calliper and pads acted upon this when braking was initiated on the loco, in addition to the rheostatic (electric) braking and tread brakes.



Simplified diagram of Class 91 transmission, from GEC publicity leaflet



Plan view of Class 91 loco transmission, from BR Intercity training notes.

Unfortunately, traction motor flashovers occurred, requiring the attention of the depot and Derby Project team. It was suspected that the motor commutators were becoming “out of round”. This causes the traction motor brushes to bounce across the commutator surface when the motor rotates. The bouncing movement of the brushes is exaggerated at speed, increasing the chance of an arc striking between the brush and commutator surfaces. If the arc is drawn around the commutator to adjacent brushgear, a flashover results and serious electrical burning and flash damage can occur. The state of the commutators had to be assessed, and any replacements or rectification work carried out as soon as possible.

In the worst case, “out of roundness” affects the motor armature, causing it to expand. Partial disintegration of the armature and field windings can occur as they can come into contact with each other. This “bird nesting” usually results in the traction motor being seriously damaged, requiring a complete rewind, rebuild or scrapping. These motor problems can be caused by a combination of manufacturing problems and motor overspeeding (such as during high speed wheelslip).

To check the condition of the motor commutators, and provide a general indication of motor condition, the Derby team supplied the depot with a commutator profiling machine. This works by fitting a probe with a roller in one of the traction motor brushboxes, in the place of a carbon brush. The probe incorporates a load cell which gives a signal to the recording instrument. By rotating the motor, the probe measures the relative height of each commutator bar. The recorder logs these relative heights and prints the resulting commutator profile on a long strip of paper.

The easiest way to rotate the motors was to move the loco manually with a pinch bar, at just below walking pace. Too fast, or too slow, and the recorder would emit a high-pitched alarm tone, and stop recording. From hours of practice, and with a lot of help from others, by pinch barring an 84-ton loco along either 13 or 14 road, all of traction motors on the fleet were profiled. All good exercise, especially against the imperceptible gradient, up the hill towards the country end of the shed.

The profile print-outs gave an immediate indication of the state of the traction motors. Analysis by the Derby team determined the size of the problem. The motors in the worst condition were identified and replaced. The rate of commutator distortion could be determined by repeating the profile measurement at regular intervals, so motor replacement could be prioritized.

This work led to the introduction of specialist commutator grinding equipment. Using this equipment, the commutator condition could be restored without removing the traction motor from the loco, reducing downtime and improving loco availability. However, it was a filthy job!



The (then 22 year-old) author under a Class 91 loco on the jacks, with bogie removed, looking at a “bird nested” traction motor.

There was a dress code for the Tech Office!

Photo taken by my supervisor to finish the camera film. Thanks John!

Hugh Driscoll

Next month, in Part 4, Hugh will describe some more of the jobs he undertook during his time at Bounds Green.

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



Chinnor Independent Line: Ballast on Track



A major step forward towards the completion of the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway's extension into Princes Risborough has been taken. 900 tonnes of ballast was laid on the 800m long Chinnor Independent Line just outside the town during the week commencing 10th March. The track had recently been re-laid by volunteers of the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway Association, the line having closed in 1989 and become derelict since. Work is continuing, with the aim of re-opening the line before the Summer.

Styled "Prima 4", this was the fourth of the major logistical projects bringing in materials for the line. Prima (Princes Risborough Infrastructure Materials Acquisition) 1 and 2 involved small track panels (pre-assembled, or more accurately in this case previously cut up, sections of track from 15 to 30ft long) moved to the railway by large lorries in September and November 2023, craned across and taken to site on C&PRR wagons. Prima 3 brought 60ft track panels in by train in July 2024, which were craned into position alongside using the railways track relaying machine, a twin-jib crane. Since then the track has been laid, and now Prima 4 has delivered a trainload of ballast to go on top.

The track panels were "pre-loved"; the ballast is recently quarried granite. Bringing it in by train has avoided some 30 full-length articulated tipper lorry movements, and removed the challenges of transferring the load into rail wagons for the final move from a road access point to the locations along the railway.

The ballast was purchased through Network Rail and arrived in an 18 wagon train 300m long at breakfast time on Tuesday 11th March, possibly to the surprise of commuters waiting on Princes Risborough station. Hauled by a Freightliner Class 66 loco, the wagons were stabled in the C&PRR sidings, and the loco returned to base.

The C&PRR's trusty class 08 shunter, 08825, was used to position the wagons alongside the new line, where they were unloaded by road-rail vehicles (RRVs); a pair of Liebherr excavators with operators hired from Quattro Plant, working on the new line itself.

The unloaded ballast was spread and levelled next day by one of the excavators using a specially shaped profiling bucket, while Association volunteers recovered the remaining ballast from the corners of the wagons. (Difficult to extract with the large excavators, but traditional methods came to the fore: blokes with shovels! A network loco returned and collected the empty wagon rake on the Thursday.



Now the track has ballast on it, the next major task is to hire in a tamper machine to cleverly lift the track through the ballast and align it accurately for position, height, and cant (cross-slope applied on curves). The clever bit is that it does this whilst sitting on the track it is lifting; it's rather like lifting yourself up by your own bootlaces!

Once the track itself is finished, all the rail bonding and wiring will be installed for track circuiting – the means of electrically detecting the presence and position of trains. Then the signalling systems can be completed and tested ready for the line to open.

For now, trains continue to run via an adjacent siding owned by Network Rail. Announcements on when the new line will be opened, marking the culmination of the railway's Princes Risborough extension project are eagerly awaited.

(Reproduced courtesy of C&PRR)



160th Anniversary Weekend and Ongar Town Festival

3 and 4 May

A weekend to mark the 160th anniversary of the opening of the railway line from Loughton to Ongar, alongside the Ongar Town Show!



EOR expect two steam locomotives from their home fleet, together with Class 20 diesel locomotive, 20227, in London Transport livery and visiting Class 73 electro-diesel locomotive, E6040, courtesy of the Bluebell Railway and the 73133 Supporters Group, to be in action across both days.

The vintage London bus services will also be operating providing connections to Epping Underground station (Central Line, zone 6) and Shenfield station.



Ongar Town Festival - **Sunday only**

On Sunday 4 May the EOR join with the Ongar Town Festival - now in it's 6th year!

For further details, including ticket prices and timetables, visit the EOR website:

<https://www.eorailway.co.uk/events/160th-anniversary-weekend-and-ongar-show/>

(Reproduced courtesy of the EOR).

The May Presentations (1)

Cambridge Area Railways, Yesterday & Today (Part 2)

- Dave Scudamore



70011 at Cambridge Station, with 61043 on MPD

13th May, at Hitchin
(An afternoon presentation starting at 14:00)

Cambridge Area Railways, Yesterday & Today (Part 2) starts back at Cambridge and following another look around the station area heads north to Chesterton Junction where we follow the route of the St Ives line (now misguided busway).

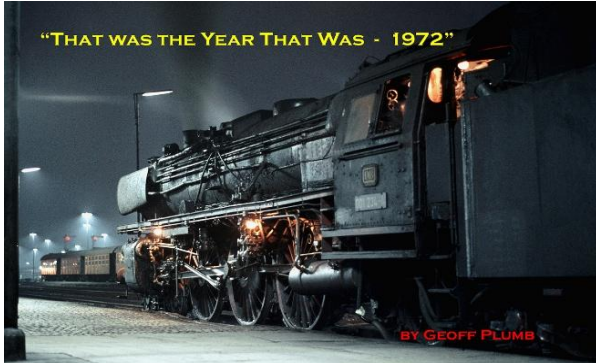
Next we look at the Mildenhall line as far as Fordham & then to Soham. Back at Cambridge our next journey is to Newmarket before returning to Cambridge for a shed visit before, time permitting, heading south via the goods line towards Audley End.

David Scudamore

The May Presentations (2)

That Was The Year That Was - 1972

- Geoff Plumb



DB unrebuilt 01 Class 4-6-2 No 001 234-4 sits at the head of train E1790 at Hof station, the 20:35 semi-fast passenger service from Hof to Bamberg, on a Sunday evening in April 1972

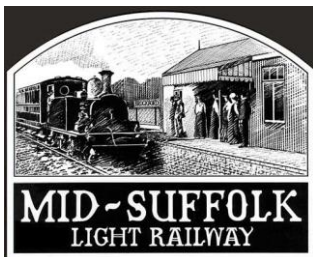


Two SAR Class 25 "Condenser" 4-8-4s sit side-by-side at the wayside station of Britsville, both of them with northbound freights in the loops, as a northbound passenger train hauled by another "Condenser" overtakes them, before resuming their journeys to De Aar. Monday 4th September 1972

27th May, at Digswell

Geoff Plumb returns with another of his popular "That Was the Year That Was" series of presentations. With his usual excellent standard of railway photography, this time it's the turn of 1972 and we can expect the presentation to include more of Geoff's many days out around and about, including UK scenes in Brighton, Bristol and the London area, among others.

This time the presentation also features West Germany quite strongly, but the main event sees a visit to South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique for a feast of steam, in repose and in action!



The Middy in the 1940s

25 – 26 May

Britain's railways played a major role in the war effort and the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway was no different, coming into its own after 1942 when the USAAF moved into the airfields at Mendlesham and Horham. The Middy had never been so busy and never would be again after the war ended, so this event is the MSLR's tribute to those who served to preserve freedom both at home and overseas in those dark years between 1939 and 1945.



'Middy in the 1940s' has grown from small beginnings to become one of the largest events in the railway's calendar and, along with the many visiting displays and vehicles, MSLR are joined by a number of quality re-enactors and 'personalities' to help create a great 1940's atmosphere.

This year there will be a range of military and civilian vehicles of the period and stalls selling everything from clothing, collectables, toys, military memorabilia, wartime paperwork and magazines. Both days will feature 1940s style music with Sarah Mai.

And this year, for the season, the MSLR has the USAAF 34th Bomb Group Museum with a historic range of artefacts and memorabilia from their days at RAF Mendlesham on show.

(Reproduced courtesy of the MSLR)

Exhibitions

Two in May that are fairly local -

South West Herts Model Railway Society

Saturday 10th May 2025

At Queens School, Aldenham Road, Bushey, Watford, Hertfordshire WD23 2TY

Opening Times: 10:00 - 16.30

Entrance Fees: Adults £8.00 Children £4.00 Family £16.00

Twenty excellent model railway layouts have been booked in a variety of scales and gauges ranging from N gauge to O gauge, with narrow gauges also represented, and with European and US locations on show. There will be nine trade stands and Club information stand and shop to help you find those essential items for your own collection. Refreshments will be available.

Layouts: Upperton - N Gauge – Wiltshire. St Marys - O16.5 Narrow Gauge – Wales. Achalraj - OO9 Narrow Gauge – Himalayas. Inchyra Paper Mill - OO Gauge – Scotland. Micro Layout Display - OO, N & Z. Braughing and Standon - N Gauge – Hertfordshire. Geeksville Depot - HO Gauge - Nebraska, USA. Books Bridge - O16.5 Narrow Gauge - Early Edwardian, East Anglia. Donnersbachkogel - HO Gauge – Austria. Churwaldem RHB - N Gauge – Switzerland. Fareford Depot - OO Gauge – UK. Brief Encounter Monochrome - OO Gauge – UK. Thomas Town - OO Gauge - Sodor! Oakley Lane - O Gauge – UK. Tinner's Wharf - N Gauge - West Country. Welham Mitey - O Gauge – Somerset. East Anstey - N Gauge - North Devon. Hell's Glen Power Station & Coal Mine - N Gauge – USA. Turntable Yard - N Gauge – UK. Exebridge - 3mm Scale - West Country.

Hoddesdon Model and Railway Club

25th May 2025

At Old Mill, Mill Lane, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire EN10 7AX

Opening Times: 10:30 to 16:00

Entrance Fees: Adults £5.00

Layouts. Mill Lane 32mm, Broxbourne Junction 45mm + portable 32mm and N, OO, O Scale Standard and Narrow Gauge, and 5' gauge ride on. To include pictures of local railway history, Hertford East to Broxbourne New River line. Light Refreshments. Free Parking at Old Mill & Meadows Car Park EN10 6QS Then 5 minute walk.



3 & 4 May



Join in the nationwide VE Day Celebrations as 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. As it was in 1945, the heart of the VE Day 80 commemorations and celebrations will be in our communities.

Take a train ride back to the 1940s as the NVR turns back the clock and recaptures the spirit of VE Day. Dress up in style and don't forget to bring dancing shoes, as the event features live entertainment, music and dancing, and vehicle displays.

Be sure to have your identity card and travel permits ready for inspection!

Browse for vintage clothing, shoes and accessories – or even get your hair done – from the vintage stalls in “Market Street” at Wansford.

Attractions at Wansford:

- Live singing performances by Raw Divas covering 1940 VE songs
- Steam Train services
- Buffet Car
- Wansford Cafe
- Miniature Railway Rides and Shop (Saturday 3rd)
- Pump Trolley Experiences in the Yard at Wansford
- Browse among vintage trade stalls



VE Cream Tea: Enjoy a Traditional boxed VE Cream Tea to take on the train. This must be booked in advance with your tickets, £5 per person or £10 for two, Does not include a hot drink this can be purchased from the Buffet Car

Attractions At Overton Station



- Visit the Wagon Yard at Overton with displays of how Freight trains were operated on the railways.
- Vintage Post Office Vehicles
- Travelling Post Office Carriages and displays
- Tea Room and Station

Pre-Booked Ticket Prices

Adult / Senior - £18.00

Child (3 to 15 Years) - £8.00

Family (2 Adults & 3 Children): £48

Carer - £9.00

On the day Ticket Prices

Adult / Senior - £19.00

Child (3 to 15 Years) - £10.00

Family (2 Adults & 3 Children): £52

Carer - £10.00

Platform Tickets: Adult £5 / Child £3 (Access to Wansford event and station - train travel not included)

Tickets may be purchased online in advance, or simply turn up on the day for tickets on the door.

For more details: [VE 80 Weekend | Nene Valley Railway Ltd](#)

(Reproduced courtesy of the NVR)

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

At the Nene Valley, the repair and repaint of *Helga*, the Swedish railcar, continues apace in the main workshop. The roof repairs are finished and repainted, the sides undercoated and receiving top coat, in a colour that puts sunshine yellow in the shade! *Blue Circle* the traction engine on railway wheels, has also had a fresh coat of paint and is currently being reassembled, the boiler having been steam tested.



On 6 April, Dave O'Connell's longstanding financial and working commitment to the NVR was finally recognised when the Danish F Class 656 was named *DOC* in his honour. Over the years Dave or DOC (D. O'Connor) as he has long been known, financed the heavy overhaul shed (on which I report), the overhead crane and he has also worked tirelessly to restore 656 to working order.



Careful examination of the next picture shows the big yellow overhead crane which Dave named "Diane" after his wife. This attempt to curry favour rather backfired, when it had the notation "10 tonne" written next to the name!



Having lost 92 *Squadron* to the East Lancs Railway, the NVR have hired-in a Great Western "Large Prairie" locomotive 4144 to cover the summer season. 4144 was built at Swindon in September 1946. These powerful tank loco's were often used on suburban workings but this particular loco was used as a Severn Tunnel banker, being withdrawn from Severn Tunnel Junction depot in March 1965. The locomotive was sent to Woodham Bros. of Barry for cutting up, but was bought jointly by the Didcot Railway Society and one of its members in 1974.



4144 with a warming fire, prior to a weekend on service trains.

On 2 April, the NVR ran an Autism Awareness day. I volunteered to take parties round the shed, which was nerve wracking, since those with Autism are magnets for facts.....no bluffing my way out! We were blessed with a beautiful day, with *Thomas* in charge of a shuttle to-and-from Yarwell, where the hawthorn bush blossom made a lovely backdrop.



Tony Edwards fetching the lamp for *Thomas's* front buffer beam and showing the special headboard.

Two weekends ago, we ran TWO sales stands on the same day (12 April) at the De Havilland Model Railway Society exhibition in WGC and at the Royston railway Exhibition at Bassingbourne! Both were highly successful, selling many second hand books (making my wife very happy) and even five RCTS new books. Many thanks to David Elsdon and John Dossett who ran the De Havilland stand while Paul Holloway and I were at Bassingbourne.

Finally today, 23 April, the last vestige of 92 *Squadron* was due to leave Wansford. A large container lorry arrived to remove our container full of tools and spares from the NVR. We had warned the haulier of the tight access, but when the lorry arrived, despite the driver's best efforts, he was unable to remove the container. It would appear that at least one part of the society was reluctant to leave the NVR! A solution awaits!



Tight, with outriggers deployed, jib extended, dragged, but unable to lift clear at that extension.

Steve Lacey

Solution to the May Puzzle (page 5)

1. The Princess – **46200**. 2. Maid of Lorn - **626893**. 3. Aureol - (D)**212**.

4. Eton – **30900**. 5. Newport Castle - **5065**.

Answer – **46235 City of Birmingham**

6. Sir Gareth – **30765**. 7. Rhyl – **45521**. 8. County of Dorset – **1013**. 9. Scafell Pike - (D)**1**.

10. Falcon - (D) **0280**

Answer – **34110 66 Squadron**

11. Blink Bonny - **60051**. 12. County of Oxford – **1023**. 13. Loch Quoich - **61787**.

14,. The Garth - **62764**. 15. Orion - **45691**.

Answer – **61664 Liverpool**

Martin Elms

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