Journal of the Great Central Railway Society

No. 152 June 2007

Front cover caption

LNER class B3/2 4-6-0 no. 6166 Earl Haig (corrected) in resplendent LNER green livery passes a solitary ganger with an express. A Robinson 4-cylinder design, it was built as GCR class 9P (the 'Faringdons') in 1920. The class totalled six locomotives, the best known being the war memorial Valour. Four of the class were rebuilt with Caprotti valve gear by the LNER forming sub-class B3/2. No. 6166 was rebuilt in 1929.

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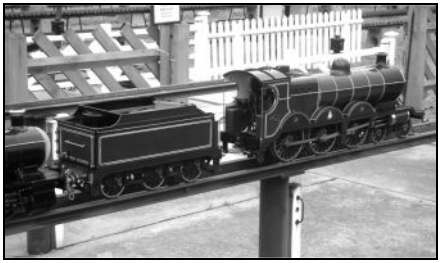
Editorial by Bob Gellatly

When Robinson's class 11E (later LNER D10) appeared in 1913 they were named after members of the Great Central Railway board, earning them the nickname 'Directors'. When his class 11F (later LNER D11) was introduced in 1919-22 they were called 'Improved Directors' but only two of the class were named after board members, the remainder being named after royalty and WW1 battles. Two of the earlier 'Directors' were also renamed to commemorate royalty. In the case of Sir Alexander Henderson, his new title Lord Faringdon appeared on class 9P no. 1169, but for Charles Stuart-Wortley there was no such re-incarnation. We are fortunate that the National Collection includes the preserved 'Improved Director' no. 506 Butler-Henderson.

After Grouping the LNER continued the theme of naming locomotives after board members with some of Gresley's A4 Pacifics, originally named after birds, being renamed. They now sat quite comfortably alongside Sir Nigel Gresley himself, as no. 4498 had been so named to commemorate the building of the 100th Gresley Pacific. Gresley's successor, Edward Thompson (1941-46), was commemorated on the first of his final A2 design (later designated A2/3) no. 500 Edward Thompson. The final CME of the LNER, A. H. Peppercorn (1946-47), was commemorated on his class A2 Pacific no. 525 A. H. Peppercorn, the only one of the class to be completed before Nationalisation. His earlier class A1 Pacifics had included names of CMEs of the constituent pre-Grouping companies - Sturrock, Stirling, Ivatt of the GNR, and Fletcher, Worsdell, Raven of the NER. Sadly the CMEs of the GCR, GER and NBR were ignored. It is to be regretted that John G. Robinson's name has never adorned a locomotive - of his own design or those of his successors. (chronology corrected)

John G. Robinson ?

Our friends at GB Railfreight have been involved in some memorable naming events with a GCR connection. Class 66 locomotive no. 66707 was named Sir Sam Fay Great Central Railway by Edgar Fay on 31st August 2003 at Rushcliffe Halt on the GCR (Nottingham). Class 66 locomotive no. 66715 was named Valour by Mike Hartley on 11th Nov. 2003 at Sheffield Victoria. Metronet-dedicated class 66 locomotive no. 66722 was named Sir Edward Watkin (in his role as Metropolitan chairman, but he was also MSL/GCR chairman) by David Jukes on 26th Jan. 2007 at Euston (see back cover photo). It would be appropriate if future namings were to include John G. Robinson. I hope that GB Railfreight will be sympathetic to the suggestion.



A model of GCR 4-6-0 'Immingham' at Ruddington. photo : Bob Gellatly

Please put a note in your diary for 25/26/27 August. Over that Bank Holiday weekend there will be a GCR themed event at Ruddington. Our good friends at Ruddington, GCR (Nottingham) Ltd and the GCR Rolling Stock Trust, always give GCRS members a warm welcome. As well as the full-scale railway, the Ruddington site also offers an excellent miniature railway operated by the the Nottingham Society of Model & Experimental Engineers and a collection of vintage buses. So there is plenty to see.

Len Bunning, the Southern Area Representative on the GCRS committee since 1993, has decided to relinquish the role. Thank you, Len, for all the work you have put in over 14 years. We are pleased to welcome Richard Butler as the new Southern Area Representative.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held on Saturday 12th May 2007 at the New Venture Social Club, Beeston, Nottingham

Present: 34 members.

The meeting was opened at 11:10 by the Chairman, who welcomed the members to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: John White, David Bodicoat, Howard Turner, David Hibbert, Pete Garrard, Jason Marbeck, Geoff Hughes, Richard Middleton and Richard Hardy.

2. Minutes of the 2006 AGM

The minutes of the 2006 Annual General Meeting, which had been published in Forward 149 were accepted as an accurate record. Proposed by Martin Walker and seconded by Frank Stratford. They were then signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arose.

4. Officer's Reports

Chairman's Report

Mike Hartley said that the last year had been a quiet one. The proposed Gala Day at Ruddington had been postponed owing to problems at the site. On a positive note, the Society had been involved in the Immingham Centenary Weekend. A permanent site for the archives is still being sought. *Forward* magazine now has a new editor, Bob Gellatly. Mike thanked former editor Brian Bell for his excellent work. John White wishes to stand down as Sales Officer and Mike asked for a volunteer from those present. He finished by thanking the committee and everyone else who had worked hard within and for the Society.

Secretary's Report

Brian Slater said that four committee meetings had been held in the past year and all members could attend future meetings. He welcomed Bob Gellatly to the committee and said that the committee had made a presentation of a digital radio to Brian Bell in recognition of his contribution as editor. He then read out a letter of thanks from Brian Bell. Help is required in manning the society stand at various exhibitions throughout the country. We could not attend the Gauge O Guild exhibition at Telford last year as we could not man the stand. He finished by thanking the committee for their support and the Nottingham Society of Model and Experimental Engineers for making facilities available at Ruddington for committee meetings.

Treasurer's Report (including Membership Secretary's Report)

Eric Latusek reported that membership was now 493, a decrease of 5 on the previous year. He had produced a handout showing details of the membership over the years which were explained in full. Four members had died during the year. To date, 84 members had to renew their membership compared to 104 at the same time last year and invited any present to renew. 29 members now pay their subscription by Standing Order and anyone wishing to do likewise should contact him. Copies of the accounts had been handed out which he commented upon. The adjusted balance at the end of the financial year was £6491.34 compared to £5718.86 in the previous year. The accounts had again been audited by Martin Gray (ACMA) and Eric thanked him. Had he been a member, he would have been one of the longest serving members! Stephen Gay asked if Eric ever received reasons for people not renewing their membership. Eric replied that in many cases he had no reasons, others resigned for financial reasons or their interests had changed and some members had died. The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Jack Turner, seconded by Brian Holyland and agreed by the membership.

Sales Officer

In John White's absence, Brian Slater read out his report.

John had been temporary Sales Officer for 5 years and he is prepared to carry on for a further year, although he would prefer if someone came forward to take over the position. John had taken the sales stand to Scunthorpe, Caister, Sheffield, Cleethorpes and the NEC Birmingham shows. He had

relied on donations of material for sale this year and appealed for any old Forwards, books or other magazines. He had been asked to dispose of collections of deceased members, for which the Society received a 10% commission.

Editor's Report

Bob Gellatly reported that he had produced 3 issues of Forward so far and the 4th is ready to go to the printers. He had had good liaison with the printers for the first 2 issues but following a change of staff, Forward 151 had been printed differently to his specifications and he hopes this can be resolved. He has attempted to include more photographs although some which were downloaded from the Internet were of poor resolution. He has a photo editor and he hopes that his skill in using it will improve. There has been a steady flow of material for which he is grateful, although more is required, even a half page snippet is welcome. He has tried to vary the content to encourage readers to look through Forward straight away rather than leaving it on the bookshelf. Correspondence for Reader's Forum seems to have dried up and Bob said that he may have to write to himself under fictitious names unless readers send in their own letters! He finished by saying how much he has enjoyed his contacts with members through his role as editor.

Model Steward's Report

John Quick reported that he had had another busy year, answering a huge variety of enquiries. He had supplied information on Woodford to two new members. He is assisting Andrew Horrocks-Taylor with the GCR Rolling Stock Trust website. It is being split into three parts in respect of locomotives. He had been requested for details on MS&LR classes 2 and 2A 4-4-0s as a scheme exists to build a replica. The society has attended various model railway exhibitions. He said that thanks should go to all those who had helped and especially Andrew David who is always helpful. He apologised for the lack of progress being made in producing GCRS locomotive transfers.

Midlands Area Rep's. Report

The absent David Bodicoat had said that he had no report to make.

Northern Area Rep's, Report

Ken Grainger said that he was still getting used to being the Northern Area Rep after his co-option. He was the co-host/organiser of the Rotherham GCRS Group. He has been doing slide shows, mainly on the GC but also Isle of Man, Irish narrow gauge and Lynton & Barnstaple. Ken is on the War Memorial committee and had completed the Roll of Honour. He thanked Richard Graham and Mark Hambly for their assistance in that.

Archivist's Report

No report was received.

Southern Area Rep's. Report

Len Bunning gave his final review as Southern Area Rep. He said that it had been a unique year in that the Southern Group had not been thrown out of a venue! The Exmouth Arms in Euston is a superb venue. Len will still be involved in the group's walks and trips. He thanked the various members who had helped him. He referred to his 14 years on the committee and said he had had a wonderful time and that there was a good spirit of cooperation. His highlights had been the Marylebone Centenary in 1999, the three days at 'Steam on the Met' and the appearance of GBRf *Valour* at Marylebone. He finished by giving his successor, Richard Butler, every good wish.

5. Election of Officers

The following nominations had been received by the secretary for committee posts for the coming year:

Chairman - Mike Hartley, Secretary - Brian Slater, Treasurer/Membership Secretary - Eric Latusek, Sales Officer - John White, Northern Area Rep - Ken Grainger, Midlands Area Rep - David Bodicoat, Southern Area Rep - Richard Butler, Editor - Bob Gellatly, Model Steward - John Quick, Archivist - Gillian Brooks.

In the absence of any other nominations, their appointment was proposed by Richard Graham, seconded by Brian Holyland and agreed by all present.

6. Any Other Business

Brian Holyland commented on the marvellous job done by Len in the Southern Group and welcomed Richard Butler to the committee.
Alan Ashurst referred to Richard Tilden-Smith's talk at last year's AGM and said that reinstatement of part of the GC route is still under discussion, according to Rail News.
Bob Gellatly said that the demolition of the Birdcage Bridge at Rugby will feature in a TV programme on 16th May.
Jack Turner said that there was talk of reinstating the line from Aylesbury to Milton Keynes and Cambridge.
Alan Ashurst said that a Wrexham to Marylebone service may happen during the next year.
Paul White said that he had sent a letter to the Guardian, which had been published. It will appear in Forward 152.

7. 2007 AGM

Last year, Northwich had been suggested and it was agreed that next year's AGM will be held at Northwich, either at the refurbished railway station or at the Salt Museum. The committee will arrange this event with Alan Ashurst's assistance

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 12:00.

Brian Slater
Secretary

Welcome to the following new members

Mr D.J. Speight, Boston Spa
Mr J.G.Poulton, Frecheville
Mr J.T.Williams, Meltham
Mr G.R.Smith, Northam
Mr C.R.Hewlett, Ockham
Dr J.W.Fox, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia
Mr P.G.Toone, Hucknall
Mr M.J.Walters, Davenport
Revd E.R. Worthy, Wellingborough
Mr K.Wragg, Martin
Mr D.Dalton, Mansfield
Mr L.Jackson, Bolton-on-Dearne
Mr K.J.Warren, Gosport
Mr K.Simmons, Woodford Halse
Mr R.Middleton, Belfast
Mr A.Harvey, St Neots
Mr P.D.Llewellyn, Coombe Dingle
Mr J.H.B.Gedny, Bromley
Mr A.E.Genders, Baldock
Mr G.B.Brook, Watton-at-Stone
Mr D.Russell, Kexby
Mr Battersby, Penmeanmawr
Mr P.Coulter, Eythorne

GCRS on the web

The Society is looking to register the domain name www.gcrs.org.uk which is being relinquished by its present owner. At the minute this URL links in to www.thewoodheadsite.org.uk/gcrs which has information on the Society and for that we are very grateful. We intend to make www.gcrs.org.uk the 'official' web site for the Society. Geoff Burton has offered to be our 'webmaster' so please 'watch this web site'!

Reader's request

from Alan Stennett : e-mail Ala.Stennett@virgin.net
I am compiling a book on the closed railway lines of Lincolnshire, including a number of MS&L/GC lines. I am looking for photographs of the two lines that crossed the Trent into Lincoln via Torksey and Skellingthorpe during their time in use, and wondered if any readers might have any. I am a member of the Great Northern Railway Society and live in the GN station at Woodhall Junction.

Trains through Gainsborough

by George Hinchcliffe

As a founder member of Gainsborough Model Railway Society I always make the pilgrimage to Gainsborough at the end of August, and spend a long time watching the trains go by on the Society's huge O gauge layout. I usually meet some interesting visitors and last August was no exception. A member of the GCR Society was a visitor and as we watched an O4 trundling around hauling a substantial train of wagons, the visitor who was alongside me and obviously knew who I was, commented that he had enjoyed reading my contribution to Forward magazine (p.36 in Forward 145) on the subject of the Robinson O4s. He too was raised in Gainsborough and we spent at least an hour talking about the trains we saw in our youth. Hence this reminiscence on trains through Gainsborough.

The railway bridge over the River Trent at Gainsborough.

Lincolnshire can only be accessed via a bridge or a ferry. By far the most interesting railway bridge is the Trent bridge at Gainsborough where the line from Sheffield to Grimsby and Cleethorpes (GC) uses the same bridge as the line from Doncaster to Lincoln (GN/GE), the latter usually known as the Joint Line. This bridge over the River Trent and the triangle formed by one line going northeast, one going southeast and a dirt road, provided a train observers' paradise. By the time I was ten and had a bicycle I spent a lot of my leisure time on this dirt road between the two lines just watching trains. Books on trains usually arrived on birthdays and at Christmas and in one there was a description with diagrams of locomotive wheel arrangements so I was able to classify locomotives this way and also identify various classes from the books. I could recognise a GC from a GN and a Robinson from a Gresley.

By a strange quirk of fate my mother was with me when we met a relative at Gainsborough Central station and as the train came in mother asked me what the 'Class D9' meant on the buffer beam. I must have seen hundreds of locomotives by this time but had never noticed anything on the buffer beam except the number. I soon figured out that the letter was the wheel arrangement and the number the particular class. There was no Ian Allan in those pre-war days. I have little doubt other watchers of trains had similar experiences. Watching became much more interesting after that.

The variety of locomotives was fascinating to me even as a ten year old and as mother and I made almost weekly visits to Lincoln I had the opportunity to observe locomotive workings close at hand. In general the majority of trains on the GC section had GC engines and those on the Joint Line had GN engines. There were exceptions on the Joint Line as a few goods trains had O4s but the majority had the Gresley O3s (reclassified from O1 in 1944). One passenger train had a regular Lincoln D9 which took a portion of the Harwich Boat Train from Lincoln to York but did not stop at Gainsborough.

Though my early watching days are the main object of this account I was reminded by my newly found acquaintance of the post-war workings of empty coal wagons from March to Doncaster. On Sunday mornings people of all ages (some in prams) would congregate on the dirt road to the south of the Joint Line to watch the empties go by. This was quite a sight as an O4 with 100 wagons came through Lea Road Station and went over Trent Bridge. The engine was on the bridge when the brake van was still in the station. I think these must have been the longest trains ever to have run on British rails. Two block sections ahead clear was the signalling regulation required to operate them.

There was a Saturdays only train from Gainsborough to Lincoln which came from Lincoln, then the loco ran round the train and left at 1.30pm. I travelled on this many times. No one single class of locomotive was to be found on this train. It seemed anything Lincoln had that they could spare was

used. I recall seeing ex-GC class D9s and other 4-4-0s of GN origin (I couldn't tell the difference between them), C4s, B4s and A5s turning up. There was a train which started its journey in the North and went to the Eastern Counties which left Gainsborough at around a quarter to twelve (my mother never knew the exact times of the trains - 'half past', 'quarter to' .. was near enough).

We often travelled on this train and on every occasion except two it was hauled by a 'Shire'. On the first of these two occasions an ex-GN C1 Atlantic turned up some 20 minutes late but gave us quite a good run to Lincoln considering the 10 coach load. On the second occasion the train engine was an ex-GC B7, one of Robinson's small wheel 4-cylinder 4-6-0s. The train was over half an hour late and we did not run very well. The return working of this locomotive was on the Eastern Counties to York train. When the B7 backed on to the train at Lincoln, a driver from a train bound for Sheffield which had a 'Director' class on came over to the B7 and had a chat with the driver and fireman. As I was then 14 years old I was able to recall the conversation. It went something like this --
D11 driver : "How come you have one of these on?"
B7 driver : "We failed at Doncaster. The brick arch came down and they gave us this thing. It rides well but it won't steam."
D11 driver : "May I have a look in the box?" The driver had a look in the box and used the shovel to shield the glare. "You've got too much at the front. These engines like plenty at the door and let the movement shake it down to the front. When you leave, give it some hammer and clear the front, then drop it across the back and a bit down the sides. Give it about half regulator and pull it up to about half way and then work on the regulator."
I rode this train back to Gainsborough and by Kesteven Siding (5 miles) the safety valves had lifted and we finished up on time at Gainsborough. This conversation had introduced me to some new terminology and I resolved to find out more about the mysteries of firing.

Summer Saturdays and Sundays saw some GC activity on the Joint Line with specials or Summer only trains going south to destinations such as East Anglia, Skegness and Mablethorpe. Most of these trains had B4s or very occasionally one of the only three B6s. Some of these trains changed engines at Lincoln and continued to the East Lincolnshire resorts with a J11 or J6. I do recall on one occasion the solitary named GN Atlantic taking over from a B4 at Lincoln.

You have to bear in mind that some of the memories I am describing happened over 70 years ago and the grey matter does not always recall things as easily as I would like. The recollections so far are up to the start of WW2. Until then the Joint Line operations remained more or less the same. The GC section through Gainsborough also remained much the same. The line ran diagonally at the end of the street where I lived and I spent hours sitting on a fence watching the trains. I could also see the railway from my bedroom window and when I went to St. Johns Infants School I made sure my seat in the classroom was opposite a window that looked out on the railway. What went on in the classroom was not as interesting as what went on outside! Before going to school at the age of four my daily duty was to go to the end of the street just before 2pm and watch Earl Beatty go by on a train consisting of three passenger carriages and up to 20 fish vans. This important educational activity enabled me to tell the time, read numbers, recognise the letters on the engines and the word 'fish' on the vans. Though Earl Beatty was the most frequent performer, Valour, Lord Faringdon, Lord Stuart of Wortley and the unnamed 6167 put in appearances. The return working was just before 8pm with the three passenger carriages minus the vans.

It was years later that I found out that this, my favourite train, went to Nottingham, changed engines and then the whole train went to Leicester where the vans were detached and travelled south - where to I never found out. I think I would be about seven when my parents and I travelled to Nottingham for a couple of days and returned on the evening return working which left Nottingham soon after 6pm. On the outward journey this train did not call at Retford but used the GC crossing but did call at Retford on the return. I seem to remember that most of the passenger trains were pulled by green engines. After my initiation to the class designation system, I realised that these green engines were D9, D10, D11 and C4. By the time I was at the junior school almost all these engines were appearing in black livery.

There were, of course, other trains that required my attention. More detail will follow but there were two other trains which I remember quite well. Soon after 9.30am an impressive 6 or 7 coach train

went west usually hauled by a B2 - Sir Sam Fay and one or two of the cities usually worked this train, which headed for Liverpool via Manchester Central. Following Earl Beatty was a Sheffield bound train headed by a C4 or C5. It was some time before I was able to figure out some of the outward and return workings of many of these trains. For instance it was war time before I found out that the 9.30am Liverpool train engine was the return working of the mail train which called at Gainsborough at 4.23am in the morning. I also discovered that the diagram was given to one of Sheffield's best engines and covered the mail train from Sheffield to Cleethorpes, then to Manchester Central returning to Sheffield on the afternoon Liverpool to Cleethorpes.

By the time I was 13 or so, I had figured out many of the locomotive diagrams and, with the aid of my bicycle, was not only able to make trips to the dirt road but also able to solve the mystery of a train of wagons which went past the end of the road as I was setting off for school. This turned out to be Gainsborough pilot which shunted at the Central station and once a day also made a trip to Lea Road station, left wagons, collected a few more and then went back home to Retford. The engine was usually tender first when it arrived and then returned chimney first. About this time, 1935 or 1936, a Sentinel locomotive shunted Lea Road and what was known as the Low Level Yard which was close to the dirt road. I and a few of my friends occasionally managed a ride on the Sentinel and enjoyed the art of shunting trucks. Most of what was made in Gainsborough at this time went out by train and the Low Yard had a collection of trucks with timber, agricultural machinery and animal feed on them by the late afternoon.

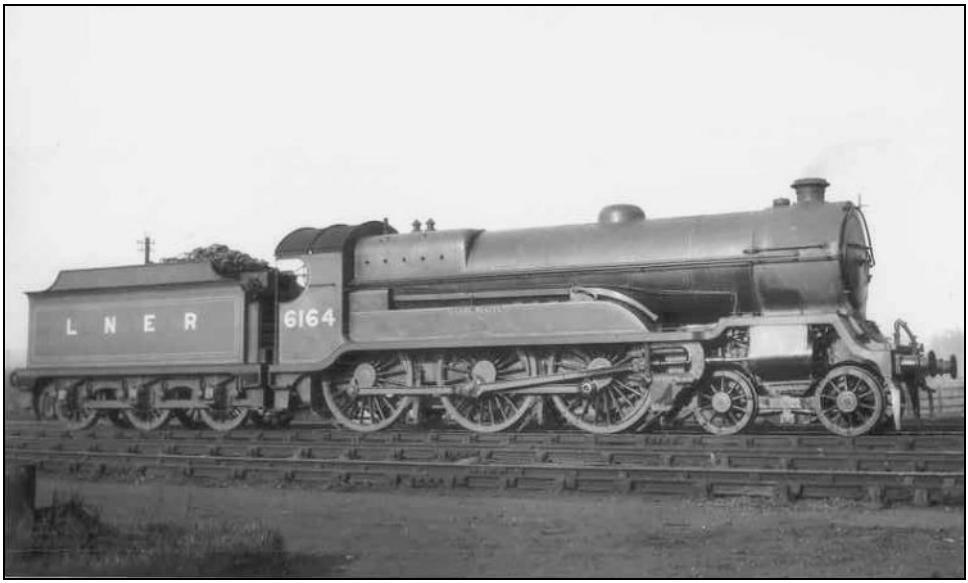
At the Central station shunting was much more concentrated. The locomotive was always a J11, known affectionately as a 'Pom-Pom'. I discovered that the driver of this was a friend of my mother's uncle. A discreet word and I was invited to meet him and ride on his engine. I cannot describe the joys and complexity of shunting in a goods yard. It is a world of its own. It was not long before I was asked if I would like to put coal on the fire. I had already watched the young fireman manipulate coal through the firehole door and into the back and sides of the firebox. Being inquisitive I always asked why things were done a particular way. Explanations followed. The firehole door on GC engines is higher than the shovelling plate on the tender and as the engine moves along the coal shakes down. The J11 liked the coal under the door and round the sides. Before long I was able to fire and keep pressure up on 180 psi. After lessons finished at school I would cycle to Central station and stay with my new found friends until they set off for Lea Road and home. Once I had mastered the injectors I was left to apply the shovel and injectors on my own but with the driver always there to keep an eye on me. I think this arrangement suited the fireman as he would then go off to visit his girl friend who worked in the refreshment room! This routine went on until I was 14 and left school. I remember thinking that I was now qualified to fire from Kings Cross to Edinburgh! I was apprenticed at Marshalls who built steam engines of almost every kind.

I never met the driver again, but by a trick of fate I met up with the fireman several times later under circumstances I could not have foreseen. Until the outbreak of WW2, when I joined the Royal Navy, the pattern of train workings hardly changed except that the trains became longer, the times altered and the Leicester fish with 'Earl Beatty' ceased to run. For me, gone were the excursions to Cleethorpes and Mablethorpe, the Holiday Runabout tickets and my trips by regular train services to Lincoln and other exotic places. There had been some changes in the variety of locomotive classes to be seen on the GC section. Some GN Atlantics took over some of the passenger workings. The 9.30am to Liverpool continued to run but with Sandringham B17 locomotives. In fact this train which was the return working of the morning mail had an amazing variety. For several weeks I worked on a project which allowed me a view of the line and so was able watch the 9.30am each day. On one occasion a Gresley Pacific Woolwinder was in charge. I well remember during the course of one week (Monday to Saturday) there was a different class of engine each day - B7, B3, B4, K3, D11 and B2.

I have been helped considerably in writing these memoirs by having access to the 'RCTC series of Locomotives of the LNER' , the more informative 'Yeadons Register for LNER Locomotives' and the reprint of the 'Bradshaw's Timetable' for June 1922. The latter shows many of the trains which I travelled on in their pre-grouping times and many of their times had hardly altered over the years. For instance the 'Morning Mail' left Gainsborough at 4.14am not 4.23am and the 9.30am was really 9.35am. The Leicester Fish timings varied by only a few minutes.

LNER class D9 4-4-0 no. 6041.This was an early design by Robinson, the first of the class appearing in 1901. They were put to work on the Marylebone expresses, displacing the less powerful class 11A 4-4-0s of Pollitt design. A superheater was added in 1913 and the Ross 'pop' safety valves were added by the LNER. No. 6041 entered BR stock as 62325 but only survived until 1950 after spending its final years shedded at Trafford Park.

LNER class O4 2-8-0 no. 6229 with a goods train at Torside in 1939. This illustrates the power of the Robinson 2-8-0s, most of their lives being spent at the head of long trains of wagons, usually of coal. photo : E.R.Morten



LNER class B3/1 4-6-0 no. 6164 Earl Beatty in its original form with the raised running plate over the outside cylinder. Compare this with the rebuilt B3/2 illustrated on the front cover. No. 6164 (along with 6166 and 6169) did not have cab windows. It survived until 1 photo © Photomatic Ltd

LNER class J11 0-6-0 no. 4424 (1946 numbering). This class was a development of Robinson's first 0-6-0 design (LNER class J10). It became the standard small goods engine for the GC with 174 being built over the period 1901-1910 in numerous batches from different manufacturers. Known as the 'Pom-Poms' because their noisy bark sounded like the rapid firing gun of that name used in the Boer War. Some of the class were later fitted with piston valves and designated J11/3. No. 4424 retained its slide valves until withdrawn in 1958.

I travelled a lot during the War and many times on the footplate. I was on a mine-sweeper for 18 months during which time I travelled on the 6.40pm from Cleethorpes most nights when sweeping the Humber Estuary and based at Grimsby. Almost every night on the 6.40pm I was on the engine and the fireman on several occasions was the man I first met years earlier on the 'Pom-Pom' at Gainsborough Central. This took me home to Gainsborough for the night and the following day I was up early to catch the 'Morning Mail' at 4.23am to return to base. I had a few footplate rides on this train as well.

Having had some experience of firing I was always on the look out for a footplate ride. I was at Euston on my way to Stranraer to join a ship. A Class 5 was on the front of the train. I had never been on the footplate of a Class 5 before, and as I gazed in admiration was invited aboard. Before I knew it we got the right-away, and as I was about to get off, the driver told me to stay on. It was a thrilling ride. The engine was rather rough but steamed well. I looked in horror at the length of the firebox and was rather glad I did not have to throw coal to the front end. The Class 5 came off at Bletchley and was replaced by Jubilee Duncan.

I had many footplate rides during the war, including some in Australia. There were big differences between engines and how they rode and how they were driven. It would be true to say that although my early days of footplate rides may have been by grace and favour, I learned a great deal and this was very useful to me in later years. My apprenticeship at Marshalls gave me invaluable engineering experience which helped in my later career and in O gauge modelling.

I close with some wartime experiences with GC engines. Weekend leave meant returning to Chatham on a midnight train from Retford. I recall the excitement on Retford station when all the platform staff turned out to watch a 31 coach train go south behind class B7 no. 5032. Though I have read that 27 coaches was the longest service train ever pulled (by an A4 I think), 31 beats it but I also think it could have been a troop train, so it may not have counted! Strange though it may seem no one has ever been able to explain how this particular engine came to be on this train on the GN main line

Over the years I have never travelled on a steam train when it has stalled, being unable to pull the train because it was too heavy. I mentioned the 31 coach train hauled by no. 5032 to Ossie Nock who did some calculations and reckoned the load was virtually on the engine's limit. One more huge wartime load comes to mind, also at Retford. Going back off leave I caught the evening train from Gainsborough with the usual Sunday train of 7 coaches behind Director Prince George. At Retford the train from Lincoln, also with 7 coaches, was combined and the 14 coach train was then taken on to Sheffield, all stations, by Prince George. I enquired if this was a regular working on a Sunday and it was, but only in July and August when the Lincoln train was full of fishermen from the mining communities who travelled to Saxilby and Bardney to fish in the canal and river.

I only have one more recollection of a GC engine with a huge train and this was in Edinburgh. Again I was going home on leave, having spent three weeks minesweeping in the Clyde, and decided to go via Edinburgh and the East Coast line. The train of empty stock came into Waverley station with 18 coaches hauled by Scottish Director Captain Craigengelt. Shortly after this I had an interesting experience out of Glasgow Queen Street with this same Scottish Director. I talked my way onto the engine and we set off up the fearsome 1 in 40 incline. Suddenly there was a bang and we came to a standstill in the middle of the tunnel - the nearest experience of hell I have ever experienced. The driver told the fireman to go back and find out the trouble. The banking engine had in fact broken a coupling rod. The driver then decided he was not going to stop there and the banker was uncoupled and its handbrake applied. The Captain then eased back with the train to compress the bankers buffers and I came in handy. While the fireman worked the sanders and I worked the reverser the driver opened the regulator and we were off.

Shortly after this I had go into hospital to have my tonsils out and returned to Chatham Barracks. By this time the War in Europe was nearly over and my next ship was a destroyer which took me to Australia and China. My experiences there were described in Forward 143. I was away about a year and upon returning found the old LNER was soon to be B1-ised and within a few years GC engines

LNER class D10 4-4-0 no. 5437 Prince George. Robinson's second 4-4-0 design was introduced in 1913 and they were all originally named after directors of the GCR, hence the class was known as the 'Directors'. No. 5437 was originally named Charles Stuart Wortley before being renamed Prince George in 1920. The success of the class led to the introduction of a futher batch of 'Improved Directors' (LNER class D11) from 1919. The most noticeable distinguishing feature between the two classes is the cab style - cut-out cabs on the D10s and window cabs on the D11s. No. 5437 survived until 1955 as no. 62658.

LNER class C4 4-4-2 no. 6085 at Neasden on 9 Oct. 1937. Built in 1905 it became one of the last of Robinson's Atlantics to be withdrawn in Nov. 1950 as no. 2909. photo © Railway Photographs

were somewhat rare on the GC section through Gainsborough and apart from the O4s on a Sunday there were none on the Joint Line. Some of the Directors moved to the Cheshire Lines but then the D11s returned to Sheffield and worked the Cleethorpes trains. Then some of these D11s found their way to Lincoln and worked the Nottingham and Derby trains in place of the Compounds and big tanks. They were run down but kept time and after the Midland men became used to them they were at best tolerated. Amazingly on two successive summer Saturdays Prince Albert worked a mid-morning relief train from Lincoln to York. It was regarded as a good engine. In what was to be their twilight years Zeebrugge, Somme and Prince Albert led quite adventurous lives being seen in the London area, Basingstoke, Whitby and The Lake District as Alan Pegler and Gainsborough Model Railway Society enjoyed themselves!

The pre-war Sunday excursions continued to Cleethorpes and the Retford J11s had a great time at the seaside. Gradually the B1s reigned supreme but one GC working continued well into B1 days. A local train from Cleethorpes to Retford leaving Gainsborough around 9am and back at 12.30pm was worked by one of the few surviving GC Atlantics, now renumbered 2909. I made a determined effort to ride on this train one Saturday. Alas on that day a K3 turned up and 2909 was never seen again and as far as I personally can recall I never saw another GC passenger engine through Gainsborough again. However I did have a hand in getting the O4 and Butler Henderson preserved.

The J11 tour from Lincoln to Northampton and the O4 tour round the South Yorkshire Colliery area from Lincoln with a gallop back along the main line from Doncaster to Retford were the last passenger trains hauled by GC engines on the national network thanks to the Gainsborough Model Railway Society - which is where we started this reminiscence.

Editor's note : If you wish to visit Gainsborough Model Railway Society's Open Days the remaining dates for this year are 16/17 June, 15 July, 25/26/27 August, 14 Oct, 9 Dec and 30 Dec. Opening times are 1.30pm to 6pm except for the 27 August which is 10.30am to 6pm. The location is opposite the far end of the Tesco car park in an old Victorian school building and is well signed. If you have never been before you will be surprised at the sheer size of the O gauge layout. There is also a web site at www.gainsmodelrailway.ik.com.

Basingstoke on 11 Sept. 1955 found class D11 4-4-0s no. 62666 Zeebrugge and no. 62667 Somme double-heading a special far from home territory.

LNER class D11/2 4-4-0 no. 6388 Captain Craigengelt at Eastfield on 31 Aug. 1938. These 'Scottish Directors' were built by the LNER to the Scottish loading gauge (lower chimney and dome) in 1924 so they were not GCR engines. They were named after characters in Sir Walter Scott's novels, following the tradition of Reid's NBR 'Scott' class (LNER class D30). The names were painted along the straight splasher. photo : L. Hanson

Cast iron corner

A GCR stop valve notice from Leicester. Black lettering on a red ground.

Along Cheshire lines

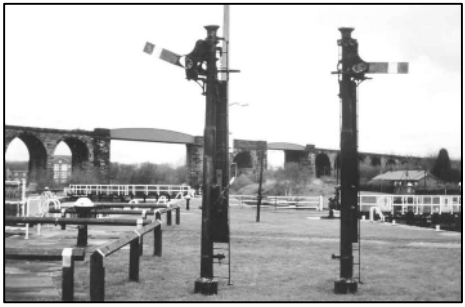
Part 3 : Northwich to Chester

by Ken Grainger

Northwich station's eastbound platform still has a fine range of buildings, dating from 1897, despite the 'rationalisation' of its outer canopies impressively restored as 'The Zone'. Its pointy-arch windowed yellow brick walls are a bit bare, bereft of posters or timetables, but that, I understand, is being addressed. The survival of the platform canopy is a mixed blessing. On an earlier visit, a pigeon perching overhead registered a very near miss as I surveyed the scene from a platform seat. On the other, westbound, platform, once an island, the outer face of which accommodated L&NW connections, but now just one-sided for the Chester trains, there is - nothing. Apparently when the CLC rebuilt the station the L&NW wouldn't pay its wack and so its platform stayed bare !

Those L&NW trains used to arrive from Crewe via Sandbach and the Middlewich line, which curves in from the south at Sandbach Junction, immediately beyond the Chester end of the platforms. It had been hoped that 45407 could arrive that way, but that longed-for return of passenger traffic to the Middlewich line is still awaited - hopefully it won't be too much longer.

Thus far, the crossing of Cheshire's very pleasant but undramatic countryside had been achieved without any major engineering works, but now 45407's exhaust sharpened as we climbed away from Northwich to cross the major engineering feature on the line, the magnificent viaduct of 40-odd masonry arches, punctuated by girder spans, that crosses first the River Dane and then the Weaver Navigation. In deference to the structure's age, 45407 decorously tip-toed across, giving us time to look down to the left, at the Weaver Navigation's twin side-by-side locks, each controlled by bi-directional railway-style semaphore signals! Wonderful!

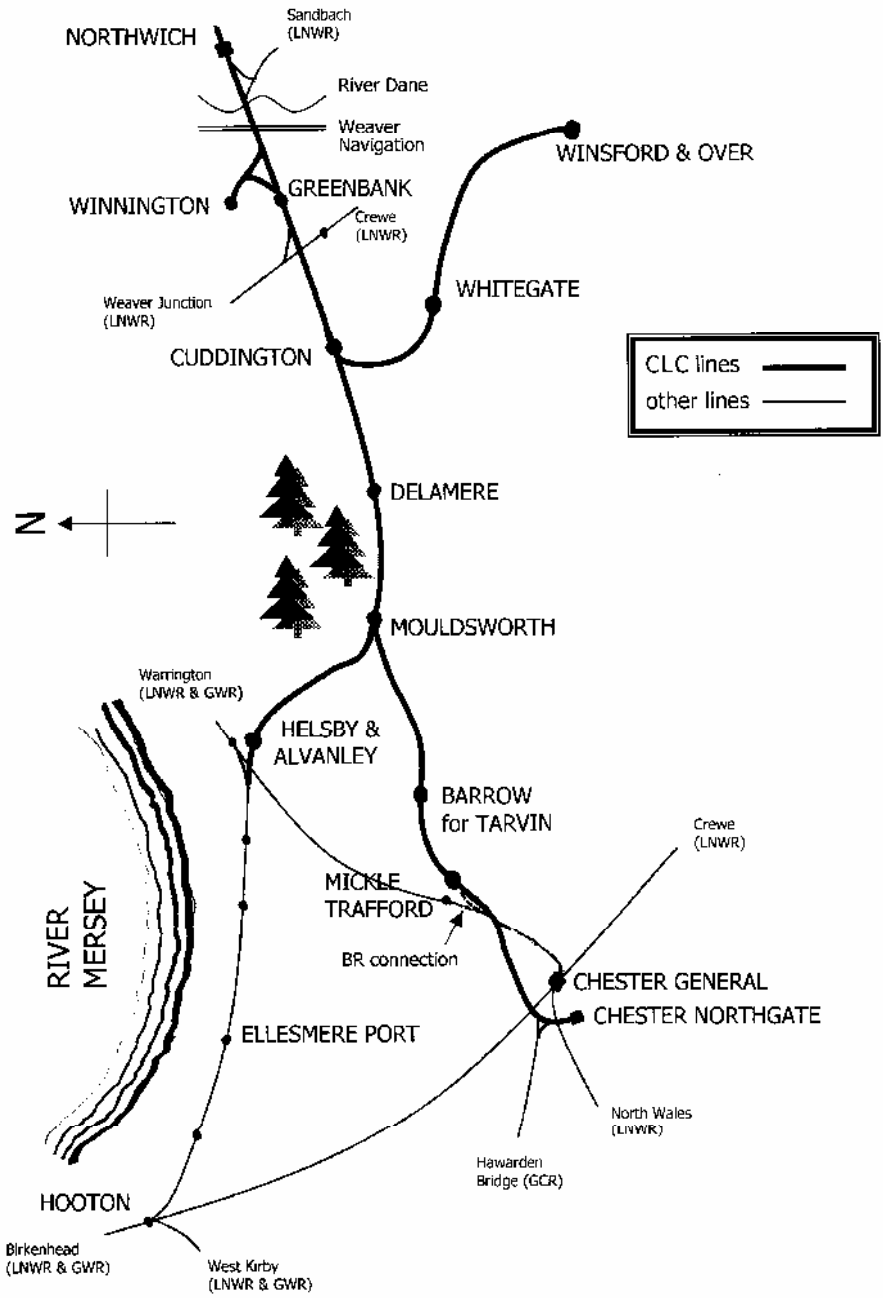


The Weaver viaduct viewed from the Weaver Navigation twin locks. photo : Ken Grainger

Beyond the viaduct the single track Winnington branch curved away to our right, serving Brunner Mond's (ex-ICI) chemical works, the destination for that steady stream of limestone hoppers that continues to sustain the Northenden Junction/Cheadle Junction connection with the Midland. For many years the limestone trains were the staple traffic of Northwich's Stanier 8Fs, which, if they were brought to a halt on the curve at Skelton Junction, had all on to get moving again. Nowadays the limestone hoppers rumble by behind Class 60s, no doubt very efficiently but with nothing like the 8F's presence.

Greenbank - the station buildings now used as a church. photo : Ken Grainger

The steady climb, more-or-less from Northwich's platform ends, is almost continuous to the summit in Delamere Forest, but at Greenbank we are reminded that since Northwich we have been traversing another company's metals. Greenbank introduces the station style of the West Cheshire Railway, opened in 1870 to passengers. The amenities aren't dissimilar from the Cheshire Midland's - single-storey station building attached to a station house, opposite an open-fronted platform shelter on the other platform, with an adjacent road overbridge saving the extravagance of a footbridge. The style is different though, with the booking office occupying the ground floor of a cruciform (at Greenbank) or T-shaped station house, with a shallow platform shelter cantilevered out before it.


NORTHWICH
Sandbach
(LNWR)
River Dane
Weaver
Navigation
WINSFORD & OVER
WINNINGTON
GREENBANK
Crewe
(LNWR)
Weaver Junction
(LNWR)
WHITEGATE
CUDDINGTON
CLC lines
other lines
N
DELAMERE
MOULDSWORTH
Warrington
(LNWR & GWR)
HELSBY &
ALVANLEY
BARROW
for TARVIN
Crewe
(LNWR)
MICKLE
TRAFFORD
BR connection
RIVER
MERSEY
CHESTER GENERAL
CHESTER NORTHGATE
ELLESMERE PORT
North Wales
(LNWR)
Hawarden
Bridge (GCR)
HOOTON
Birkenhead
(LNWR & GWR)
West Kirby
(LNWR & GWR)

None of the former West Cheshire station buildings are still in railway use but happily every one has found a suitable tenant. Greenbank, extended sympathetically in the original style of brickwork, is now in use as a church. At Hartford Junction, what looks to be a well-used double-track chord falls away to the right, to make an east-to-north connection with the L&NW main line, which we are about to cross. The L&NW's Hartford station is just a little to the south. The CLC station of 'Hartford & Greenbank' was simplified to just Greenbank in 1973 to avoid confusion with its neighbour.

Cuddington is in red brick like Greenbank and here the station building has found a new lease of life as an art gallery and collectables shop. Well into the BR era the station nameboard continued to read 'Cuddington – Change Here For Whitegate And Winsford' although the Winsford branch had finally closed to passengers as long ago as 1930 and had in fact only lasted into the 20th century at all by order of the Court of Railway and Canal Commission. Now the Whitegate Way footpath follows the trackbed and can be seen veering off to the south a little way beyond Cuddington.

Cuddington looking west - now an art gallery.
photo : Ken Grainger

The CLC had never possessed locomotives of its own, but they did acquire four Sentinel steam railcars. When new they were described as being in a two tone 'light and dark tan shoe polish' livery, and later carried an even less inspiring plain dark brown. The Winsford branch was one of their haunts. One can imagine that the railcars would not have been overtaxed by the traffic. Seemingly intent on avoiding human habitations, such as they were, and built really for goods traffic (salt), the branch wasn't intended to end at 'Winsford & Over' anyway. Sir Edward couldn't persuade his GN and Midland counterparts to chip in for his planned extension to link up with the North Staffordshire at Sandbach and, despite his posturing, the MS&L couldn't afford to go it alone. Unsurprisingly the wooden temporary terminus is long gone but the intermediate station at Whitegate still stands, a low-roofed station house with a large central dormer - even a nameboard survives. In truth the station seems far too grand for the tiny community it purported to serve, and it's pretty remote even from that! It is now the Whitegate Way's administrative centre.

Agricultural fields gave way to woodland as we arrived at Delamere station, delightfully in keeping with its lovely Delamere Forest setting. Delamere adheres to the West Cheshire style, as at Cuddington, but here in Cheshire's red sandstone rather than brick. Now an attractive and welcoming café, finished with period enamel advertisements and not more than ten minutes walk from the Delamere Forest visitor centre, Delamere is not to be missed.

Moulsdsworth looking west - now 'The Hair and Beauty Station'. photo : Ken Grainger

Over the summit we rolled gently through the woodland to Mouldsworth. One can imagine the livid gash the railway would have slashed through these groves when it was first built, but in maturity its grassy banks and stone arched bridges enhance this most beautiful section of the line. Like Delamere, Mouldsworth station is in red sandstone and is equally picturesque. The station is a now a salon, announcing its presence on a BR-style totem as 'The Hair and Beauty Station'. Across the forecourt it faces a row of prettily-dormered railway cottages, and if anyone is reluctant to linger by the station lest they get a facial, 'The Goshawk' by the road overbridge is a tempting place to wait for your train.

Mouldsworth's platforms seem even shorter than the other stations, possibly because the overbridge here straddles the platforms rather than being at their end. Beyond the bridge, at the end of the Chester platform, is Mouldsworth Junction signal box. Within a week of 45407's visit, the reprieve from its intended March closure expired and the signal box closed to face an uncertain future. Mouldsworth is of course a junction no more, just a few rusty rails poking through the security fencing opposite the signal box marking the route of the original West Cheshire line (Northwich to Helsby), which, until it closed in 1991, swung northwards towards 'Helsby & Alvanley' and a junction with the L&NW/GW Birkenhead Joint.

It had in fact lost its regular passenger service as long ago as 1875, when the Chester Northgate line opened, though 'Helsby & Alvanley' desultorily served workers trains up to the 1960s. I haven't seen it for myself, but I'm told the one-time intermediate station at Manley still exists, as does 'Helsby & Alvanley', much like Whitegate but in stone rather than brick, and intriguingly a corridor has been retained alongside the supermarket which now occupies the former yard at Manley, as provision for the local authority's plan to reopen the line. It has to be said, it is difficult to see what social need this would address, but if you visit Helsby, don't miss the Birkenhead Joint's Helsby station where the Chester and Ellesmere Port lines diverge. Its Jacobean-style stone buildings and beautifully tended gardens are a delight, and cannot fail to again attract the attentions of the 'Best Kept Station' judges. The next station on that line, Frodsham, is another architectural gem but unfortunately, for the moment at least, lacks the TLC which has been lavished on Helsby.

Black Five no. 45407 makes a fine sight as it passes Cuddington with the Chester-Altrincham special on 30 April 2006. photo : John Kitchen

Beyond Mouldsworth, now on the single track Chester and West Cheshire Junction of 1875 and with the gradient in our favour, speed quickly built up, so much so that we couldn't get more than a fleeting impression of the closed but extant station building of 'Barrow for Tarvin' in the dip as we swept past. Built in the MS&L twin-pavilion style, as might be expected with it being a contemporary of the Liverpool line stations, it is surprisingly lavish for its location. Known as 'Tarvin & Barrow' until

1883, the indecision might reflect that the station isn't really anywhere. Most directly it serves the few scattered habitations of Little Barrow, with Great Barrow (which is anything but) some way off to the south. Tarvin, which isn't a heck of a lot bigger, is as far again beyond. Perhaps at one time the station was useful as the railhead for local farm produce, but its closure in 1953 can't have caused very much hardship. It now appears to be the rather down at heel centre of a small-scale car-breaking business. It calls for a longer look, though I've been warned that something less than a red carpet welcome is to be expected from the present occupant.

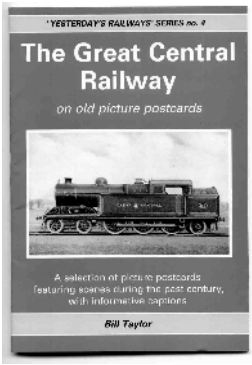
Climbing again, it's hard to be sure precisely where Mickle Trafford station was, which is hardly surprising for an all-wooden station which closed as long ago as 1950, though as the CLC and Birkenhead Joint lines converged on their respective embankments, I saw what I think was the overgrown remains of a station approach climbing up from road level. At Mickle Trafford Junction (put in place when Chester Northgate was closed in 1969) we now joined the Birkenhead Joint line, dropping down under the old Chester Northgate line to complete our journey into what used to be known as Chester General Station. In the sunshine that morning, we had rued not booking for the later return journey, to give us a few hours in Chester, but as the weather had changed we were happy to just have a quick cup of tea and a look around the station. Francis Thompson's great Grade II listed Italianate frontage to Chester station has been much praised, and rightly so, but behind it, despite some original features here and there, the station has been so much mucked about it is a mess.

Our reserved seats were in carriage G, which had put us towards the rear of the 10 coach train on the outward run so that we were only able to admire the intermediate stations after the train had restarted from each stop. Now we were towards the front and actually stopped within the stations. With 45407 now heading chimney-first, how I envied the lineside photographers at such as Delamere and below the Weaver viaduct.

Had 45407 been facing towards Chester, I had thought of disembarking at Ashley or Hale to get a shot of the second departure, but that was not to be. Perhaps next time, but one of the MCRUA stewards advised me of an ambitious plan they have to bring in two locomotives and trains for a future event, with rovers to allow interchanging between them - wouldn't that be something? But for now, there was no more to do than to see off no. 45407 heading up to Skelton Junction to run round before her second foray, before heading back for home ourselves. Despite the 'iffy' weather, it had been a tremendous day - no. 45407, her crew and all within the Mid-Cheshire Rail Partnership had done us proud. But for me for the star attraction was being able to travel on the Cheshire Lines themselves. Long may it remain so.

Book Reviews

"The Great Central Railway on old picture postcards" by Bill Taylor
published by Reflections of a Bygone Age - ISBN 978 1 905408 07 8



GCRS member and contributor to Forward , Bill Taylor, has put together a collection of old postcards of GCR subjects for publication in the 'Yesterday's Railways' series of booklets. The format is A5 with card cover and 36 pages. Subjects cover locomotives, trains, locations and railway staff from all over the GCR system – even the WM&CQ. One regret is that the colour postcards included are in monochrome. Each postcard is accompanied by a full and accurate description.

Copies can be ordered directly from Bill Taylor (51 High Tor, Skegby, Notts NG17 3EX) at the cover price of £3.95 post free. Bill will also donate 70p per sale to the GCRS if the buyer identifies themselves as a member.

Bob Gellatly

"The Railways of Buckinghamshire from the 1830s" by F.G.Cockman
published by The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, HP20 2QP
Price £5 plus £2 p&p - A5 format paperback of 108 pages, including numerous maps

Fred Cockman was a noted author of many books about railways, but about 40 years ago he made a meticulous study of the origins and evolutions of the railways in Bucks and Herts. He recorded the results of his investigations on type-written loose-leaf pages and hand-drawn maps contained in binders, depositing them at the relevant County Record Offices. Subsequently, Hertforshire published theirs as a paperback, and now The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society have produced a similar volume – the original was said to be the most consulted item at The County Record Office! It has been sensitively edited by Dr David Thorpe who has included a good introductory overview of the railways in Bucks by Cockman from The Records of Buckinghamshire and also redrawn the maps to great advantage.

Although it covers all the railways that were built, as well as those that were not, it will be of great interest to GCRS members in view of Sir Edward Watkin's various 'manoeuvres' to further his multifarious interests across Bucks. These are reflected, not only in the activities of the MS&LR, GC and Met, but also their joint partners, potential associates and competitors. Apart from listing the prime movers, relevant Bills and Acts of Parliament, routes and landowners, it often includes fascinating items that usefully illuminate the story.

Cockman's original documents have assisted many authors, including my own works on the Met & GC Joint Committee line. The Bucks Archaeological Society deserves congratulations for making them available to a wider audience in a more accessible form and at a very reasonable price.

Dr Clive Foxell CBE FREng

A letter to the Guardian 9th April 2007
submitted by Paul White

Re : Report April 3rd on French TGV Record Breaking attempt and Letter (April 4th) from Gerry Docherty of TSSA regarding case for a high speed rail line in the UK.

Gerry Docherty (letter, April 4th) rightly criticises the short-term thinking inherent in the Government's reluctance to fund any similar high-speed lines to the French TGV routes. Quite co-incidentally, last week I was returning from France by coach with a party of schoolchildren. The journey had run smoothly and to time along the excellent road system of Northern France and the ferry from Calais to Dover. Many hours later after serious delays on the heavily congested M25 we found ourselves stopped in traffic in Leicestershire on the M1, from where I was able to view the remains of the former Great Central Railway main line, engineered to continental standards and surely a prime candidate for any future high-speed rail scheme, closed now for 40 years and increasingly derelict. This monument to short termism and the clogged motorway are prime symbols for the timidity and lack of vision that have characterised transport policy in Britain for over 50 years, and there is little sign that the French success will bring about any change of heart.

Paul White

Network Rail published their Route Utilisation Strategy for Freight in March 2007. Mark Hambly reviews the findings as it affects former GC routes. The full report can be found on Network Rail's website – www.network rail.co.uk.

The Strategy identifies a former GC location, the South Humberside Main Line at Barnetby, as the busiest point in the country for freight movements, with up to 70 trains passing through each day. Principal commodities conveyed are coal, iron ore and steel between the Port of Immingham and Scunthorpe, as well as petroleum traffic to various locations in the Midlands and increasing volumes of imported coal to the Aire and Trent Valley power stations.

That increase in imported coal traffic provides the rationale for several proposed network improvements. In the short term (2007–2009) line speed improvements at Wrawby Junction and enhancement of the route via Brigg to Gainsborough would provide a significant number of additional paths from Immingham to the Trent Valley power stations and Doncaster, as well as providing a diversionary alternative to the South Humberside Main Line. In the medium term (2009 – 2014) the Cottam Chord (effectively making Clarborough Junction the west junction of a triangle) would provide a more direct route from Immingham to Cottam power station and in turn relieve congestion on the South Humberside Main Line and the South Yorkshire Joint.

West of the Pennines, the Strategy observes that the projected increase in trans-Pennine traffic to the Trafford Park terminal in the North West originating from European shipping routes into the North East could have "localised capacity implications" between Ardwick Junction and Castlefield Junction, across the throat of Manchester Piccadilly and on the elevated section of the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham through central Manchester. With the benefit of hindsight the closures of the Fallowfield loop in 1988 and the Fairfield to Hyde Road link in 1983 may turn out to have been premature.

The Great Central as I knew it

by Cecil J. Allen

This article was published in 'Trains Illustrated Summer Annual 1960' and submitted by David Wrottesley for inclusion in 'Forward'. Reprinted by kind permission of Ian Allan Ltd.

Few main lines can have been opened with higher hopes than that which was built to connect the former Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway at Annesley, north of Nottingham, with the Metropolitan Railway at Quainton Road, north of Aylesbury, together with the new line from Canfield Place into the London terminus at Marylebone. A new British main line of such a length coming into existence as late as 1899 was almost a phenomenon; from that time onwards only the Great Western Railway, active in cutting off the circuits of its original lines as planned by Brunel, was to do any more main line construction. Moreover, one such Great Western scheme, its shortened main line from Paddington to Birmingham, was to be carried out in conjunction with the new line from the North. So, in 1899, the Great Central Railway began to operate out of Marylebone. Who could have dreamed that in 1960, not much more than half a century later, its through express passenger services would be coming to an end, and that nothing would be left running over this costly route, laid out for high speed, other than suburban trains at its London end, a few semi-fasts between London and Nottingham, and freight traffic?

The Acts which authorised the London Extension had only been obtained, needless to say, in face of fierce opposition from the Great Central's neighbours. These were, in particular, the Midland Railway, with which the G.C.R. would be in competition most of the way to Sheffield; the Great Northern, which stood to lose the M.S.& L. traffic formerly handed over at Retford; and the London & North Western, which imagined itself to be threatened both at Rugby and at Manchester. But from the start the Great Central, determined to share in the passenger traffic as well as to benefit by being able to work its own freight trains through to London and the south, was handicapped in various ways. All its competitors had some slight advantage in distance, from London to Rugby, Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and a considerable advantage to Manchester.

As to gradients, throughout its entire length the G.C.R. locomotives had a tougher task than those of any of the competing lines, even the Midland; in their exit from London over the Metropolitan line, they had to tackle the sharp climbs out of Marylebone to Brondesbury and to Harrow, and then the 6 mile grind at 1 in 105 from Rickmansworth up to Amersham, or, in the up direction, the similar 6 miles at 1 in 117 up from Aylesbury. Over the new line proper there were the long sweeps up and down at 1 in 176; then, north of Nottingham, 10½ miles of climbing almost entirely at 1 in 130 had to be faced up to Kirkby South Junction, or, coming south, the 6 miles mainly at 1 in 100 from Staveley Town up to Heath. In such conditions Great Central locomotive work of the highest order would be needed if journey times equal or even near to those of the Midland Railway were to be achieved.

Now the Midland Railway, by the beginning of the century, with the relatively light train formations of its frequent main line service, had established a very high standard of speed. It was also noted for the comfort of its rolling stock and its restaurant car catering was justly famous. In addition to speed, therefore, the G.C.R. needed to build coaches of exceptionally high quality. From the first its slogan "Every express train vestibuled with buffet car attached" was something new in Great Britain; the provision of buffets in addition to normal restaurant car catering was a novelty indeed. Actually the buffets did not last very long; in this matter the G.C.R. was well ahead of its time and it was many years later before buffet cars were to become a standard feature of British main line train operation. A final handicap for the Great Central was the somewhat out-of-the-way position of its London terminus, Marylebone, which was even without any direct underground railway service until the Baker Street & Waterloo line was extended in 1907 to its "Great Central" station, later renamed Marylebone.

Regular travellers, and businessmen in particular, are not easily induced to change their habits, and it called for a tremendous effort in the early years of the London Extension to attract patronage to the Great Central route. I have before me the G.C.R. main line timetable of May, 1905, and in view of its contraction in later years the lavish nature of the service provided from and to Marylebone seems

almost unbelievable. The day began with a couple of down newspaper expresses to Sheffield, both carrying passengers, at 2.45 and 5.15 a.m., the latter non-stop over the 103.1 miles to Leicester in 110 min.; their times to Sheffield, stops included, were 3 hours 25 and 22 min. respectively. At 8.45 and 10.0 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. the first restaurant car trains of the day went out, and even with from five to eight intermediate stops apiece their times to Sheffield were scheduled at from 3 hours 32 to 43 min..

At 1.40 p.m. there was a fast departure, calling at Aylesbury, then non-stop over the 65.1 miles to Leicester in 69 min., and after a call at Nottingham reaching Sheffield at 5.1 p.m.. Mid-afternoon at 3.25 p.m. saw the departure of the famous "Sheffield Special" which passed both Leicester and Nottingham, though deigning to slip a coach at the former, and reached Sheffield in 2 hours 57 min. and Manchester London Road in 3 hours 50 min.. At 4.0 p.m. there was a restaurant car semi-fast to Nottingham followed at 4.35 p.m. by an express which called only at Finmere between Marylebone and Leicester, and which with a Nottingham stop was into Sheffield at 8.0 p.m..

Finally there were the 5.25 and 6.20 p.m. expresses, the latter non-stop to Leicester via Aylesbury in 110 min., and taking only 3 hours 2 min. to Sheffield; there was also the more leisurely 10.0 p.m. down. Out of these 12 down trains nine were restaurant car-equipped. The 10 principal down expresses averaged in journey time no more than 3 hours 25 min. from Marylebone to Sheffield; the five corresponding down trains at the end of 1959 required an average of 4 hours 1 min. for the same distance.

The up Great Central timetable of 1905 contained some even more spectacular bookings. There was no non-stop run from Sheffield to Marylebone, but the 8.50 a.m. from Sheffield was non-stop over the 126.5 miles from Nottingham in 134 min., and reached Marylebone at 11.50 a.m.. The most astonishing schedule, in view of the difficulty of the route, however, was that of the 11.25 a.m. from Manchester. Allowed no more than 105 min. for the 103.1 miles from Leicester to Marylebone; this train, due at 3.30 p.m., ran up from Sheffield in 2 hours 57 min. inclusive of both Nottingham and Leicester stops. It may be added that the 10.0 a.m. and 6.20 p.m. from Marylebone both ran through to Bradford, the latter reaching Bradford at 10.55 p.m., only 34 min. later than the 4.50 p.m. down "South Yorkshireman" in the 1959-60 winter, which started 90 min. earlier in the evening and was 56 min. slower.

The earliest photographs show the down "Sheffield Special" as a train of no more than three coaches. For a short time it was booked over the 164.7 miles from Marylebone to Sheffield in a very fast 170 min. but by 1909 the normal formation was five, four for Manchester and the Leicester slip coach, which ran through to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The Pollitt 4-4-0s, with their stovepipe chimneys, which began the service over the London Extension in 1899, had been supplemented in 1900 by the same designer's handsome 7 ft. 9 in. 4-2-2 engines, but over such gradients as those of the G.C. main line single-driver locomotives were not the most suitable of types, and their reign was short.

The accession to power at Gorton Works of John G. Robinson in 1900 soon resulted in the provision of more suitable locomotives, first, in 1901, a series of larger 4-4-0s which in L.N.E.R. days became Class D9. Then, in 1905 and 1906, came 24 Great Central Atlantics - some of the most handsome locomotives that have ever run on British metals - to be followed, in 1913, by what undoubtedly was Robinson's chef d'oeuvre, the first of his 4-4-0 "Directors", later L.N.E.R. Class D10. Later, when the 10 engines of this type had been increased in number to 21 in 1920, for Great Central traffic, Gresley decided in 1924 to build another 24 for Scottish use, such was the reputation that the class had built up on its own line.

It was in the year 1909 that I began regular travelling over the Great Central main line, with the Robinson Atlantics in their heyday. But, as with so many other British locomotive types, it was not until later years that these engines displayed their maximum ability. In my experience, Leicester was the shed that could be relied on to produce the most outstanding Atlantic performances, of which that which is set out in the first column of Table I may be taken as a typical example. It was recorded on the 6.20 p.m. down Bradford express by Mr. O. S. Nock, about the year 1936, up to which date, notwithstanding the lengthy reign of the "Directors" and the incursion of L.N.E.R. types such as the B17 4-6-0s, the Atlantics still monopolised the working of this important train. Moreover, although the

former Finmere and Woodford slips had been replaced by stops, the actual running allowance to Leicester, including slowing down to and accelerating away from these two halts, was only 4 min. more than previously.

TABLE I
L.N.E.R. MARYLEBONE–LEICESTER

Dist. miles	Engine No. Engine, Type Load, tons tare/gross	Sched. min.	5363 4-4-2 241/255 Actual m. s.	5363 4-4-2 241/255 Speeds m.p.h.	4830 2-6-2 242/255 Actual m. s.	4830 2-6-2 242/255 Speeds m.p.h.	§2849 4-6-0 310/325 Actual m. s.	§2849 4-6-0 310/325 Speeds m.p.h.
0.0	MARYLEBONE	0	0 00	—	0 00	—	0 00	—
3.0	Brondesbury	—	6 38	32/56	6 13	—	6 24	35
5.1	*Neasden South Junc.*	9	9 20	—	8 50	—	9 01	—
			p.w.s.	*20/56				
11.6	Northolt Junc.	17	19 45	*42	*sigs.*	*15	17 07	*42
13.4	Ruislip	—	22 06	54	p.w.s.	*20	19 26	—
16.1	Denham	—	24 58	61½	28 59	53	22 25	61½
18.7	Gerrards Cross	—	27 46	55	31 59	51½	25 08	57
23.0	Beaconsfield	—	30 38	64½/72½	36 27	57½/71	29 36	69½
					sigs.	*30		
27.9	HIGH WYCOMBE	35	36 45	*41	43 00	—	34 14	*41
30.1	West Wycombe	—	40 08	48½	45 57	—	37 21	—
32.8	Saunderton	—	43 31	47½	49 16	50/60	40 46	50
					sigs.	*55		
36.0	PRINCES RISBOROUGH	45	46 56	73	52 40	—	44 08	—
41.4	Haddenham	—	51 03	88	56 44	87½	48 11	85
45.4	*Ashendon Junc.*	—	54 06	77½	59 34	81½/78	51 10	—
51.3	*Grendon Underwood Junc.*	—	59 08	67½/69	63 57	83½	56 05	69
53.3	Calvert	—	60 57	65½/70½	65 30	75/80	57 50	64½/69
59.0	Finmere	67½	66 50	†61	70 30	†70	63 39	†60
4.8	Brackley	—	7 18	‡63	6 35	‡65½	7 33	‡60
8.0	Helmdon	—	10 48	54/67½	9 46	59	11 29	48
11.6	Culworth	—	14 13	62½/76½	12 53	78½	16 06	—
14.6	WOODFORD HALSE	17½	17 11	—	16 03	—	18 21	—
2.4	Charwelton	—	4 52	46	4 42	—	5 12	—
6.1	*Staverton Road*	—	8 31	72	8 04	81	8 59	—
9.4	Braunston	—	11 09	81	10 22	90	11 38	85
14.1	RUGBY	—	15 07	63½/73	13 43	76/83	15 20	67½/76½
17.7	*Shawell*	—	18 15	65/56	16 32	79/65½	18 20	—
20.8	Lutterworth	—	21 31	66½/61	19 18	73/65½	21 29	58½
24.8	Ashby Magna	—	25 08	74	22 36	75	25 11	—
29.3	Whetstone	—	28 27	87	25 51	88	28 32	88
33.0	*Leicester Goods Junc. South*	—	31 06	—	28 25	—	31 12	—
34.0	LEICESTER	34	32 25	—	30 09	—	32 55	—

* Speed restriction. † Before shutting off steam. ‡ At foot of Brackley Bank. § Sheffield United.

In all my experience of Great Central Atlantics, I never remember recording maximum speeds very much over 80 m.p.h. with them, and the 88 m.p.h. at Haddenham and 87 m.p.h. at Whetstone on this trip were certainly unusual. But it was the uphill work that was of such fine quality - 55 m.p.h. minimum up the 7 miles of 1 in 175-264 past Gerrards Cross, 47½ sustained up the 1 in 164 past Saunderton, a drop only from 70½ to 61 m.p.h. up the 1 in 176 before steam was shut off for Finmere and from 63 to 54 m.p.h. up Brackley bank, 4½ miles at 1 in 176. So, with the help of an average of 75.3 m.p.h. from Princes Risborough to Grendon Junction, the 59.0 miles from Marylebone to Finmere were run in 66 min. 50 sec., or 64½ min. net; time was just kept on the sharp booking from Finmere to Woodford, and the brilliant finish of 32 min. 25 sec. for the final 34.0 miles from Woodford to Leicester, start to stop, brought the train into Leicester just ahead of time - a great credit to Driver Newall and his mate. The equivalent net non-stop time was almost exactly "even" - 107½ min. or 6½ min. less than the old non-stop booking - but it needed very hard work on the engine's part, with cut-off continually at 40 per cent. on the uphill stretches.

The two other runs in this table, both recorded by Sir James Colyer-Fergusson, show what could be done by later London & North Eastern interlopers with the same train. On the night that V2 2-6-2 No. 4830 was at the head, the Great Western 6.10 p.m. down Birmingham was obviously behaving badly, and Gresley's V2 did not get a chance until Collett's "King" was past Princes Risborough, now 7¾ min. late, but Driver Tetlow - another of Leicester's past experts - determined he was going to be in to time; and so he was.

With an average of 80.9 m.p.h. from Princes Risborough to Calvert, speed was still 70 m.p.h. when steam was shut off for Finmere; even with no better than exact timekeeping from Marylebone to High Wycombe, the net time to Finmere would have been no more than 62 min.. With a minimum of 59 m.p.h. up the 1 in 176 to Helmdon, the Finmere to Woodford time then was cut to 16 min. 3 sec., and the train got away from Woodford 3½ min. late with 30½ min. left for a punctual arrival at Leicester. Brilliantly indeed Tetlow did it - 90 m.p.h. at Braunston and 88 at Whetstone were separated by the exceptional minimum of 76½ over Rugby "hump" and of 65½ up both stages of the

quite lengthy stretches of 1 in 176 to the summit just beyond Lutterworth. The start-to-stop time of 30 min. 9 sec. for the 34.0 miles from Woodford to Leicester is the fastest I have ever known.

I should imagine that passengers may have had some lively sensations in Catesby Tunnel, where drainage troubles have always made for rough riding; and in later years high speed down the bank to Braunston has been taboo for the same reason. As I know from my own experiences, speeds approaching the 90 mark also could make the reverse curves round the island platforms at such stations as Ashby and Whetstone very distinctly perceptible in the trains, especially if one happened to be in a tail coach with wagging propensities.

On the third run Driver Newall, whose Atlantic run already has been described, showed his prowess with a B17 4-6-0, and with the load now increased from seven to nine coaches, or 325 tons gross. The most outstanding features of this run were in the early stages; the minimum of 57 m.p.h. up Gerrards Cross bank and of 50 m.p.h. up Saunderton bank were both very good with this load, and took the train through Princes Risborough a minute early. With 85 m.p.h. past Haddenham, 3 min. were gained between Princes Risborough and Finmere - the most easily-timed stretch on the journey - but Newall then rather unaccountably dropped a minute to Woodford. This was comfortably recouped on the final length, however, with a start-to-stop time of 32 min. 55 sec. over the 34.0 miles from Woodford to Leicester.

Of all the trains on which the "Directors" showed their paces, pride of place must go to the 3.20 and 4.55 p.m. from Marylebone to Manchester and the 2.20 p.m. from Manchester to Marylebone, as their times became in London & North Eastern days. There was no parallel in Great Britain for such workings by 4-4-0 locomotives - a continuous run of 206 miles (211¼ miles in the case of the 3.20 p.m. down, which worked round the southern Manchester suburbs into the Central station), and with severe gradients throughout, culminating in the climb to all but 1,000 ft. altitude at the Dunford end of Woodhead Tunnel.

In the days before the 1914-18 war I used to think that the "Directors" were being taxed to somewhere near their limit with the five-coach load of the 3.20 p.m. down, but by the later 1930s the train had regularly become a seven-coach formation, one coach being detached at Leicester; then at Sheffield the load was made up again to seven by the addition of the through Bournemouth-Bradford coach, which with the Marylebone-Halifax coach came off at Penistone, when most of the climbing to Dunford was over, leaving five for the remainder of the journey. In these conditions timekeeping was still exemplary.

A slightly better than typical run with this train from Marylebone to Leicester is set out in Table II. The start in particular was unusually fast, such minima as 47½ m.p.h. up the 1¾ miles at 1 in 92 to Harrow and 55 up the short 1 in 145 to Northwood being very creditable. No slack was made for the curves at Harrow, where the rebuilding of the station had not then taken place, and Rickmansworth was taken at a speed well above that demanded by the rubrics (though not quite at the 56 m.p.h. with which the driver of a "Sir Sam Fay" 4-6-0 once really did alarm

TABLE II

L.N.E.R. MARYLEBONE–LEICESTER

Engine: 4-4-0 No. 5504 *Jutland*
Load: 248 tons tare, 260 tons gross.

Dist.		*Sched.*	*Actual*	*Speeds*
miles		*min.*	*m. s.*	*m.p.h.*
0.0	MARYLEBONE ...	0	0 00	—
3.0	Brondesbury	—	6 35	34
4.8	*Neasden South Junc.* ...	—	9 05	65
9.2	HARROW	14	13 30	47½
11.4	Pinner	—	15 45	64
13.7	Northwood	—	18 10	55/70
17.2	RICKMANSWORTH ...	—	21 30	*40
19.4	Chorley Wood ...	—	24 35	39
23.6	Amersham	—	31 10	37½
28.8	Great Missenden ...	—	36 15	74/54
33.3	Wendover	—	40 45	80½
38.0	AYLESBURY	46	44 35	*70
44.4	Quainton Road ...	53	50 20	*50
46.8	*Grendon Junc.*	—	52 40	70½
48.8	Calvert	—	54 30	60/70
54.5	Finmere	—	60 10	52
59.3	Brackley	—	65 05	—
62.5	Helmdon	—	68 40	52
66.1	Culworth	—	72 20	70½
69.1	WOODFORD HALSE	77	75 00	—
71.5	Charwelton	—	77 20	—
78.5	Braunston	—	83 20	80½
83.2	RUGBY	—	87 20	62/74
90.0	Lutterworth	—	93 45	57
93.9	Ashby Magna	—	97 45	—
98.4	Whetstone ...	—	101 35	73
			p.w.s.	*30
103.1	LEICESTER	109	106 45	—

* Speed restriction.

me with the same train!), and the 6-mile climb at 1 in 105 to Amersham was mounted steadily at 39-37½ m.p.h.. With high speed down the northern slope and a lively 70 over the curved approach to Aylesbury, we were 2¾ min. early past Quainton Road. Later high-lights were the 52 m.p.h. minimum maintained up both the 1 in 176 ascents to Finmere and to Helmdon, and the 57 m.p.h. minimum after Lutterworth. A fast finish like those of the 6.20 p.m. down runs might have brought us into Leicester in 105 min.; a final permanent way slowing made it 106¾ min., though we were still 21min. early.

I have mentioned in the last paragraph a run with one of Robinson's 4-6-0 engines, which appeared from time to time on these trains, but their running was seldom the equal of that exhibited by the "Director" 4-4-0s. With the latter the designer seemed to have reached the optimum in his dimensional ratios; but I have never understood how it came about that with the much larger 4-6-0 boilers Robinson adhered to precisely the same firegrate area of 26 sq. ft. as with the smaller engines. The 4-6-0s, with their larger cylinder volume and adhesion weight, could make smart starts, but continuous steaming on fast runs was another matter, as became abundantly clear when they were used on the Kings Cross-Sheffield and Kings Cross-Leeds Pullman runs on the Great Northern line. Never once did I record an outstanding Robinson 4-6-0 run on the Great Central line; indeed, the earlier 4-6-0s, generally uniform with the Atlantics, often did better than the "Sir Sam Fay" and "Faringdon" 4-6-0s of the later series.

TABLE III
L.N.E.R. LEICESTER–MARYLEBONE

Dist.	Engine No. / Engine Type / Load, tons tare / Load, tons gross	Sched.	§5506 4-4-0 218 230 Actual	§5506 4-4-0 218 230 Speeds	¶2848 4-6-0 437 465 Actual	¶2848 4-6-0 437 465 Speeds
miles		min.	m. s.	m.p.h.	m. s.	m.p.h.
0.0	LEICESTER...	0	0 00	—	0 00	—
4.7	Wheatstone	—	7 00	55¾	7 45	50
9.2	Ashby Magna	—	12 15	50	13 55	42
13.1	Lutterworth	—	16 20	69/80‡	18 59	73½
19.9	RUGBY	—	22 10	68	25 12	63
24.6	Braunston	—	26 10	75	29 23	70
27.9	*Staverton Road*	—	29 28	—	32 42	—
31.6	Charwelton	—	34 05	44	37 17	44
34.0	WOODFORD HALSE	37	36 45	†70½	39 53	†69½
37.0	Culworth	—	39 20	61½	42 40	60
40.6	Helmdon	—	42 55	69/64	45 58	—
43.8	Brackley	—	45 45	74/77‡	48 46	79
			p.w.s.	*40		
48.6	Finmere	—	50 45	74	52 37	69/‡80½
54.3	Calvert	—	56 00	66/70½	57 03	72
56.3	*Grendon Underwood Junc.*	—	57 45	*60	58 46	*63
58.7	Quainton Road	59	60 20	*47	61 14	71
65.1	AYLESBURY	66	66 50	66	66 37	69
67.4	Stoke Mandeville	—	69 10	53½	68 49	—
69.8	Wendover	—	72 15	46	71 54	—
71.9	*Milepost 31½*	—	75 08	44½	75 05	39
74.3	Great Missenden	—	77 35	76½	77 37	71
79.5	Amersham	—	82 20	57	82 33	55
81.5	Chalfont	—	84 20	70	84 26	80
85.9	RICKMANSWORTH	89	88 55	*20	88 11	*40
89.4	Northwood	—	94 00	—	92 45	46
			p.w.s.	*20	p.w.s.	*30
93.9	HARROW	98	99 35	—	98 47	—
98.3	*Neasden South Junc.*	102	104 20	67	103 12	68
100.1	Brondesbury	—	106 30	49	105 21	49
103.1	MARYLEBONE	110	111 20	—	110 06	—

* Speed restriction. † At Culworth Junc. ‡ At foot of Finmere Bank. § Butler Henderson. ¶ Arsenal.

Table III sets out two up runs from Leicester on 110 min. timings, the first with a "Director" and the second with a B17 4-6-0. The former was at the end of the long through working from Manchester, with a six-coach train, but clearly the fireman still had his fire in good order. To be still doing 50 m.p.h. at the top of the 7 miles at 1 in 176 past Ashby Magna was good work, though the 44 m.p.h. at the summit of the corresponding 1 in 176 to Charwelton was not quite so meritorious. We were running well on time until a permanent way check just after Brackley put us 1¼ min. behind at Quainton Road; this had been more than recovered by Rickmansworth, however, with the excellent minimum of 44½ m.p.h. up the 6 miles at 1 in 117 to Milepost 31½ ; and to mount the 3 miles at 1 in 160 to Amersham with no greater drop in speed than from 76 to 57 m.p.h. also was first-class work. Owing to a second permanent way check at Harrow we were 1¼ min. late into Marylebone, but the net time of 107 min. was 3 min. less than the 110 min. scheduled. For a "Director" with a six-

coach train there was less margin on this up schedule from Leicester than with the same load on the 109 min. allowance going north.

The second run in Table III was one of the most astonishing performances I have ever known on the Great Central line; indeed, I have never known a superior effort over any main line with one of Gresley's B17 4-6-0s. Arsenal with Driver Webb and Fireman Hayes in charge, had had a through four-coach boat portion from Immingham attached at Nottingham to their nine-coach train, so making up a total of 13 coaches, weighing 437 tons tare and 465 tons gross. Yet they succeeded in working this through from Leicester to Marylebone on time. Such minima as 42 m.p.h. past Ashby and 44 at Charwelton were understandable in the circumstances, but the train was only 11 min. late at Quainton Road (where, by the way, the junction had now been realigned to permit full speed in place of the former restriction); then came minima of 39 m.p.h. at Milepost 39 and 55 m.p.h. at Amersham, both extremely creditable. With a lively 80 m.p.h. down the hill and an equally lively 40 through Rickmansworth, the express was now back to schedule, and even a final permanent way slowing through Harrow did not prevent a punctual arrival. This run was recorded by Sir James Colyer-Fergusson.

Running between Leicester and Nottingham has always closely resembled that between Calvert and Leicester, up and down the same sweeps of gradient. One fast run of my own dates back to 1912, and was the only occasion on which I have ever turned night into day to the extent of catching the down morning "Newspaper" which at that time left Marylebone at 2.40 a.m.. I had spent the evening at Neasden, and rode up to the terminus on the footplate of Atlantic No. 363 with Driver Bailey, one of the great names at Neasden shed who afterwards became an inspector. We had a trifling load of two passenger coaches, two bogie vans and two four-wheel vans, 140 tons all told.

As a result, we were through Rickmansworth, 17.2 miles, in 19 min. 29 sec. - how simply incredible this sounds in the light of present schedules! So we reached Brackley, 59.3 miles, in 62 min. 49 sec.. The next two stages were run at the booked mile-a-minute gait - Brackley to Rugby, 23.9 miles in 23 min. 10 sec., and Rugby to Leicester, 19.9 miles in 19 min. 58 sec., the latter including a permanent way slowing. These were capped by the time from Leicester to Arkwright Street, Nottingham, however, for we did this 22.6 miles in 21 min. 22 sec. start to stop, having attained 83½ m.p.h. at both Loughborough and Gotham, and not fallen below 66 over the summit at Barnston. This was an exciting start to the day in question.

The section from Nottingham to Sheffield has always been hampered by pitfall speed restrictions, but until 1939, nothing like the same extent as now. Here the best run that I ever remember timing was one made in 1924 by "Director" 4-4-0 No. 505 *Ypres*, which had done well to work a nine-coach load of 325 tons gross from Marylebone down to Leicester in 113 min. 5 sec., losing no more than 4 min., and then, with load reduced to 295 tons, had done still better with a time of 24 min. 20 sec. for the 23.4 miles from Leicester to Nottingham, start to stop, touching 79 m.p.h. at Loughborough and 82 at Gotham. The start northwards from Nottingham is for 2¼ miles through the tunnels at 1 in 132, followed, after a level 1¼ miles, by 7 miles right off at the same inclination. Up this, after we had touched 53 m.p.h. on the brief level past Bulwell, Ypres fell to 38½ m.p.h.; 61½ m.p.h. in the dip beyond Kirkby was followed by 54 m.p.h. minimum at Pilsley summit. Then indeed I held my breath as we swept down through the colliery-infested area past Heath to a maximum of no less than 85 m.p.h., slightly eased to 80 through Staveley. We had passed Kirkby South Junction, 10.8 miles in 17 min. 40 sec. and Pilsley, 17.9 miles in 26 min. 10 sec.; the 26.2 miles to Staveley Town took 33 min. 30 sec.; and despite a permanent way slack after Woodhouse, we stopped in Sheffield, 38.2 miles in 47 min. exactly, having regained 2¼ of the previous 4 min. loss.

Finally, Table IV sets out four runs over the gruelling stretch between Sheffield and Manchester, from which steam has been displaced by electricity. The first two runs were on the 3.20 p.m. from Marylebone before it had been diverted from the London Road to the Central Station in Manchester; the remaining two were on the 4.55 p.m. down after its Sheffield to Manchester timing had been cut to 55 min., and London Road was being reached in 4 hours 5 min. from Marylebone with three intermediate stops. The unbroken climb which begins half-a-mile out of Sheffield Victoria is at 1 in 132 for 4¼ miles (Oughty Bridge), then at 1 in 120 for 5 miles (to just beyond Wortley) and 1 in 131

for the next 1¾ miles; the next 1¾ miles include an easing to 1 in 160 and a steepening to 1 in 100 through Penistone; after which 1 in 130-124-135 gradients continue to Dunford.

TABLE IV

L.N.E.R. SHEFFIELD–MANCHESTER

Dist.	Engine No. Engine Type Load, tons tare Load, tons gross	Sched.	‡5502 4-4-0 167 175 Actual	5072 4-6-0 175 180 Speeds	Sched.	2834 4-6-0 175 180 Actual	2848 4-6-0 341 360 Speeds
miles		*min.*	*m. s.*	*m. s.*	*min.*	*m. s.*	*m. s.*
0.0	SHEFFIELD	0	0 00	0 00	0	0 00	0 00
1.2	Nearpond	—	2 45	2 55	—	2 42	3 36
2.9	Waddley Bridge	—	5 15	5 30	—	5 10	6 31
4.9	Oughty Bridge	—	7 50	8 15	—	7 43	9 35
7.9	Deepcar	—	11 45	12 20	—	11 46	14 15
8.8	Wortley	—	12 55	13 35	—	12 54	15 37
12.2	Barnsley Junc.	—	17 35	17 55	—	17 11	20 28
12.9	PENISTONE	20	18 40	18 50	19	17 56	21 20
16.7	Hazlehead	—	25 00	24 05	—	23 00	26 38
18.9	Dunford	29	28 05	27 10	27	25 55	29 58
22.1	Woodhead	33	31 45	30 45	31	29 23	33 59
26.0	Torside Crossing	—	35 25	34 05	—	32 58	37 33
29.4	Dinting*	—	39 05	37 30	—	36 33	40 49
				p.w.s.			p.w.s.
33.0	Godley Junc.*	—	44 45	43 40	—	41 25	46 33
36.3	GUIDE BRIDGE*	50	48 40	47 40	47	45 12	50 14
38.6	Gorton	—	51 55	50 50	—	47 47	53 12
40.5	Ardwick*	—	54 25	53 15	—	50 04	55 18
41.3	MANCHESTER LONDON ROAD	59	56 20	55 20	55	52 14	57 11

* Speed restriction. ‡ Zeebrugge. § Huddersfield Town. ¶ Arsenal.

"Director" No. 5502 Zeebrugge, with a 5-coach train, maintained 45½-47½ m.p.h. up to Penistone, where a 30 m.p.h. slack then in force was observed, after which speed rose once again to 45 m.p.h. before Woodhead Tunnel was entered. Nothing higher than 66 m.p.h. was touched on the descent, and beside the usual speed restrictions at Dinting, Godley, Guide Bridge and Ardwick there was a bad slack for widening works at Mottram. Manchester was reached in 56 min. 20 sec., however, or 55 min. net. No. 5072, in the second column, was one of the large Robinson 4-cylinder 5 ft. 7 in. mixed traffic engines (later L.N.E.R. Class B7), which ran distinctly faster than the 4-4-0 both uphill and downhill; from Wortley to Barnsley Junction the speed averaged 47 m.p.h., and small wheels notwithstanding, speed was in the "seventies" down past the reservoirs. To Manchester the actual time was 55 min. 20 sec. and the net 54 min..

In the third column B17 4-6-0 No. 2834 Huddersfield Town gave me the only acceleration to 50 m.p.h. that I have ever recorded up the long bank out of Sheffield with steam power. This was on the brief 1 in 160 past Barnsley Junction; the speed then fell away to 44 m.p.h. at Dunford. Maxima down the hill were restrained to 68 m.p.h. at Torside Crossing and 69 at Gorton; with intermediate slacks to 40 m.p.h. at Dinting, 53 at Godley and 43 at Guide Bridge. The time of 52 min. 14 sec. from Sheffield to Manchester was my own fastest ever; even the quickest two-stop electric train today requires 54 min., though there is an eastbound electric non-stop in 48 min..

Finally, in the last column, there is a B17 run rather like that already described with a 465-ton train from Leicester to Marylebone; and, rather remarkably, it was the same engine. In this case No. 2848 Arsenal was called upon to tackle a load of no less than 341 tons tare (360 tons gross) over these formidable gradients. It is hardly surprising that time was lost; the surprise is that the loss was only just over 2 min., of which 1¼ min. was accounted for by the Mottram permanent way slowing. Up the long grade speed was maintained pluckily at round about the 40 m.p.h. mark until an increase to 45 at Barnsley Junction, after which it relapsed to 40 once again at Dunford summit. The service slacks were to 44 m.p.h. at Dinting and 30 at Guide Bridge, and we ran into Manchester London Road in 57 min. 11 sec. from Sheffield.

Much more could be written about these halcyon days of the Great Central Railway and the same route in London & North Eastern days. They are now, alas, a closed book; none the less, they are a happy memory to all those of us who were privileged to travel over this lively main line during the best years of its history.

Editor's note – I was unaware of the existence of the 'Trains Illustrated Summer Annuals' until receiving this article. I have been able to purchase this particular copy on the Internet. It is has thin card covers and is very slightly smaller format than the more familiar hard-covered Annuals.

The Bolsover tragedy of Christmas Eve 1910

by Bill Taylor

Many years ago the late George Dow wrote to me asking if I could help him solve an apparent mystery regarding the footbridge at Bolsover Station as he apparently had a number of photographs and on one of them the position of the station footbridge did not correspond with the others. Although I am not yet certain whether the bridge ever was removed from its original position, nevertheless I suspected that the apparent anomaly would have something to do with the aftermath of the tragedy which struck the small mining community of Carr Vale on Christmas Eve 1910.

So far as can be ascertained no person using the line was fatally injured during the independent years of the Lancashire, Derbyshire & East Coast Railway. From 1st January 1907 it was absorbed by the GCR. In June 1909 a man, believed to have been a drunkard, was killed when a train hit him whilst he was crossing the line at Bolsover Station. That accident did precipitate correspondence between the Bolsover Urban District Council and the Great Central Railway Company. Clearly the Council was aware of the dangers presented by the level crossing at Bolsover Station and was urging the railway company to do something about it. Evidently three proposals had been suggested, firstly that the signal box should be moved from the east to the west end of the station, secondly a foot subway should be provided at the west end of the station adjacent to the level crossing, and finally a pedestrian and vehicular subway was proposed. Sam Fay (as he then was) in writing to the Council indicated that the third choice was the preferred option as far as the railway was concerned but that the railway had no obligation in law. A contribution of £270 towards the expense would be made by the GCR representing the estimated cost of removing the footbridge to a new position alongside the crossing, stipulating also that if the subway were to be constructed the railway would close the level crossing completely. It was this last condition which was unacceptable to the Council, so the exchange of letters ended without agreement being reached upon a solution to the perceived situation.

The difficulty had arisen with the development of the area around Bolsover Station in the years since the line was opened in 1897, for at that time the level crossing was only a track and was classified as an Occupation Crossing with the gates opening outwards away from the line of rails as provided for by section 68 Railway Clauses Act 1845. There was not at any time any legal obligation upon the owners of the line to do anything more than this apart from providing wicket gates for the use of pedestrians as referred to in section 61 of the same Act, and that was a recommendation imposed by Col. Yorke when the completed line of railway was first inspected by him on behalf of the Board of Trade. Wicket gates, of course, in this situation have no means of being locked and herein lay the trap. In the intervening years, with extensive colliery development in the area, many buildings had been erected on both sides of the railway, those on the south side being called New Bolsover and those opposite being called Carr Vale. One result was that many children who lived on one side had to use the crossing to get to and from the school which was on the opposite side of the line to their homes. In law it remained an Occupation Crossing, whilst in fact it had become a busy highway.

In December 1910 a moving picture show was put on in the local Public Hall for the very first time and several young children from the locality were anxious to see this latest wonder at first hand. When the show ended about fifteen children from Carr Vale, anxious to tell their parents about their adventure and doubtless also excited that it was Christmas Eve, assembled at the crossing gates in the darkness waiting for a train to pass by. This may or may not have been a passenger train but at any rate it was approaching from the Chesterfield direction on the set of rails furthest from where the children were waiting and once it had cleared the crossing the only thought in their minds was to get through the wicket gates to the opposite side of the line. At this critical moment what the accident report refers to as a goods train belonging to the Great Northern Railway approached on the nearer set of rails with the engine running tender first, whistling as it passed through the station. Col. Yorke in his report attaches no blame to the driver of the goods train who carried on blissfully unaware of the disaster which had occurred, wherein three young children were killed outright and three more were seriously injured.

Bolsover Station in LD&ECR days looking west towards Chesterfield. The photographer is stood under the footbridge at the east end of the station. The occupation crossing can be seen just beyond the platform ends.

photo : Nadin's Series postcard

The tragedy sparked further meetings and correspondence between the Council and the GCR but they now involved the Bolsover Colliery Company, who had built Carr Vale as a model village for the families of men employed at the pits, and also the Board of Trade who were charged with making a report on account of the fatalities. The old schemes were urgently looked at again and to those already referred to were added the possibility of a footbridge with ramps instead of steps because the Council thought this would be more convenient for elderly people and those using perambulators, together with a further alternative of moving the signal box from the eastern end of the station to a new position by the crossing where it could properly control and lock both the main and wicket gates, or if the existing signal box could not easily be removed a new smaller cabin should be provided at the gates.

Several officers of the GCR attended the Coroners Inquest into the cause of the three deaths including, it would seem, Sam Fay himself. His heart must have been touched by the accounts of the tragedy which must have devastated the small community of Carr Vale on Christmas Eve for he was not prepared to wait for council meetings and the like, indicating that something must be done and it must be done NOW. He reported to the Coroner that he had already given instructions for the footbridge to be transferred to a new situation alongside the crossing and as soon as the work was finished the wicket gates would be permanently closed.

The Coroner in his summing up to the jury said, "The crux of the whole question has been the unwillingness especially of the Carr Vale part of the population to abolish the wicket gates. This seems to have been the stumbling block in the way of any settlement of the matter up to the present". The jury returned the following verdict, "We find that the children were accidentally killed by a Great Northern Railway train. We suggest that the Authorities proceed at once with the foot subway and keep a watchman at the gates until the subway is made. We do not consider that the footbridge should be moved if the subway is made as it would be dangerous to children and old people. We consider the crossing is badly lighted and in a bad state of repair and we regret that it is impossible to move the signal box as we all thought it was the best scheme". For once the Council acted promptly for whilst the jury was out deliberating a quickly convened meeting had taken place

with the result that a resolution was passed confirming that the Council would proceed with the construction of a foot subway and that the GCR should be asked to stand by its offer to contribute £270 towards the works, that being the amount estimated by the railway as the cost of moving the footbridge. Dixon Davies, Solicitor to the GCR was also present and immediately said that he accepted the situation and that the promised contribution would be honoured. In the meantime the GCR would keep a watchman day and night at the crossing to prevent any further incident until such time as the subway was brought into use.

Although Col. Yorke leaves the matter there, some further correspondence passed between the Council and the GCR which resulted in a slight modification of the proposal and a little extra cost for the railway, namely that the subway would be constructed by the GCR for the use of pedestrians on the eastern side of the level crossing between the crossing and the station at an estimated cost of £1050, of which the Council would bear only £600 plus £5 per annum towards the cost of maintenance of the subway and cleaning and lighting of the same. So it was that Bolsover Station got a foot subway, which surely removed the need for the footbridge to be relocated to the west end of the station, and whilst the crossing got busier as the years went by it nevertheless remained an Occupation Crossing as far as the railway was concerned until such time as the road leading over it was made up and adopted by the highway authority who themselves had to bear the financial responsibility for its upkeep. The signal box certainly remained where it always had been and as far as is known nobody else was injured or killed on the line at Carr Vale. Finally, as often as not, the solving of one problem is the creation of another, and here is no exception for at times of very heavy rain such as happened in July 1912 the subway filled with water and, temporarily at least, pedestrians were back to using the level crossing.

For sale

Signalling equipment, including the diagram from Woodford No.2 signal box.
Contant Andrew Emmerson at andrew.emmerson4@ntlworld.com or phone 01604 844130.

The former Neasden South Junction box on its new brick base at the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre at Ruddington. Renovation is well advanced. Alongside is the newly built lamp room.

The present day Great Central Railway : The signal boxes

by Dennis Wilcock (Editor of Main Line)

Some of the more obvious and interesting features of the infrastructure on the present day Great Central Railway are the signal boxes. Four are in full operation, two in an advanced state of renovation, one needs tender loving care and four more are planned. It is a mammoth task to complete and then operate all these facilities. And since the boxes are there to operate signals and points the task of developing and maintaining the systems grows by the year. But all is not as it might appear as only two of the boxes were in situ when the preservation project started in 1969. The boxes are as follows:

Ruddington Heritage Centre – This box was recovered from Neasden South Junction and is in an advanced state of renovation and fitting out. It will control the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre and access to the main line. (See photo on page 31)

Ruddington North Junction – In operation. A small 10 lever box to control access to the main line.

Gotham Sidings – A long term project to locate and install a GCR box.

Hotchley Hill – An LNER brick and concrete roofed structure of 1946. In derelict condition but the subject of proposals to renovate it. A long term project.

East Leake - A long term project to locate and install a GCR box.

Loughborough Junction - At the southern end of the northern section of the line north of the Midland Main Line. A long term project to locate and install a GCR box.

Loughborough Central – The only original operational Great Central box on the preserved line and resides where it was built in 1898 just north of the station on the west side of the line. It is now adjacent to the Motive Power Department built after preservation. It was derelict when the preservation project started but has been fully operational for many years having been fully refurbished to control all movements at the GCR's principle station. It is now undergoing a major refurbishment.

Quorn & Woodhouse – This box comes from Market Rasen. It is now fully operational and controls all the area around Quorn & Woodhouse station. It is in approximately the same position as the original GCR box east of the line. The signalling scheme won the National Railway Heritage 2003 Westinghouse Signalling Award.

Swithland Sidings – This box comes from Aylesbury South and has been rebuilt on a new brick base. It is now in an advanced state of renovation and will control the double track main line with its two passing loops and access to the sidings. The area is modelled on the GW&GC Joint Line and was the inspiration of the late David Clarke, the major benefactor of the present day Great Central.

Rothley Station – This box, known as Rothley Cabin originates from Blind Lane, Wembley and was brought to the railway, re-erected and fully equipped with all its signalling equipment. It is situated on the west side of the station opposite Platform No.2. It is fully operational and controls all movement through the station and access to the Carriage Works south of the station. As with the signal box the Carriage Works was erected since preservation and has recently been the subject of a complete external repaint. The original GCR box was south of the station on the west side. Its base overhanging the embankment is still visible.

Leicester North – A long term project to control the southern terminus of the line. The station is south of the original Belgrave & Birstall station which it replaced.

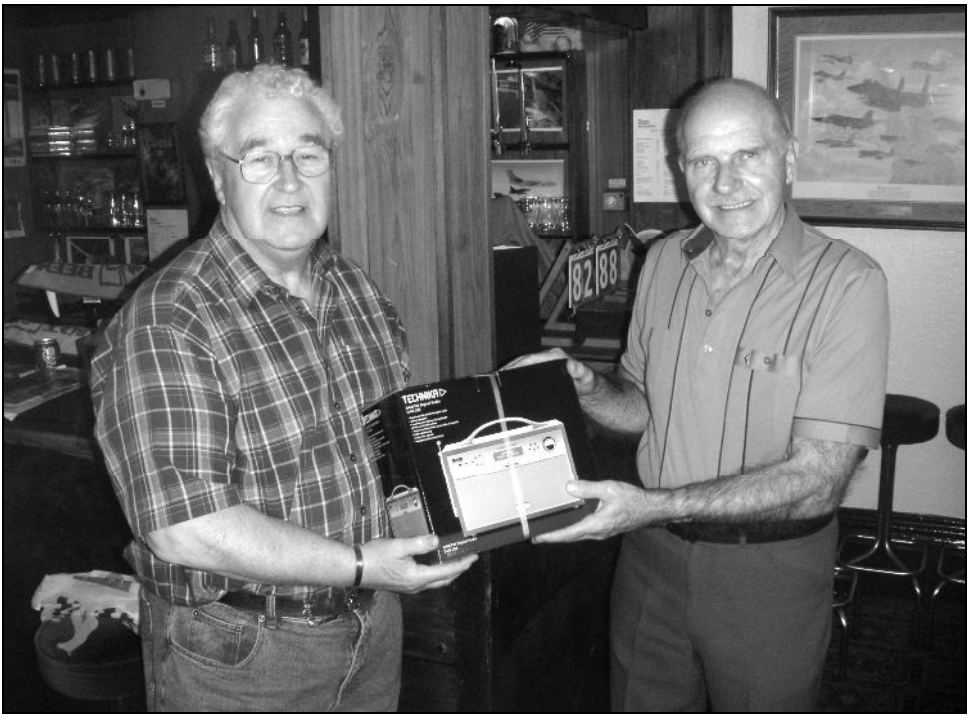
Currently EWS and GB Railfreight run trains carrying DSG (desulphurised gypsum) to the British Gypsum works at East Leake. There are usually two trains a day during the week. Access to the line form the Midland Main Line at Loughborough is controlled by Leicester Power Box. The recently announced scheme to build the new Loughborough Locomotive Works (Top Shed) north of the existing locomotive shed at Loughborough will almost certainly involve another signal box south of the Midland Main Line.

Presentation events in North Lincolnshire

reported by Bob Gellatly

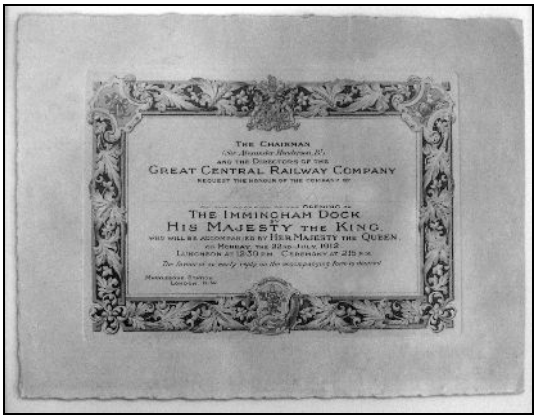
Wednesday 14th March found me on the promenade at Cleethorpes. No, I wasn't looking for the sea (I've been told it does appear occasionally) but looking for a parking space near to the RAF Club where I was to give a talk on 'The Southern Schools' to the Grimsby & Cleethorpes Railway Group. I had arrived earlier than anticipated. It was a clear evening and I was able to gaze across the darkness of the Humber estuary to the twinkling lights of the Easington Gas Terminal. A North Sea Ferry slipped slowly by as it set out on its overnight crossing to exotic destinations like Zeebrugge. My reverie was disturbed by the arrival of Mike Hartley, the organiser of the group, who helped me carry my equipment (a multi-media presentation!) up to the first floor meeting room.

Mike, as Chairman of the GCRS, used the occasion to recognise the service given by Brian Bell as editor of Forward from 1999 to 2006. During the interval, a DAB radio was presented to Brian by Mike on behalf of all of us in the GCRS. Brian, to whom the presentation came as a surprise, was pleased with his new toy and very appreciative of the sentiment. I am pleased to report that Brian is in good health and is still enjoying his golf.



Chairman of the GCRS, Mike Hartley (left) presents former editor of Forward, Brian Bell (right), with a radio.

On Wednesday 28th March I was invited to Immingham Museum. This was my first visit to Immingham. The museum is part of the modern Resource Centre on Margaret Street and consists of one room in which are displayed items connected to Immingham's history. The Great Central Railway was responsible for changing Immingham from a sleepy backwater when the docks were opened in 1912 - last year's Centenary was for 'The Cutting of the Sod'! While other ports like London and Liverpool have virtually vanished, Immingham has continued to grow. Ironically, originally built to export coal it is now a major importer of coal. Only today I saw an item on the local TV news about Immingham residents complaining about coal dust!



THE CHAIRMAN
AND THE DIRECTORS OF THE
GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY COMPANY
REQUEST THE HONOUR OF THE COMPANY OF

at the Opening of
THE IMMINGHAM DOCK
BY
HIS MAJESTY THE KING,
WHO WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN,
on MONDAY, the 22nd JULY, 1912.
LUNCHEON at 12.30 p.m. CEREMONY at 2.15 p.m.

An invitation to a Mr Thompson to attend the opening of Immingham Dock in 1912.

The reason for my visit was to attend the presentation of a copy of the GCR Roll of Honour by its compiler, Ken Grainger, to the museum's curator, Brian Mummery. Arriving 30 minutes before the proceedings I was able to have a good look around the displays, which includes much to interest the student of the GCR.

As the time for the presentation approached the room began to fill. The Mayor and Mayoress of Immingham arrived, creating a ripple of civic dignity. As organisers of the event, the Friends of Immingham Museum were well represented. There were also a good number of GCRS members present from the North Lincolnshire area. It soon became apparent that there wouldn't be enough chairs for all the guests and more had to be requisitioned from other parts of the building. The presentations were made twice - once for the photographer from the local paper, who only stayed long enough to fulfill his assignment, and then for real! Brian thanked Ken and the GCRS for adding a copy of the Roll of Honour to the museum's archive collection.

There followed a talk by Ken on the history of the GCR war memorial, from the splendour of its original unveiling by Lord Haig, to ignominy under the Wicker arches and its final reinstatement in the forecourt of the Victoria Holiday Inn. Ken also gave us an insight into the lives of some of the men so commemorated. This was very well received by the audience except for Mary Leitch, who unfortunately fell ill during the proceedings. Mary had assisted Ken with his research with information from the museum archives at Immingham, so it was particularly sad that she was not able to enjoy the occasion. I'm glad to say that it was nothing serious and Mary has made a speedy recovery.

Ken Grainger (left) presents a copy of the GCR Roll of Honour to Brian Mummery (right) at Immingham Museum.

If you ever venture into north Lincolnshire, perhaps to look for the sea at Cleethorpes, it is well worthwhile making a detour to Immingham and visiting the museum. Unfortunately it is only open Mon-Fri from 1pm to 4pm, but it can be opened at other times by prior arrangement. Phone 01469 577066 to speak to the museum staff.

The banner of the New Holland branch of the NUR is on display in this corner of the museum. The days of free access for operators to run trains on the railways is not new, as evidenced by 'N.U.R.' on the loco tender!

A one day symposium

'The LNER in Retrospect : A Celebration of the LNER's Achievements through 25 Difficult Years'.

The LNER Study Group will be holding a one day symposium to mark the 60th anniversary of the demise of the LNER. The date will be Saturday 26th April 2008. The venue will be York. More details will be provided in the next issue of Forward.

A response to the Great Central Railway study centre proposal

by Mark Hambly

Issues for Consideration

What are the Purposes/Objectives of the Study Centre?

Likely to be some combination of the following:

- To provide a safe and secure repository for the GCRS Archives.
- To make GCRS Archive Material accessible to Members and other interested researchers.
- To demonstrate GCRS's credibility as an historical society and thus make the GCRS Archives the "repository of choice" for those with relevant material they wish to see preserved and made available for research.
- To provide a space in which to exhibit and interpret selected items from the GCRS Archives.

What form could/should a Study Centre take?

The objectives could potentially be achieved anywhere on the following spectrum:

- A separate GCRS-specific location (i.e. acquisition/lease/loan of a property).
- A GCRS-specific building or room at a site of related interest/relevance e.g. a heritage railway or industrial museum.
- The GCRS Archives housed in the same location as some other Collection(s) but with access directly managed and stewarded by the GCRS.
- The GCRS Archives housed in the same location as some other Collection and managed as an integral part of that Collection e.g. somewhere like the HMRS Centre at Butterley.
- The GCRS Archives placed on permanent loan with an appropriate public body e.g. the NRM or Sheffield City Archives.

The pros and cons of each point on the spectrum would need to be examined in detail.

Where geographically might the Study Centre be?

Irrespective of the form the Centre takes the location will be important if it is to be accessible and well used. Although it does not necessarily follow that all those interested in the GC live within the geographical bounds of the Railway, many do. The GC area is generally regarded as the "T" with a horizontal stretching from the Dee and Mersey to the Humber and a vertical from Sheffield down through the East Midlands to London.

- For maximum accessibility the Centre probably needs to ideally be within the triangle bounded by Manchester, Scunthorpe and Leicester, or thereabouts.

How might the Study Centre be funded?

- Heritage Lottery Fund.
- ERDF/ESF.
- Public and charitable grant-making bodies.
- Donations from businesses etc.
- GCRS.
- Revenue from sales of publications, photographic prints etc based on the content of the Archive - e.g. perhaps the GCRS could do a facsimile re-print of Per Rail (I suggested this to the Committee a few years ago but at the time there was not felt to be sufficient demand, but it might be worth considering again).

Who will staff it?

Linked to and at least partially determined by the form of the Centre (see above), but inevitably will require significant voluntary input from GCRS Members.

What facilities will the Study Centre need to offer?

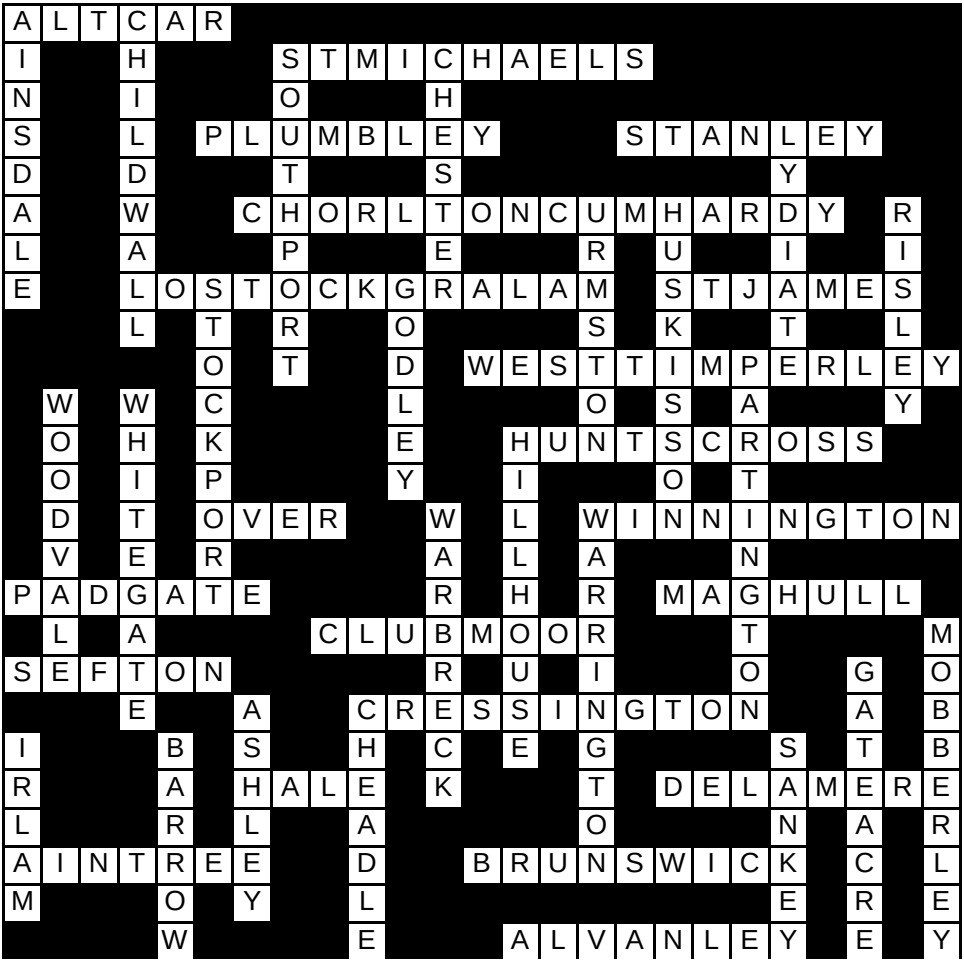
- Appropriate storage for material in a variety of formats from both security and preservation perspectives, probably including papers, books, maps and plans, photographic negatives and prints, models and small items of historical value.
- Well-lit study area with tables and chairs.

- PC with Internet connection, scanning and copying facilities - to be able to provide working copies to researchers, so that frequently requested and/or particularly fragile items can be made accessible electronically in order to preserve the originals and to be able to access material catalogued and/or stored electronically, and to access material available electronically from other collections of interest.
- Display area, where highlights of the collection can be placed on permanent or temporary display.
- Meeting room, for lectures and other events.

I would suggest that the first three are essential, the fourth is desirable and the fifth would be a "nice to have", either within the Centre or, depending upon location, accessible nearby.

CLC station word puzzle - a solution

This puzzle was set on page 25 of Forward 151. This is the solution generated by my computer but it may not be the only one - Editor.



The Wrexham, Mold & Connah's Quay Railway

by Mark Hambly

Originating as a locally-inspired venture to link Wrexham with the port of Connah's Quay on the Dee, the WM&CQ in time came under the influence of Sir Edward Watkin and thus had the distinction of being the only part of the Great Central Railway, and subsequently of the London and North Eastern Railway, in Wales. The WM&CQ main line survives to this day as the southern part of the Borderlands Line linking Bidston on the Merseyrail network with Wrexham, with an hourly service operated by Arriva Trains Wales and regular freight traffic to Corus at Shotton operated by EWS.

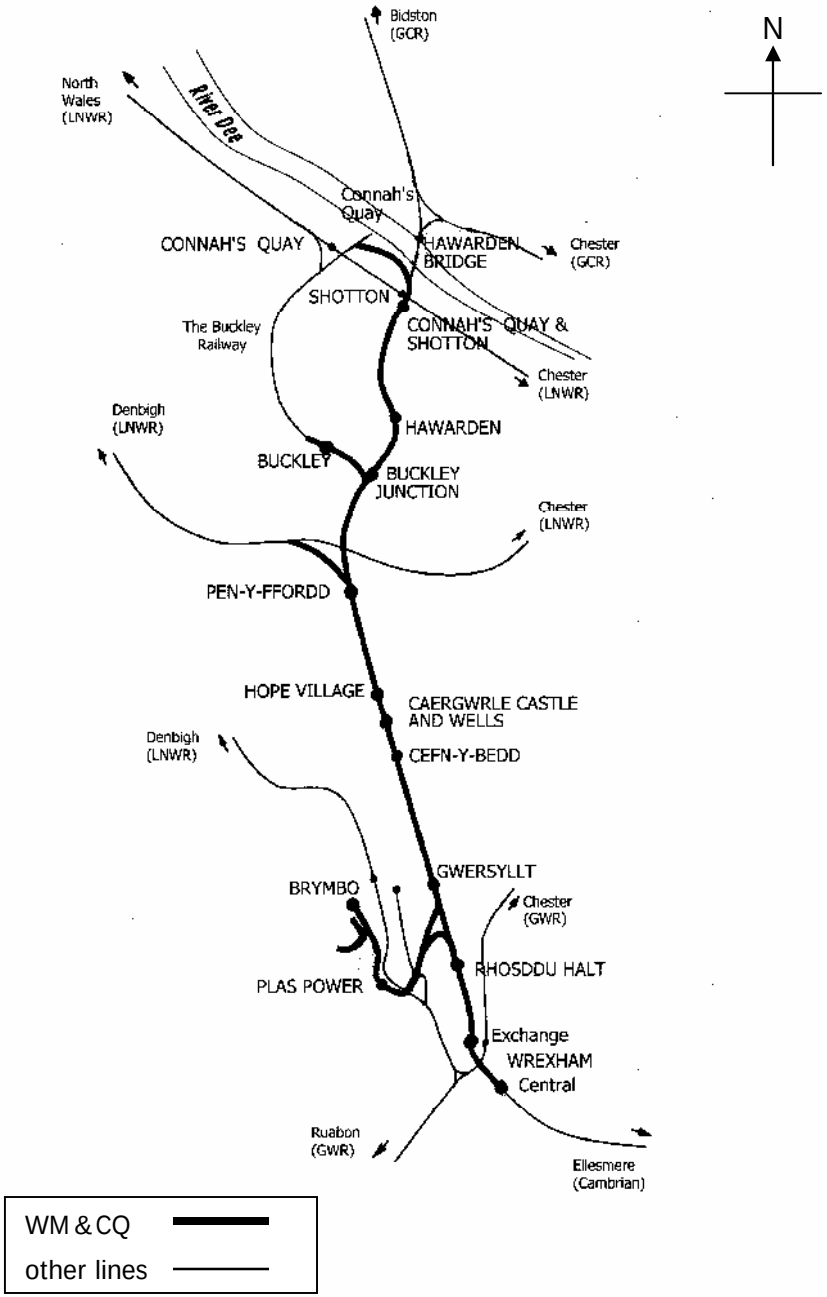
Initially promoted as the WWM&CQ in the autumn of 1861, the first "W" represented Whitchurch and was subsequently dropped before the WM&CQ Act was passed in August the following year. The first sod was cut in October 1862 by Mrs W. E. Gladstone and her husband, at the time Chancellor of the Exchequer and subsequently twice Prime Minister, made a speech. Construction began under Thomas Savin until his bankruptcy led to Benjamin Piercy taking over responsibility. In January 1865 Colonel Yolland of the Board of Trade inspected the line but, on finding inadequacies in aspects of both the construction and the proposed operational practices, he refused to allow it to open. Those outstanding matters were resolved sufficiently to permit opening of the line between Wrexham and Buckley to goods and mineral traffic on 1 January 1866, although contemporary press coverage suggests that this had been preceded by a period of informal operation. Colonel Yolland made a return visit in April 1866 and gave approval for passenger services to commence, which they did on 1 May following a celebratory outing over the line the previous day.

At Buckley the WM&CQ made a connection with the Buckley Railway, itself having opened in June 1862 to link the collieries, brickworks and potteries of Buckley with the port of Connah's Quay, replacing a number of earlier tramroads. The WM&CQ entered into working arrangements with the Buckley Railway and subsequently took a 999 year lease on the line in 1873.

While the WM&CQ was being built, Parliamentary sanction was sought for various branches and extensions but the only branch built initially was to Ffrith, an industrial district to the north west of Wrexham. There was also a connection with the LNWR's Mold line at Penyffordd and, in due course, with the Shrewsbury & Chester section of the GWR at Wrexham, although the fact that a local GWR Director, Sir Watkin Wynne, had made his opposition to the WM&CQ well known meant that initially there was a degree of animosity between the two companies.

A Bill for further expansion was tabled in November 1881 and after a rough parliamentary ride was enacted in August 1882. This sanctioned the extension of the line to a new town centre terminus, Wrexham Central, and the construction of a branch to the industrial centre of Brymbo, in the hills to the west of Wrexham. The extension to Wrexham Central was constructed during 1887 and opened on 1 November of the same year. Wrexham Central subsequently became a through station eight years later with the opening of the Wrexham and Ellesmere Railway in 1895, thus providing, via the junction with the Cambrian main line at Ellesmere, the connection with Whitchurch aspired to back in 1861. The Brymbo branch was built and opened to freight traffic in stages during the 1880s, with a passenger service from Wrexham Central to Brymbo commencing on 1 August 1889.

A further Act of June 1883 Act granted powers for what turned out to be the WM&CQ's most significant extension, the construction of the Hawarden Loop, a route from just south of Buckley (subsequently Buckley Junction) to Shotton and Connah's Quay independent of the Buckley Railway. This development marked the beginning of the end of the WM&CQ as an independent company as, in addition to providing a more efficient route for through traffic from the Wrexham area to the docks and the LNWR at Connah's Quay, it was to make an end-on connection at Shotton with a new line from Chester promoted by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway. As one of the three partners in the Cheshire Lines Committee, the MS&L had unrivalled access to the salt works in the Northwich area which provided a potential market for the otherwise almost worthless slack from the North Wales coalfield served by the WM&CQ. Both the WM&CQ's and MS&L's lines opened on 31 March 1890, with the MS&L's Hawarden Bridge swing bridge completed in the previous summer providing a rail crossing of the River Dee that also satisfied the requirement that navigation on the Dee should not be obstructed.


N
Bidston (GCR)
North Wales (LNWR)
River Dee
Connah's Quay
CONNAH'S QUAY
HAWARDEN BRIDGE
Chester (GCR)
SHOTTON
The Buckley Railway
CONNAH'S QUAY & SHOTTON
Chester (LNWR)
Denbigh (LNWR)
HAWARDEN
BUCKLEY
BUCKLEY JUNCTION
Chester (LNWR)
PEN-Y-FFORDD
HOPE VILLAGE
CAERGWRLE CASTLE AND WELLS
Denbigh (LNWR)
CEFN-Y-BEDD
GWERSYLLT
BRYMBO
Chester (GWR)
RHOSDDU HALT
PLAS POWER
Exchange
WREXHAM
Central
Ruabon (GWR)
Ellesmere (Cambrian)
WM & CQ
other lines

The completion of the Dee crossing gave the WM&CQ the incentive to take up the powers granted jointly by an Act of July 1885 to connect Hawarden Bridge with the Wirral Railway at Bidston, just outside Birkenhead. Three years prior to construction beginning in October 1892 the Wirral Railway had sold their interest to the WM&CQ and the MS&L for a little over £100,000, but the WM&CQ's relatively poor financial health meant that it found it necessary to borrow much of its share of the purchase price and subsequent construction costs from the MS&L. When the North Wales and Liverpool (NW&L) line opened in the spring of 1896 it was nominally operated by the WM&CQ due to the MS&L not initially having running powers over the Wirral Railway from Bidston to Seacombe, the transfer point for ferries across the Mersey to Liverpool, but in practice the WM&CQ was heavily reliant on motive power on loan from the MS&L in order to operate the service.

LNER class N5/2 0-6-2T no. 5548 with a Seacombe-Wrexham local at Connah's Quay & Shotton on 8 April 1939. Seacombe was linked to Liverpool by ferry. The signal gantry in the distance controlled the junction where the WM&CQ dropped down to the bank of the River Dee, leaving the GC line to cross the river over Hawarden bridge.
photo : C.A.Appleton

In September 1897 the Great Central Railway (GCR), as the MS&L had just become, obtained judgement against the WM&CQ for failing to repay the debts incurred in connection with the construction of the NW&L. The GCR's accountant was appointed as Receiver and Administrator and the lengthy demise of the WM&CQ followed, culminating in an Act of July 2004 which vested the WM&CQ, the Buckley Railway and the NW&L in the GCR with effect from 1 January 1905.

The Brymbo branch closed to passengers in 1917, initially as a temporary wartime economy measure but one that was never reversed. The various WM&CQ freight branches and the Buckley Railway gradually closed over a period of 45 years between the mid 1920s and the early 1970s but the core combined WM&CQ and NW&L route, linked by the MS&L's Hawarden Bridge, remains open to this day for both passenger and freight traffic.

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www.borderlandsline.com – information about current passenger services on 'the line that links Wales and Merseyside'.

A North West Trains single-car dmu no.153313 pauses at Connah's Quay – now Shotton (High Level) - with the 11:32 Bidston-Wrexham service on 15 August 2001. The ex-LNWR station on the North Wales line, now Shotton (Low Level), has been moved to a new positon NW of the rail bridge and a pedestrian link provided to the ex-WM&CQ station. The sign for the link can be seen at the end of the north-bound platform on the left.

photo : Bob Gellatly

Starting in the next issue of Forward –

'The Great Central War Heroes'

A series by Ken Grainger on railwaymen of the Great Central Railway who gave their lives for their country in the The Great War of 1914-18.

On Great Central lines today

by Kim Collinson

January saw severe gales and flooding during the month with the Chiltern lines the most badly affected of the GC routes. Quite a large amount of the freight traffic to and from West Burton Power Station is now operated by GBRf Class 66 locos which includes the traffic of desulphurised gypsum to Kirby Thore and imported coal from Hull Docks. In the London area GBRf locos also work many of the engineering trains in the Neasden and Northolt areas - these have included 66710/1/3/4/23/24 as well as Class 66 Metronet Locos. The final two Class 86 electric locos stored at Immingham 86205/226 were moved in January to Long Marston.

There was good news at the end of February when it was announced that Maltby Colliery has been sold by UK Coal to Hargreaves Services and this has given the mine an extended life of another 8 years with another contract to move coal by rail to Drax. On the 3rd March a railtour steam hauled by LNER V2 60800 Green Arrow from Peterborough over various GC lines was severely delayed in the Grimsby area due to a signalling incident and therefore was unable to run to Deepcar. For many people, including several hundred photographers on the branch beyond Sheffield Victoria, this was very disappointing as this would have been the first operational steam working over the Deepcar branch since Flying Scotsman way back in 1968.

Viewers of the BBC programme 'Top Gear' in February saw a staged crash between a locomotive and a car to highlight the dangers to motorists of unmanned level crossings. The event took place at Hibaldstow on the Brigg branch and used class 31 locomotive 31107. Class 31 locos have also made a rare appearance on the Deepcar branch on at least 7 occasions in February and March on route learning trips from and to Derby using 31190. Another type of traction once common on GC routes, the class 37 has also been observed in its old area, as on Monday 12th March, when 37087 now owned by DRS was seen at Roundwood coming off the Thrybergh route on engineers wagons heading south.

The reliability of services over the Penistone line has now reached its highest level of performance with almost 90% of trains running on time, the best since the route was saved from closure in the 1980s. Also the number of passengers has increased yet again in 2006 by an additional 18,000.

On Saturday 24th March a Branch Line Society Railtour originating from Ealing and worked by 66009/66093 with 7 coaches traversed several sections of the GC in the Sheffield and Manchester areas including Nunnery to Beighton, Guide Bridge to Ashburys, as well as the short remaining sections of the LDEC and CLC routes as follows, Beighton to Westhorpe, the remaining stub of the former Clowne branch via Spink Hill, and in the Stockport area the branches from Woodley to Bredbury Waste Terminal and Northenden to Skelton and as far as access onto the Partington branch. On the same day steam locomotive 60009 Union of South Africa worked through Mexborough on an excursion from Mill Hill to York, the return trip also through Mexborough was worked by 71000 Duke of Gloucester.

Network Rail has announced that they are to officially close the following branches - from Thoresby Colliery Jnct to High Marnham PS, and the Clipstone and Rufford colliery branches as there is now no prospect of any new traffic flows on these routes. Sunday 15th April saw Virgin Cross Country and Midland Main Line services being diverted through Barnsley. Then on the 28th April a day excursion from Skipton to Bath called at Barnsley at 08:35 and was worked by 47851 and 47245 bringing a return to loco hauled services to this route.

If you have any news of current activity on ex GC lines please let me know -
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or by e-mail : kim.collinson@btinternet.com.

The vital link...

by Marianne Shaw

This article appeared in the 21 March 2007 issue of 'The Bucks Herald' and was forwarded by Des Jenkins for inclusion in Forward. It is reprinted by kind permission of Johnston Press.

Have you ever tried getting to Milton Keynes or Oxford by train from Aylesbury? On the face of it the 20 mile plus journey in either direction seems as though it would be fairly straightforward. Not so. So ludicrous is the concept of not having a direct rail link between Aylesbury and its neighbouring cities that seasoned traveller Bill Bryson* makes reference to it in one of his books as an idiosyncrasy of modern Britain. The only way to make the trip by train, at the moment, is to travel 40 miles into London and then back out in the direction of the dreamy spires, or concrete cows, whichever takes your fancy.

Which is why it comes as no surprise that most commuters who live in Aylesbury but work in Milton Keynes start their day driving to work. It seems simplistic to point out that the thousands more houses planned across the Vale in coming years equals more people. But that means more schools, doctors' surgeries, shops, roads and rail links. And that offers a vague glimmer of hope. The track laid decades ago to Calvert still operates despite many people forgetting it is there. The line was once used by passengers for getting to Bletchley and the North, but nearly 30 years ago the line was closed and is nowadays only used by 20mph freight trains carrying rubbish to landfill.

Greg Lomax, managing director for Aylesbury Vale Advantage, is a member of the East West Rail Consortium - a partnership looking at the feasibility of a rail service between Milton Keynes and Oxford and reinstating the Calvert link between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. Mr Lomax attended a meeting this week after a report was published stressing the Aylesbury link was a moderate case for consideration. In total, the East West Rail link, which would be privately financed, is expected to cost about £130 million and would link Aylesbury with Southampton and Manchester.

He said reinstating the Calvert link would be the driving force to getting commuters out of their cars and without it, the incentive for rail travel would be lost. "The case at the moment can be broken down into three areas. Firstly, the statistics demonstrate it's possible to get a clear link between Milton Keynes and Oxford. The estimated journey between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury would be about 41 minutes. Secondly, there's the costs. The costings are in more detail for Milton Keynes and Oxford than Aylesbury and Calvert. So the next step there, is to undertake some civil engineering work to find out what the condition is of the existing track. At the moment it carries waste and so the safety regulations aren't as high as they would be if it was carrying passengers. Thirdly, the consortium has asked members to contribute to a further piece of work to find out how much it will cost to run it all."

Mr Lomax added the consortium will now develop business case for the rail link which will take the best part of year to complete. He said the economic benefits of the Calvert link are immeasurable, as it would get commuters out of their cars but added that initial costings of £64 million for the Aylesbury spur alone could see the link going to waste. "It's still regarded as an integral part of the scheme but if the Aylesbury spur is thought to be too expensive and it can't be justified financially then we would struggle to get it approved."

His comments were echoed by David Lidington, the MP for Aylesbury, who said he found the report interesting because it did not rule out the Aylesbury link entirely at this stage. "But it's clearly in their mind that it's a secondary target. I will be pressing for the project to be developed with the Aylesbury link as it's an integral part of the service. The other thing that caused me concern was the reference in the report to funding the orbital scheme through the government's new development tax," he said.

Mr Lidington added he will continue to lobby the Government to make sure funds are put in place for infrastructure. "What's being suggested is that a charge should be imposed on any new development within the area which includes the whole of Aylesbury Vale. "If that happens does that mean an end to developers' contributions such as section 106 agreements? I would be seriously concerned if these sources of funding were lost. The government needs to come up with a strategic plan for infrastructure. When the decision is being taken nationally on house numbers there's a duty on the

government to come up with a strategic plan for transport." The business case report, published at the end of 2007, will signal whether the Aylesbury link has reached the end of the line in terms of its viability and cost effectiveness.

* Editor's note : This gives me an opportunity to quote from one of my favourite travel writers. On p175 of 'Notes from a Small Island' Bill Bryson writes

> "Milton Keynes takes some getting to from Oxford, which is a little odd because it's only just up the road. I selected it as my destination on the basis of a quick look at a road map, assuming that I would, at worst, have to take a train to Bicester or some such place and then another from there. In fact, I had to go all the way to Euston and then finally a train to Milton Keynes - an overall journey of perhaps 120 miles in order to travel between two towns about 30 miles apart."

Readers' forum

from John G Teasdale, e-mail : JGTeasdale@btinternet.com

Re. Forward 151 - Editorial

I see in your editorial that the GCRS is looking for a home for its archive. A location not listed is a county record office (CRO). We, the North Eastern Railway Association, have lodged our archive in a museum, but if we were starting from scratch again now I think we might have gone for a county record office. Access for the public is as good as anywhere in a CRO, but the main advantage is that an archive stored there is better protected against such as fire or water damage than in most other places. We recently visited a CRO, and were shown one of the storage bunkers. It was concrete, air-conditioned, and with an inert gas fire suppression system. Staff at the CRO include conservators, who repair damaged documents and look out for such as insect infestations that would cause new damage.

A museum such as Beamish has the same standard of storage as a CRO, but such museums are few and far between. I do not know of any heritage railway site that comes anywhere close, and most libraries are pretty inadequate too when it comes to the storage of an archive.

from Bill Gee, Felixstowe

Re. Forward 151 p4 - 'Passenger Services on the LD&ECR' by Lawson Little

On 4th April 1942, ex-Met class H 4-4-4 no. 6420 (shedded at Langwith Junction) was noted at Tuxford at about 5pm on a Shirebrook North-Lincoln local. Another member of the class no. 6417 was noted at Retford (GN) (corrected) loco shed in January 1942, presumably en route to Doncaster for attention. Do any readers have memories of the Met tanks on LD&ECR services?

When the passenger service on the LD&ECR was withdrawn on 17th September 1955 the last working was when class A5 4-6-2T no. 69828 returned to Shirebrook North from Lincoln with its five coaches.

(Editor's note – photos of the Metropolitan class H appeared in *Forward 141* p10 & 11. This created some considerable correspondence in *Forward 142* p40-44.)

Rear cover caption

The naming of Metronet 66 722 as Sir Edward Watkin by David Jukes (left) who won the competition in RAIL magazine to suggest the name for this locomotive. RAIL editor Nigel Harris is on the right.

photo : Metronet Rail

Metronet
Sir Edward Watkin
METRONET
First
GBR