

Railway Ramblings

Issue 189

April 2026

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



37424 running light loco through Hitchin on a Network Rail movement from Derby to London Gateway on 16 March 2026

Photo: Julian Gladwin

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 April 2026

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

14th April **The Vintage Trains Story – to a Train Operating Company**

Mike Corbett

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

28th April **Branch AGM** followed by
My Travels in 2025, Rail 200 and More

John Tigg

During May 2026

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

12th May **Oliver Bulleid and 35028 Clan Line**

Simon Martin

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

26th May **The Railways of Austria**

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 RCTS 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

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



Chairman's Platform

Firstly, please do not forget that our April meeting at Digswell (Welwyn) starts with our Branch AGM. This is an important part of keeping the branch going and I am expecting a good number of you to attend. Papers for the meeting have already been issued, as a supplement to the March issue of this newsletter. Remember that the AGM is a formal opportunity for members to ask anything they want to about the running of the branch and also to elect officers and committee for the next 12 months. Although important, the AGM does not usually take very long and it will be followed by a presentation *My Travels in 2025, Rail 200 and More*, given by John Tigg.

With the daylight hours increasing and the temperatures generally rising we should now be into much better weather, so no excuses for not coming to branch meetings! For those of you coming to meetings at Digswell please note that building works on the hall are now well underway and these are expected to continue through to November 2026. In each issue of *Railway Ramblings* we will try to keep you up-to-date with progress (see p 11 in this issue). If you have any concerns about coming please contact our Branch Secretary (Dave Elsdon) on 01438 714277.

A reminder about book sales at our meetings - for quite a few years I have brought boxes of pre-loved books to the meetings and the funds raised by selling them have been an invaluable contribution to branch funds. Over time the number of boxes I have at home has steadily increased and parts of my home now resemble a storage centre. I am also "not getting any younger" and am struggling to cope with moving the boxes to-and-fro. This cannot continue and your committee have decided that we need to change direction. In this issue of *Railway Ramblings* (p 5) you will find a repeat of the statement of what will happen in future.

Numbers attending meetings have grown over the last year and I consider our branch now to be in "rude health". Continuing to grow means we have a strong financial position and can look to do more & better in future. A few of you have already taken the opportunity to invite a friend or two to join you at meetings – we just ask for a nominal £1 each for anyone accompanying a member. (Just sign them in and add your membership number beside their name.) We are now extending this offer to our April and May meetings.

Steve Lacey

Please Note - Programme Change

Advance notice of a change to our published programme

The 9 June 2026 meeting at Hitchin (London Underground Trains of the Past – Brian Hardy) **is cancelled**. Brian is no longer able to travel to give presentations.

The new presentation for the June meeting at Hitchin will be

The Railways of South Wales in Transition, presented by Jeremy Segrott



New Season Starts at The Middy - Easter Steam Up

5 & 6 April



This year's Easter Steam Up is promising to be very special indeed as trains will be running to the new station at Aspsall Halt, with two guest locos in steam, *Illingworth* and *May*.

During Easter Weekend all the Middy facilities will be open, including steam train rides in genuine Victorian 4-wheel coaches, the MSLR museum, visits to the Restoration Shed, souvenir shop, café and the Middy real ale bar. Plus Easter Bunny hunts for younger visitors.

Also this weekend will be the first time that members of the public will be able to ride on the newly acquired ex-GER coach no.14, our only 6-wheeler and the only known existing vehicle ever to have run on the old MSLR.

Duty engines will be Hudswell Clarke, 1916 built 0-6-0ST no.1208 *Illingworth*, plus the Peckett & Sons 0-4-0 ST *May* built in 1915. *Illingworth*, has been with the Middy before, in 2018, and is a genuine light railway loco having once worked the Bradford Corporation's Nidd Valley Light Railway. Visitors will also be able to see progress on the restoration of the railway's own locomotive, Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST 1604 and LNER Y7 no. 985 resident with the Middy in the Lottery Funded Restoration Shed.

The extension of the line is now open to just over twice its previous length giving passengers a return journey of close on two kilometres.

Work is also progressing well with the building of the new destination station, Aspall Halt.



The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway offers a fascinating picture of what life was like on and around a rural railway during the early part of the last century.

It's a great day out for families and railfans alike.

(Information and photographs reproduced courtesy of the MSLR)

Book Sales at Branch Meetings

New RCTS Books

These will continue to be available at branch meetings, by ordering from the Branch Chairman. This saves you the cost of postage. Discounts are usually available to RCTS members.

Pre-Owned Books

Substantial stocks have accumulated over recent years. This stock will be available for purchase until the end of May 2026. After that, much of that remaining will be given to worthy causes or destroyed.

New additions (often from the estate of former members) can still be received and will be on offer for no less than four branch meetings after receipt, after which any remaining books will be given to worthy causes or destroyed.

These changes will be reviewed in 2027.

Back Issues of Railway Ramblings

If you want to view back issues of Railway Ramblings, you can find those from recent months on Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City branch pages of the RCTS website www.RCTS.org.uk These are available to members and non-members. Earlier issues are available by contacting the Editor John.Dossett@btinternet.com

The April Puzzle – Martin Elms

This month it is a Midland flavour

The first letter of each answer should spell a LMS location.

1. Locomotive depot with code 1E	
2. ? and Barnack station	
3. Locomotive Superintendent of LNWR 1857 - 1871	
4. ? High Level and Midland Stations	
5. Water troughs north of Bedford	
6. ? Castle and Bridge Street Stations	
7. Locomotive depot with code 11C	
8. Name of locomotive 46251 City of ?	
9. Station south of Shap	
10. Tunnel north of Dent	
11. Locomotive depot with code 8A	
12. Tunnel north of Berkhamsted	
13. S & D station linked to the L & S W R	

Best of luck.

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

Martin Elms



Easter Special

4 & 5 April 2026



Easter Special

“Kids for a Quid” runs throughout the Easter weekend, but visitors on Easter Sunday can enjoy some extra seasonal fun at Wansford Station.

Children can take part in the NVR Easter Trail, exploring the station site and searching for carrots along the way. Once they’ve completed the trail, they can visit the Easter Bunny, who will be wandering around the platform throughout the day, to receive a sweet Easter treat.

Overton Yard Open

Over the Easter weekend, Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th April, Overton Yard will also be open to visitors, offering a range of exhibits and activities for all the family.

Visitors can reach Overton either by travelling on the train or by parking locally and walking a short distance to the station (please note there is no parking on site).

Activities at Overton Yard include:

- Wagon displays
- Wagon Museum open
- Travelling Post Office (TPO) coaches open for exploration
- Demonstrations of TPO equipment, brake sticks and shunting poles (static demonstrations)
- Letter sorting and children's craft activities
- Treasure hunt
- Vintage vehicle displays, including a Scammell Scarab and trailers
- Pump trolley rides
- And much more...

It's a fantastic addition to your day at the railway and a great opportunity for younger visitors to explore both Wansford and Overton during their Easter adventure.

How It Works

- Children travel for £1 when accompanied by a full-paying adult
- Up to two children per adult qualify for the £1 fare
- Additional children are charged at the standard child fare

What's Included

Your Day Pass allows you to:

- Travel unlimited times throughout the day
- Hop on and off as often as you like
- Explore our stations and railway attractions
- Enjoy picnic areas and scenic lineside view
- Visit nearby local attractions* including:
 - Ferry Meadows Country Park
 - Railworld Wildlife Haven
 - Peterborough Cathedral
 - And many more destinations throughout the Nene Valley

*Please note: entry to local attractions is not included in your railway ticket.

For further details, including timetables and fares, visit

[Kids for a Quid | Nene Valley Railway Ltd](#)

60163 Tornado and Deltic 55009 Visit the NVR July 2026

Tickets now on sale.

(Reproduced courtesy of the NVR)



Western Workhorses – Spring-Steam Gala

17, 18 & 19 April



Special guest, the magnificent *Wightwick Hall* steam locomotive (straight from the set of the new Harry Potter TV show), will be running throughout the Easter Holidays.

The EOR annual steam gala takes place on 17, 18 and 19 April, with an intensive steam hauled service in operation. The home fleet of steam locomotives, along with visiting locomotives, come out to be put through their paces over some of the most challenging gradients in preservation, for three days of steam filled action!

Great Western Railway Modified Hall class locomotive 6989 *Wightwick Hall* will be working alongside EOR's own Great Western Railway Hall class locomotive 4953 *Pitchford Hall*, allowing a contrast between the modified and original Hall class locomotives! An additional visiting locomotive, large prairie locomotive 4144, will provide a welcome return to a large prairie locomotive to our branch-line, and will give a truly "Great Western Workhorses" theme. It will also be a rare opportunity to travel behind Hawthorn Leslie locomotive *Isabel* at the Epping Ongar Railway.

For details visit : [Spring Steam Gala | Epping Ongar Railway](#)

(Reproduced courtesy of the EOR).

Seen at Lancaster – Alan Elsdon

These photos were taken at the recently refurbished Lancaster station on 24 February 2026



802212 with a northbound Trans Pennine train



222002 with a southbound Cross Country service



195125, with a Manchester Airport train

Alan Elsdon

Meetings at Digswell - Update

Those who attended the February 24 and/or March 31 meeting at Digswell already know that work on rebuilding the Digswell Village Church Hall has now started. This work will continue throughout 2026.

The church itself has been adapted, with the pews removed and replaced with the chairs and some tables from the hall to enable us (and other hall users) to continue our meetings there.

Temporary facilities (a toilet & small kitchen) have been provided and proper access paths installed. A completely new doorway has been added to give access to the church and the original main access closed. Our access is now past the temporary facility block and around to the other side of the main church building.

We have lost the car park, as it is required by the builders. However street parking is not a problem for the hours of the day that we meet. This is not area where you will struggle to find somewhere to park.

As the months pass, no doubt things will be different (possibly each time we meet) but the church officers and the builders will ensure that conditions are "safe".

For anyone interested in the detail of what is being built the most authoritative source should be the WHBC website. On their "Planning Applications" section look for application 6/2025/0777/FULL and chose "documents".

John Dossett



Standard Days in April

April 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 19 & 26

April is a fairly busy time on the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway. Apart from the “special” days, on 1 & 4 April, this month also has a selection of “standard” days.



Tickets are issued as Day Rovers and are valid on every train and all day long. No seat reservations are required which means that you can sit in any non-dining areas on any train.

You can join the heritage trains at either Chinnor or Princes Risborough stations. Choose your seats, sit back, relax and enjoy your trip alongside the Chiltern Hills, where the lovely views open out to the Vale of Aylesbury stretching into the distance. As the scenery gently unfolds past your window you may also spot some of the local wildlife and perhaps the red kites whirling overhead! You can also choose to break your journey at Chinnor or Princes Risborough for a stroll into the village or town.

The station café at Chinnor serves teas, coffees, soft drinks and bottled water. They also have a selection of freshly made sandwiches and baps together with hot sausage rolls and pasties, homemade cakes, biscuits, crisps etc.

A trolley service of tea, coffee and snacks is also available on most trains.

For timetables, fares and further details visit the C&PRR website at:

[Day Rover tickets and fares for Standard Days: « Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway](#)

(Information and photograph reproduced courtesy of the C&PRR)

The April Presentations (1)

The Vintage Trains Story - to a Train Operating Company

- Mike Corbett



Vintage Trains - Clun Castle

14th April

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

The presentation covers the history and development of Vintage Trains, Birmingham to train operating company status, together with the Tyseley Collection of steam and diesel locomotives. It also illustrates examples of use of modern technology applied to heritage locomotives and rolling stock for safe main line operation.

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, Peterborough, South Essex, and Watford) The details are available in the *Railway Observer* and on the RCTS website.

The April Presentations (2)

Branch AGM

followed by

My Travels in 2025, rail 200 and More

- John Tigg



28th April

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

From a very young age, living in North West London between the West Coast Mainline and Metropolitan / Great Central route, John has had an interest in railways. Despite spending his last years before retirement travelling the country for a major plant supplier to the rail industry he was unable to visit many of the heritage railways close to his work. Since retiring in 2019, living on the Bedfordshire / Buckinghamshire border, with the West Coast Mainline on his doorstep, he is centrally located to visit many of the railways on his 'bucket list'.

John describes his presentation as: "A mix of standard and narrow gauge from national and heritage locations – local-to-home WCML and East West Rail to Wales and the Midlands. Some rare shots both traction and location. 2025 was a varied year!"

Exhibition in April

18 April 2026

De Havilland MRS



Address: Methodist Church, Ludwick Way, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 3PN

Opening Times: 10am-5pm

Entrance Fees: Adult £6 Child £2

Layouts:

Glenridding Lane - 00, Moos - Ho, Morfrail - 00, Porlock - 00, Underdown - On30, Whaplode - 0, Kilwinnoch - N, Ousewell, St Jude - EM, Sparrows Hill - 009, Dale - 0, Havil Junction - 00, Ludwick Shed - 00, Shabbey Road - Underground Ernie. Castle View - 009.

Traders and Societies:

LCGB, **RCTS**, Joe Lock, Kevin's Trains, Keith's Model Railways, DHMRS Second hand stall, DHMRS Books.

Displays: UK Railtours - Britain's Favourite Rail Tour Operator

(Info courtesy of the DHMRS)

Seen at Watton-at-Stone – Tom Gladwin



Rail Adventure HST Power Cars 43423 and 43467 (trailing) passing Watton-at-Stone on Thursday 12th March, 2026. They were travelling from Kings Norton Ot (on track) Plant Depot to York Way North Junction. There they reversed and returned, via Watton, to Peterborough.

Tom Gladwin

Solution to the April Puzzle (page 6)

1. **B**letchley.
2. **U**ffington.
3. **R**amsbottom.
4. **T**amworth.
5. **O**akley.
6. **N**orthampton.
7. **O**xenholme.
8. **N**ottingham.
9. **T**ebay.
10. **R**ise Hill.
11. **E**dge Hill.
12. **N**orthchurch.
13. **T**emplecombe.

Answer - **BURTON ON TRENT**

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

Workshop Wanderings – Steve Lacey

I thought this month I would tell you about my activities with a different hat on.....namely that of RCTS National Exhibitions Officer. I gained this hat by initially agreeing to serve on The Strategy Group of the RCTS after David Elsdon put my name forward. In March 2019 David announced his intention to leave the post of Exhibitions Officer and I ended up filling the vacancy! The job involves identifying potential railway events for us to attend, applying for a stand, negotiating fees, asking for help to staff the stand and usually attending with materials for the event. This can involve staying away if the venue is distant, claiming back expenses from the Society.

One of my latest events started with a contact from Surrey branch, who had a contact at South West Trains, who had asked if they would like to take a vacant spot in the Rail 200 train when it visited Salisbury on 21 February 2026. As he had been helpful to the branch in the past with talks and visits they were anxious to keep him on board. When the train was first announced the Strategy Committee had considered a display on the train, but the more we found out, the more it seemed to be a recruiting tool for the rail industry and we decided it was not for us. Surrey Branch were aware of the stand I had arranged at "The Greatest Gathering", as they had helped staff it, and wondered if I was able to provide an augmented stand at Salisbury. By this stage David Cross (a member of our Board of Trustees) was also involved and, as keeper of the RCTS nameplate collection, he suggested using the King Arthur nameplate (Sir Torre), the RCTS headboard that is used on tours etc, added to which I was able to display 92 Squadron's smokebox plate and some other railway artefacts (lamps etc). I also had 2 O-gauge models (92 Squadronof course and a Class 33 diesel) which had been typical of motive power through Salisbury in previous years. David Cross also had local images taken by his late father, Derek Cross (a well-known railway photographer).

As luck would have it, the train was due to visit Hertford East that weekend, so I went over on the Sunday to get a better idea of the space available, as I had no details. I managed to blag my way aboard (all the free tickets having been booked) and took some measurements and photographs for reference. Armed with these, I planned a display based on the one at "The Greatest Gathering".

Next, I contacted Phil Dominey, who was the manager at South West Trains in charge of the train at Salisbury. From him I learned that the train would be berthed in the bay platform adjacent to the car park. That was the good news, the bad news was that we only had access to set up from 09.15 on the morning and the train opened to the public at 10.00! Phil also hoped that the coach we were in was at the near end of the train, otherwise all the gear would

have to be taken by trolley along the whole length of the train (6 coaches with top and tailing Class 66's!). Next was booking overnight accommodation in Salisbury as driving down that morning for the early start did not seem an option. As it was, the train closed at 16.00 and we needed to be off by 17.00! By the way, I forgot to mention I was flying out to Hamburg the next morning with my son and grandson, for a long planned visit to Wunderland the huge model railway, housed over several floors of a warehouse in Germany! It was going to be a busy few days!

Next was to get help from the local branches to staff the event and help with setting up and breaking down. Jeremy Segrott, the RCTS branch liaison Officer was contacted and he organised help from branches in Bristol, South Wales, Surrey, Thames Valley and Solent ending up with a team of 8. Most were arriving by train on the morning, just one more thing to stress me out!

In the end things came together and we were ready to open by 10.00!



Group photo of the RCTS team just before opening

Much to my surprise, we managed to recruit eight new members, talked to a great number of the general public about our club and it's impending centenary. We used the large TV screen to show images from several of the members weekends to illustrate some of the Society's activities. The local branches gave out their programme material and a jolly time was had by all.

I had rigged the sound-fitted O-gauge models on rolling roads so that they were moving with steam and diesel noises, but as a bonus for the children the DCC controller was placed near to the front of the stand where they could produce either a whistle from *92 Squadron* or two-tones from the Class 33! By the end of the day, both models had run further on the rolling roads than they ever had done on my end-to-end layout!



Entrance to our display with video nameplates and table of local views



The other end of the display showing the model locos and a range of RCTS books.
(Photos by Derek Cross)

Since then I rounded off the month, with the assistance of David Elsdon and John Dossett, having a stand at the "Ally Pally" model railway exhibition, where we sold new RCTS books and recruited another 11 new members. As usual, it was good to see those of you visiting the show who spent a few minutes to "drop-by" the stand and say hello.

And finally, this weekend (28 March), Paul Holloway and I will be at Royston MRE representing our branch, looking to recruit new members, selling RCTS publications and second-hand books.

Late news is that there is a possibility that I may have another date with the Rail 200 train, this time at Dereham!

And in my spare time.....

Steve Lacey

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.