



Journal of the Great Central Railway Society

No. 154

December 2007

Front cover caption

BR class C13 4-4-2T no. 67416 at Chesham with the branch push-pull service from Chalfont in the 1950s. The locomotive was built in 1903 as GCR class 9K and survived until 1958. The ex-Metropolitan Railway stock used on this service (built by Ashbury of Manchester) has been the subject of an award-winning restoration project on the Bluebell Railway.

Photo: E. D. Thomas

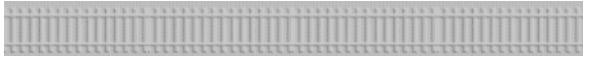


The Journal of the Great Central Railway Society

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I have been told by one GCRS member that the editorial in the last issue had made him feel depressed. I'm sorry if that was the effect. I promise to be more cheerful this time. With the season of Christmas and the New Year festivities upon us that shouldn't be too difficult.

I suspect I am not alone in having relatives who, knowing that the recipient 'is into trains', will buy a book with a train on the cover from WHSmith and think that they are doing you a favour! Such gifts are received with grace and despatched to the nearest charity shop in the New Year. However, this year could be different. I have just inspected a copy of Doncaster's Railway Legends by Brian Sharpe, published this year and exclusive to WHSmith. Despite having only one photo of a GC engine, it is an excellent read, and profusely illustrated with colour and black & white photos, some even taken this year, eg no.56303 on a special, which I also photographed as it travelled over the SYJnt in May. So this year you might be grateful for that WHSmith railway book!

Continuing on a positive note, I am impressed by the quality of articles from those who have never before put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) to write a railway article. The previous issue of Forward had 'Liverpool Memories' from Peter Lang and this issue has 'The Wombwell Accident of 1911' by Jim Thompson. I hope this will encourage others to try their hand. Without any disrespect to our regular contributors it's good to see new names appearing on the Forward contents page.

A task that I enjoy as Editor is that of finding suitable photos to accompany articles. I have in my keeping a large selection of photos, part of the GCRS archive. I also have my own photographic collection to dip into. Failing that I can ask others to look into their collections. The sharing of resources in this way is as it should be. It is a pity that sometimes when items are lent they are never returned. As referred to by Michael Minter Taylor on page 12 this has unfortunately been the experience of some GCRS members in the past. I hope none of our present readers have acquired material in this way. It's never too late to return borrowed items!

One pitfall that can befall an Editor, particularly a new one, is to publish an article that has already appeared in a previous issue. A GCRS member has informed me that Bill Taylor's 'The LD&ECR Engine Shed at Chesterfield' article, that appeared in the last issue, had already appeared in Forward 116. However, he also suggested that reprinting articles from some of the earliest issues might be a good idea.

This issue has extra pages in colour and it is intended to make this addition a permanent feature of the journal. Although careful with the Society's finances the committee feel that this expenditure is justified to give the membership more value for their subscriptions. I hope you agree.

The Society's web page at www.gcrsociety.co.uk is slowly taking shape. Dave Arnold has contributed a list of books related to the GCR. The next step is to compile a list of magazine articles. If you have access to the Internet please have a look at this list and see if we have missed any books that you think should be included.

Two events involving the GCRS have taken place at Ruddington since the last issue. The GCRS had a presence at the 'GC Gala' held on the Sunday and Monday of the August Bank Holiday week-end. John Quick was there with his 'Bridgehouses' layout and we had a GCRS publicity stall. The attendance was disappointing with the display marquee empty for most of the time. The second event was the GCRS Autumn Meeting (long-standing members still refer to it as the Reunion) on 13th October. There was some concern on the part of the organisers that the lack of publicity would lead to a poor turn-out. They needn't have worried. The day was a great success with about 30 members attending. There is a report by Paul White on page 22 of this issue.

Finally, thanks to the efforts of Len Bunning, GB Railfreight 66715 Valour was parked at the buffer stops at Marylebone over the weekend of 10th/11th November. A small ceremony took place at 11am on the 11th at which Mike Hartley placed a wreath on the front of the loco to commemorate the GC war dead.

An appeal to gauge O modellers from Tony West

It seems that the GCRS is back in the Gauge O Guild's good books and invitations have been received to attend next year's shows;

Kettering on March 8th

Halifax on June 7th

Telford on Sept 6th and 7th.

So then chaps WE need volunteers!!! Kettering is no problem as I can cover that but a little assistance would be most welcome. The main problem is Halifax and Telford on the Sunday. No help means no society stand at these important events. All you have to do to get in for free is bring along a model or two (or three) and talk GC to fellow modellers.

I will send off the Kettering form straight away but I really do need to know for the other two shows by Christmas.....this year!. Cheers Tony.

(e-mail: tonywest1959@yahoo.co.uk or write to 5 Tayberry Grove, The Street, Mortimer, Berkshire RG7 3WT)

The Great Central Railway on the Internet

www.lner.info/index.shtml

Site by Richard Marsden which he calls 'The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) Encyclopedia'. It is full of useful information about the LNER. There is a description with a photo of every LNER class which, of course, includes many GC types. Biographical information is given on all CMEs of constituent companies, which includes Sacre, Parker, Pollitt and Robinson from the MS&L/GCR. Other aspects of the LNER will be dealt with in due course.

www.lymmobservatory.net/index.htm

Site by John Lymm. Signal box diagrams, mostly GCR, and how to use them to make your own signal box simulation. Includes Aldam Jct. and Darfield Main (see article by Jim Thompson in this issue). This site will also be of interest to amateur astronomers.

www.greatcentraltoday.com

Site by Shawn Sanders. A survey of the remains, as of 2002/03, of the GC main line. Uses photos and OS maps to illustrate different sections of line.

www.woodhead.iwarp.com

This site is for those who have Microsoft Train Simulator and would like to include the Woodhead route. My own experience of MSTs is that if you are not careful it can become very addictive, particular if you go down the road (or track) of extending your route mileage and rolling stock.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2008

In accordance with Section 7(a) of the Society constitution, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Saturday 10th May 2008 at The Gladstone Club, Station Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5RB starting at 11.00am.

Under Section 9 of the constitution proposals for changes to the constitution, properly signed by the proposer and seconder, should be sent to the Secretary to reach him no later than 29th March 2008.

Under Section 5(c) nominations for the committee, signed by the proposer and seconder and made with the agreement of the nominee, should be sent to the Secretary to reach him no later than 19th April 2008.

Proposers and seconds must be paid up members of the Society.

Only proposals made in accordance with the constitution will be accepted for the Annual General Meeting.

Brian Slater, Secretary

The Wombwell accident of 1911

by Jim Thompson

In the early hours of Wednesday 13th December 1911 at approximately 6.00am a coal train ran away down the Sheffield Bank on the Chapeltown branch from Rockingham South signal box to Darfield Main Sidings, Wombwell. As a result of the collision both footplate men were killed. The two footplate men stayed with the train, endeavouring to gain control of the runaway. The deceased men were Driver James Wallis, a married man age 49 years, and Fireman Bernard Allen, a single man aged 22 years.

The goods train involved, the 12.35am 'up' coal train from Sheffield to Wath yard via the Chapeltown branch, was under the control of guard John Padley, who had been a goods guard for 17 years. All three crew members were based at Mexborough. The train departed late from Sheffield at 2.55 am as engine and brake van. The engine was running tender first. The train called at Tinsley where a number of wagons were picked up and then proceeded to Birdwell on the Chapeltown branch. There, a number of loaded and empty coal wagons were picked up. The train departed Birdwell at 4.55 am for Wath yard. The train was then made up of 44 full coal wagons and 12 empties plus a 6 wheeled brake van.

The Sheffield Bank which descended from Rockingham South signal box to Aldam Junction, a distance of 3½ miles, had a ruling gradient at 1 in 63 with a 1 in 44 gradient in places. The Rockingham South signal box was switched out at this time. As a consequence of the severe gradient there was a speed restriction of 15 mph and a special regulation was in force with regard to coal trains running on the 'up' line between Rockingham South signal box and Aldam Junction.

"All coal trains travelling from Rockingham South signal box in the direction of Wombwell Main Junction must come to a stand before the engine passes the signal box and the brake of the second wagon from the engine and each alternate wagon throughout the train must be pinned down before the train starts again."

"When a train has come to a stand the brake must be pinned down as above stated and the guard must tell the driver how many brakes he has fastened down. Before proceeding the driver must be satisfied that the brakes of half the wagons are properly secured. But on no account must the driver leave the footplate. If the circumstances of the weather or the state of the train are such that in the opinion of the driver a greater portion of the brakes should be pinned down it is the driver who is responsible for this being done before he proceeds to Wombwell Main Junction."

At Aldam Junction, situated about a mile before reaching Wombwell station, the line quadrupled with a pair of goods lines running alongside the passenger lines through to Wath sorting yard (opened in 1907). A connection was made at Darfield Main signal box approximately 800 yards before Wombwell station into Darfield Colliery branch siding. This necessitated a trailing connection from the 'up' goods line across the two passenger lines into the colliery sidings.

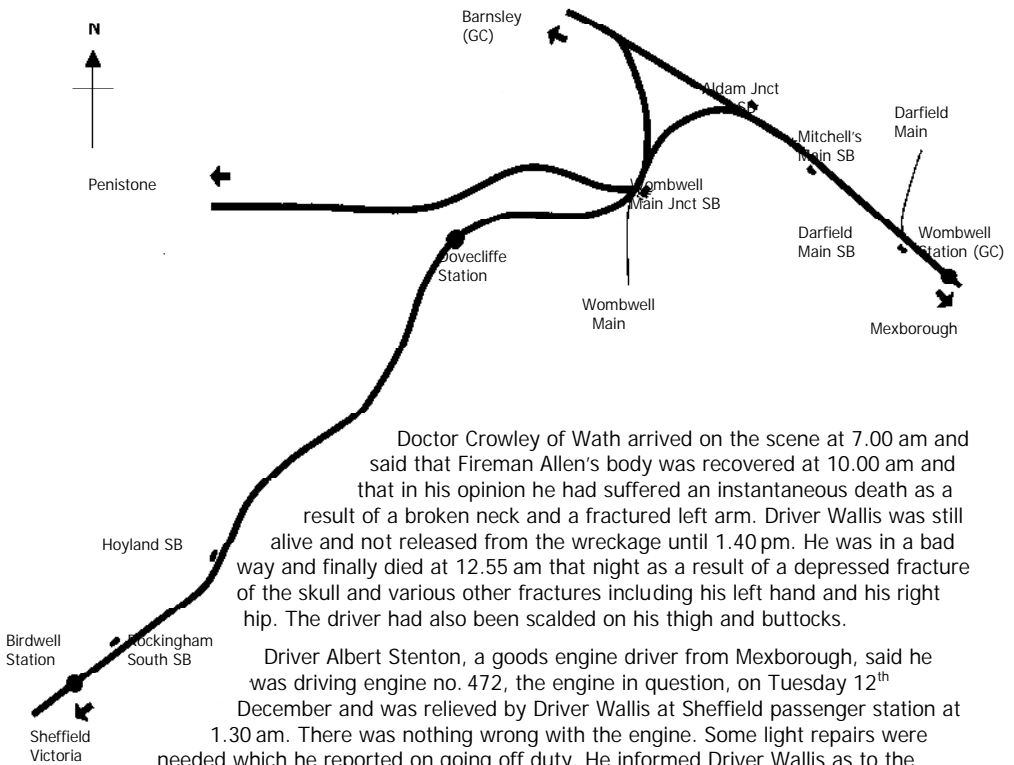
At the time the accident occurred the rails were stated to be in a very greasy condition. Under the coroner Mr P. Maitland and a jury of twelve citizens an inquest was subsequently heard at the Wombwell Wesleyan School Room. Examination of the evidence given at the hearing by the railway witnesses gives an insight into the hazards and dangers involved in the working of unfitted goods trains, the life blood of the railway industry at that time. Thousands of trains were run each day with an exceptional amount of skill and dedication by the train crews.

The Great Central Railway was represented at the hearing by Mr W. Moxley, District Superintendent Traffic Department, and Mr J. Williams, Locomotive Department. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Fireman and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants were also represented. Police superintendent McDonald was also present. Evidence was taken from witnesses in the employ of the Great Central Railway Company. Witness Guard Padley said that he had been on duty since 7.25 pm the previous day at Mexborough. He proceeded to Sheffield and subsequently worked a fish train to Tinsley. At 2.55 am with Driver Wallis and Fireman Allen he worked a coal train from Sheffield to Wath yard via Tinsley and later went to Birdwell to pick up coal wagons. At Birdwell

the train consisted of 44 full coal wagons and 12 empties. He always examined his train and found the brakes to be in good order. Due to the weather conditions, foggy and very greasy rails, he pinned three wagon brakes down next to the engine. He signalled 'right away' having previously had a conversation with Driver Wallis and they spoke of the poor rail conditions. He told him to go nice and steady to Rockingham South signal box. The line was level from Birdwell station to Rockingham South signal box, a distance of about a ¼ mile.

However, the train failed to stop at Rockingham South to pin down the wagon brakes. As a rule every other wagon was pinned down. The signal box, as usual at this time, was switched out. The gradient started just beyond the signal box. He put on his hand brake and tried to attract the attention of the driver by waving a red light. The speed at this point was about 4 mph (but this was later disputed). He said the gradient was 1 in 63 for 3½ miles and 1 in 27 in places. With the speed of the train increasing, Guard Padley jumped from the train and attempted to pin down further wagon brakes. The speed of the train continued to increase, leaving him behind. He went to Hoyland signal box where he explained the situation to the signalman.

The signalman on duty said to Guard Padley that "he thought the train went past a bit sharp" but didn't realize anything was wrong. A light engine was released from the sidings at Hoyland and Guard Padley followed on this engine to Darfield Main sidings where he found his wagons stacked up. He entered the brake van and found his hand brake was still full on and chained. Two years previously a new rule had been implemented concerning the working of trains down the gradient with a class 6C (J12) engine. The new rule was that the maximum load was 34 full wagons. There were rumours that a train had run away on the previous day.



Doctor Crowley of Wath arrived on the scene at 7.00 am and said that Fireman Allen's body was recovered at 10.00 am and that in his opinion he had suffered an instantaneous death as a result of a broken neck and a fractured left arm. Driver Wallis was still alive and not released from the wreckage until 1.40 pm. He was in a bad way and finally died at 12.55 am that night as a result of a depressed fracture of the skull and various other fractures including his left hand and his right hip. The driver had also been scalded on his thigh and buttocks.

Driver Albert Stenton, a goods engine driver from Mexborough, said he was driving engine no. 472, the engine in question, on Tuesday 12th December and was relieved by Driver Wallis at Sheffield passenger station at 1.30 am. There was nothing wrong with the engine. Some light repairs were needed which he reported on going off duty. He informed Driver Wallis as to the condition of the engine and would have been happy to have continued driving the

engine himself. As far as he knew there was nothing to account for Wallis not pulling up at Rockingham South. The Loco Superintendent, Mr Townend, reported that when he last travelled on the engine with a coal train there had been no difficulty in controlling the train.

William Gorrill, age 63 years, had been a signalman at Aldam Junction for 37 years. Signalman Gorrill had been alerted that the train was coming from Wombwell Main Junction by a 'runaway in right direction' signal. He said the ill-fated train passed the box at about 6.00 am. The train was running on the 'up' (from Sheffield) passenger line on the Chapeltown branch. A Barnsley to Mexborough passenger train was already on the 'up' (towards Mexborough) passenger line in his section, so he routed the train onto the 'up' goods line. Signalman Gorrill estimated the speed of the train at about 60mph when it passed his signal box. Apparently it was customary for this train to continue its journey from Aldam Junction on the 'up' passenger line.



Wagons piled high at Wombwell following the collision.

Signalman Thomas Scorah had been a signalman for 20 years. He said he was on duty at Darfield Main signal box when he received the 'train run away' signal at 5.58 am from Mitchell Main signal box. At that time there was an engine driven by Driver James Kilner on the 'up' goods line with 7 wagons. He had given permission for the driver to shunt into Darfield Main sidings across the passenger lines. The driver was immediately informed of the runaway and told instead to pull clear. However, the train was not cleared in time and was hit by the runaway. He observed that sparks were flying from the wheels of the runaway engine. He sent the 'Obstruction Danger' signal in both directions.

Driver James Kilner had been in the service of the company for 16 years and a goods engine driver for 5 years. He said he had received instructions to shunt 7 wagons into Darfield Main sidings. He received the signal to propel them into the colliery sidings. He started them off when he saw the headlamps of a train approaching. As soon as he saw the engine and at what speed it was coming he reversed his engine and gave it full steam. He was well on the move in reverse when the collision occurred. He said the runaway was moving at about 60 mph. There were sparks flying in all

directions from the runaway engine. He had known the driver for years and he knew he was an experienced man.

Following the collision, 50 miners or more, from the adjacent colliery assisted with the rescue work. Charles Huggill, the District Locomotive Superintendent, Doncaster, arrived on the scene at 8.45 am. Driver Wallis was still buried under the wreckage, four wagons deep. The debris was 20 feet high. The miners present were assisting in every way and he let them carry on. He examined engine no. 472 and with the exception of the boiler, frames, cylinders and wheels everything else would need renewing. The brakes were all smashed under the engine and tender. The brake application valve was in the position of being 'hard on'. He saw Driver Wallis but had no conversation with him regarding the runaway as he was in great agony.



Driver James Wallis

his lucky escape and commended him for his actions. The jury found a verdict of death, through their train running away down the gradient from Rockingham South signal box owing to it not being pulled up at that box. But why it did not pull up the evidence did not show. The jury added they thought the railway company ought to have a signalman in charge of the box at all times and also a light at night, seeing that it was in such a dangerous position.

Locomotive no. 472 was an ex-MS&L 0-6-0 goods locomotive built in 1882 to the design of Sacre embodying substantial frames and a round top firebox. They were later provided with cabs, an improvement on the original weather boards. The reversing rod was unusually mounted below the outside frame. No. 472 was subsequently rebuilt in 1909 by Robinson with his standard no. 1 Belpaire boiler and also automatic vacuum brake. No. 472 was put on the duplicate list in 1922 and received a 'B' suffix. This was to make room for a new class B7 4-6-0 with that number. The locomotive survived until 1928 as LNER class J12 no. 6441.

Subsequently a Railway Department Board of Trade enquiry was held under Col. P.G. von Donop R.E. at which he was informed that the railway company was arranging the construction of a sand drag in a suitable position at Wombwell Main Junction similar to those in use on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway where they had proven very effective.



Fireman Bernard Allen

Acknowledgement : I would like to thank the staff at the Local History Archives of Barnsley Library for helping me with my research.

Len's Stratford-on-Avon & Midland Joint (part 2) bus trip

by Ken Grainger

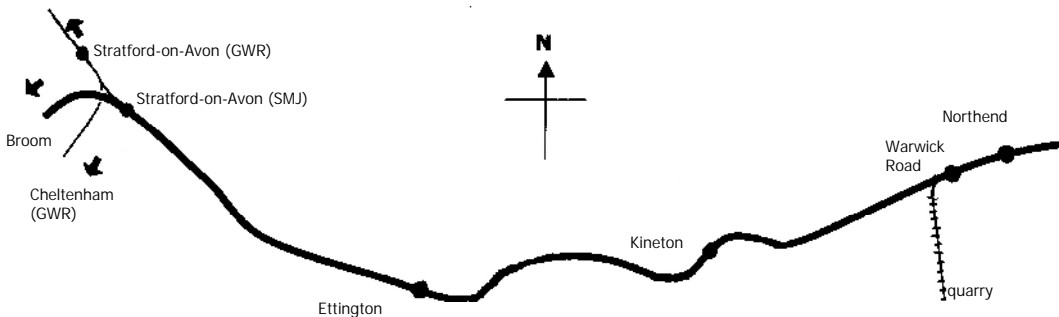
You know, those of you who opt not to bother with Society 'Get-Togethers' really don't know what you're missing. Within some organisations, an AGM might well be something to avoid like the plague, with financial projections, resolutions, points of order, etc., etc., but be assured a GCRS AGM is nothing like that. Such is GCRS equanimity that AGM business is quickly completed and the serious matter of Great Central Railway enthusiasm got around to. The Autumn event is similar except that it's Great Central Railway enthusiasm right from the start! Above all though these 'get-togethers' are wonderful social events, opportunities to make and renew acquaintances with others of similar interests - and none more so than the annual 'Len's Trip'.

Members will be aware that at the last AGM Len Bunning stood down after years of dedicated service as GCRS Southern Area Representative. That does not mean though that Len is exiting the scene completely. Amongst other things he fully intends to continue organising his extremely successful and hugely enjoyable annual historic railway site safaris by minibus, which might be termed "Site of Historic Interest Tours" (you work out the acronym). This year's foray, on Saturday 14th July, was Part Two of an exploration of some of the remains of the Stratford-on-Avon and Midland Junction Railway (SMJ), that romantic byway that once unhurriedly conveyed Great Central through carriages between Woodford Halse and Shakespeare's birthplace, now referred to as Stratford-upon-Avon. I'm afraid I'd missed out on Part One, being on holiday at the time, but that raises another point! Apart from thoroughly receiving his annual tours, Len has a happy knack of choosing sunny Saturdays on which to stage them, so if you really cannot make it, the allotted date is no bad time to book your holidays - but could he pull it off this dreadful summer? Actually, as we drove down under a glowering sky to make our Banbury rendezvous, we thought he'd blown it this time. We should have had more faith.

We travelled along that winding country lane from the M1 at Daventry, jokingly called the A361, with its tantalising signs to places of GC lore such as Catesby and Culworth, to arrive at Banbury, with GWR signal boxes and lower quadrant signals at both ends of the station, a great place to meet. There was just time for a couple of photos before being warmly greeted by the southern contingent, arriving from Wembley Park, then we were heading back northwards through picture postcard villages with cottages of honey-coloured stone. We just paused for the briefest glimpse of the GWR's Cropredy station cottage, which looks nothing like any GWR architecture I know of. I suspect it was there long before the railway was built but, being in the right place, got co-opted for the job.

We actually reached SMJ territory at Aston le Walls to inspect the first of a couple of SMJ bridges. Our driver, Andy, might well have questioned the charm of humped-back bridge SJT53 but managed to ease the coach over it without grounding. According to Len's programme the next stop at idyllic Claydon Middle Lock on the Oxford Canal was "just for Ted", but the rest of us, even if not canal students like Ted, were equally appreciative, not least because by now the sun had come out and would shine for the rest of the day. It has to remain his secret though how Len managed to

Birmingham Moor St. (GWR)



coordinate our arrival with the lock being negotiated by a narrow-boat, the gates being operated by an attractive young lady in ultra-short shorts.

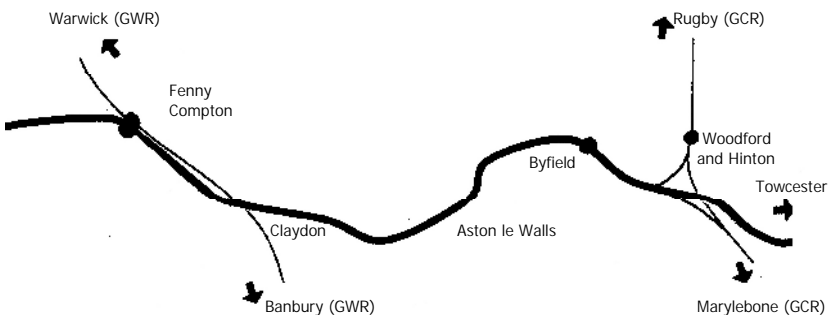
Following the line of the canal brought us back to the SMJ where it bridged and then ran alongside the GWR just south of Fenny Compton. We pulled in beside a van inscribed "TROTTERS : ONLY MULES AND HORSES", which would appear to represent the equestrian branch of Del-Boy's business empire. Along the footpath there were this time no 'up for it' cattle (those who survived the Ashendon Junction expedition will know what I'm talking about) and we had merely to take our lives in our hands to cross the GWR line, where close proximity to a couple of speeding Turbos provided salutary reminders of the impermanence of man. Only the abutments of the SMJ bridge over the GWR remain, but the blue-brick arches over our footpath looked as sound as the day their centrigs were removed.



The narrow boat 'Penguin' emerges at the top of Claydon Middle Lock.

The actual site of the junction is remarkably clear, but had to vie for attention with a picturesque cast iron bridge over the adjacent canal, and a goods (what Peter called "a real train") heading for Banbury. And so to Fenny Compton and lunch at the Wharf Inn. I mustn't overuse the word 'idyllic' but as the hostelry's name implies, a basin and moorings of the Oxford Canal are immediately outside, beside the original hump-backed road bridge which has now been bypassed - much I would imagine to Andy's relief. Of Fenny Compton's side-by-side stations, where the SMJ diverged towards Stratford while the GWR continued towards Leamington Spa, there was little to be seen, just the very end of the SMJ's Down platform. Thus far, such is the degradation of the SMJ that the canal definitely had a half time lead.

Heading westwards again, we passed over a bridge that Andy should have been worrying about, as a horrible scraping sound emanated from the underside of the coach, but the silencer obviously survived intact. We could only speculate as to which side of the road overbridge was the one-time middle-of-nowhere Northend station, which is hardly surprising since it closed in 1877. Even that was four years later than even the more remote Warwick Road, a mile-or-so further along the road. There looked though, to be plenty of life in the MoD depot a little to the south west. On this occasion we could only survey at some distance all the rolling stock and couple of Class 47s in their sidings - perhaps another time ?



Any remains there might be of Kinton station are submerged under burgeoning rain forest, and the piece of rail which Len told us was "still extant" stands more-or-less upright beside the station overbridge, where it had once supported a cast iron sign. Kinton though was where the SMJ was going to get back into the match. It was amongst the loveliest of the several delightful villages we had passed through and its church is exquisite, but how precisely Len happened upon that bridge sign only he knows. It can only have survived because of its out-of-the-way location down a little used lane, but sticking up in the nettles where the lane bridges the trackbed is an original SMJ cast iron diamond bridge sign, in perfect condition and not even requiring a repaint. "Diamonds are Forever"? Probably not, as only two bolts prevent this gem from becoming the pride and joy of some private collector, but it's doing its best.



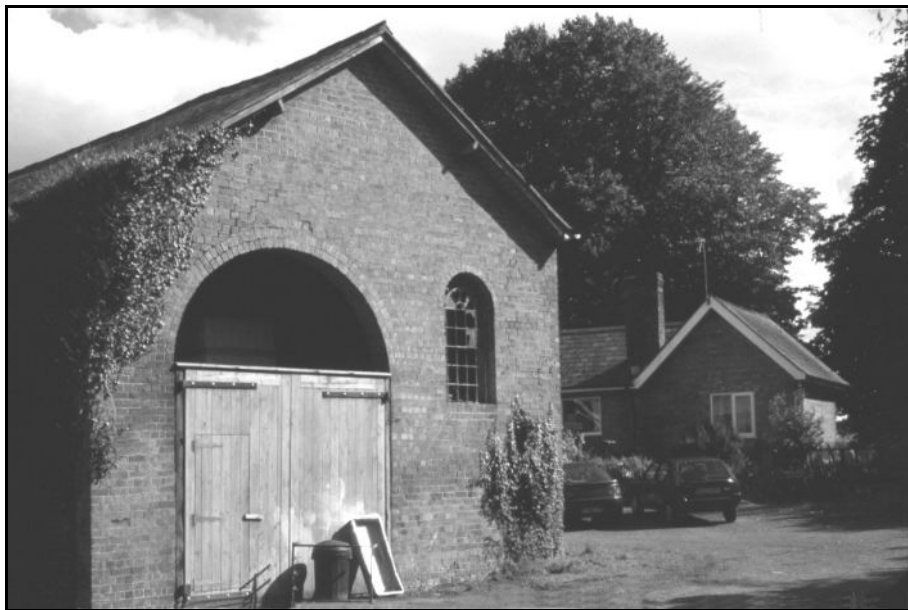
The pristine cast iron SMJ sign by the bridge at Kinton.

though apparently it's a later facsimile. Paul very nearly got left behind taking a photograph of it, but managed to look quite unperturbed when we did a second circuit to pick him up.

There was to be just one more stop, for much needed refreshment, at 'The Tramway' which commemorates the one-time horse-drawn tramroad feeder to the Stratford Canal. One suspects that the sign depicting a horse-drawn tram on transverse sleeper track and with a scarlet-coated Dickensian driver owes more to artistic licence than to reality. Thirsts slaked, we set off for Banbury to say our farewells and head for home. Who knows what Len might come up with for next year? Whatever, it is sure to be of tremendous railway interest, with excellent company and above all it will be fun! If you can possibly make it, you won't regret it.

The SMJ really got the result though at Ettington. Here, not only does the station building survive, sympathetically extended by the addition of a second gable to create a neat bungalow, but the goods shed remains substantially unaltered. Ettington station is a must for SMJ students, but let the lady of the house know what you are up to - I think she was quite alarmed by our incursion until our honourable intentions were made clear.

We set off on our final lap towards Stratford in good spirits, arriving along the A4390 which, it turned out, has usurped the course of the SMJ. The presence of Stratford (Old Town) station is commemorated on the south side of the road by a short length of track complete with buffer stop, it must be on the site of the engine shed, and on the north side by what at first glance might be taken for a brick wall, but is in fact the surviving Up platform face of Stratford (Old Town) station. It was at this platform that, in their day, delectable SMJ Beyer Peacock 2-4-0 tanks drew up with the Great Central through carriage, handed over at Woodford to give Stratford, however improbably, its shortest route to and from London. The adjacent bridge which carries the A4390 over the Avon also retains an original SMJ 'look',



The goods shed and station building at Ettington.



SMJ 2-4-0T no. 6 at Stratford (SMJ) station with a train for Towcester, its train including a Great Central through carriage for Woodford. No. 6 was one of a pair originally built by Beyer Peacock in 1884 for the Swindon, Marlborough & Andover Railway, but never delivered and purchased by the SMJ's predecessor, the East & West Junction Railway, in 1885. Both were sold for military service in 1916 and in fact at grouping the SMJ was very possibly unique in owning no tank engines at all. The Great Central carriage is a Gorton-built Lavatory Brake Composite of 1906, with WCs sandwiched between each pair of compartments, except the near end 3rd, which had a short side corridor to gain access to the WC of its neighbouring 3rd class compartment.

photo : SWA Newton, by courtesy of Leicestershire Records Office

The Knightsbridge connection

by Michael Minter Taylor

If a particular company, of which I was an employee, had not decided to move its head office in Knightsbridge to north Buckinghamshire, the Great Central Railway Society, as such, may never have come into existence. A startling fact, but one that can be verified quite simply, so its back to the very beginning.

Milton Keynes was in its infancy. Roads led from Bletchley, Stony Stratford, Wolverton and Newport Pagnell, to a place designated as Milton Keynes town centre. The problem was there was, as yet, no centre. The office was to be built in Bletchley. What would the staff do in their spare time? They would be like fish out of water. So the writer, one afternoon in early 1974, was sitting at his desk in Knightsbridge thinking about the future and what it held for himself, his family and the staff. Then it came to him, had not the Great Central main line out of Marylebone closed a few years previously, so why not form a society to study the industrial archaeology of the London Extension. Finmere was just a few miles from Milton Keynes and could be a jumping off point.

When approached, the management thought it a good idea and said the inaugural meeting could be held on their premises in Knightsbridge. So far so good but would it not be sensible to open such a society to the world at large? Yes, of course it would. So having decided on the date and time for the meeting, the railway press were contacted and the magazines went out of their way to publish editorials and inform their readers of this new development. Copies of the many letters written at this time were in a file lent to a former member and never returned. This has led the writer to put pen to paper so that this gap in the early history of the Great Central Railway Society can be fully appreciated.

The result of all this was that some 40 enthusiasts from all over the country attended the inaugural meeting which was held on 19th April 1974. The writer was nominated Chairman and Secretary, and among the other nominations were James Hatch who was elected Programme Co-ordinator, and Christopher Austin who was elected Recorder, both of whom the writer was delighted to meet again at the Society's Silver Jubilee celebrations, held at Kings Cross in 1999. The annual subscription was set at £1.50 and most of those present paid up on the spot. The Great Central Railway Society was now a going concern.

The writer always remembers the comments expressed somewhat forcibly by Mr D. L. Franks. He had travelled from Yorkshire to attend. It was made quite plain that it was wrong to think of the Great Central as just being the London Extension. He was referring, of course, to the lines of the former MS&LR, the CLC and other joint lines, as well as the shipping services. Absolutely correct and as a consequence he became the Northern Co-ordinator there and then, and later through his hard work, the President of the Society.

The first newsletter duly appeared in May 1974, sporting the banner FORWARD. The rest, as they say, is history.



Finmere station in the 1960s before closure.

The LNER Study Group

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



To mark the Diamond Jubilee of the end of the LNER's existence as a separate company, the LNER Study Group is presenting a one-day Symposium, with the above title.

The event will be held at The Bar Convent, in York (just 5 minutes walk from York station), on Saturday, 26th April, 2008.

On reading this title, many enthusiasts will probably think first of Gresley Pacifics and high-speed trains. Whilst we can never seek to ignore these more-glamorous achievements, they are already well-documented. It is, therefore, planned to shift the emphasis of the day towards the company's wider achievements. By exploring some of these and the reasoning behind them, we hope to encourage fresh fields of LNER interest and research. To this end, the following panel of speakers has been assembled:

Professor Colin Divall (University of York, Institute of Railway Studies) will give the keynote address on the Economic Framework, Management & Policy Responses of the LNER.

Andrew Dow The Other Half of the Machine.

Beverley Cole It's Quicker by Rail.

Peter Scott Passenger Services.

Sam Woods The Northern Belle: Cruising in Style with the LNER.

Peter Tatlow The LNER's Entry into Europe: Train Ferries.

Anthony Miller Some Aspects of LNER Goods Traffic.

Malcolm Crawley Locomotive Development and Standardisation.

The cost of the day is £20, which includes coffee, tea and a buffet lunch. The lunch menu has a selection of homemade quiches, cold meats, salads and jacket potatoes. Special dietary requirements can be catered for and any such needs should be clearly stated at the time of booking.

The number of places is limited and, if you would like to attend, early booking is strongly advised. Bookings, with cheque for £20 per head payable to "The LNER Study Group", should be sent to Dr John B. Sykes,

Secretary, 10 Lumb Carr Avenue,
Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire,
BLO 9QG.

A Symposium Dinner is being planned for the evening of Saturday, 26th April. This is intended to be a convivial end to the day and ladies and friends will be most welcome. When you book a Symposium place, therefore, it would be most helpful if you could also please say whether or not you would be interested in attending the dinner and how many places you might like.



Women at work collecting coal from the tracks on the LNER in 1943.

Sheffield Victoria through the lens of 'loose grip 99'



Sheffield Victoria station, June 1968. EM1 E26052, named Nestor, departs platform 5 for Manchester over the Great Central Woodhead route.



Sheffield Victoria station, 1969. Class 37 diesel D6754 enters platform 4 with the Harwich train from Manchester over the Woodhead route.



Sheffield Victoria station in September 1969. The original LNER EM1 E26000 Tommy arrives at platform 4 from Manchester on a train to be taken forward on the old North Midland line to Derby by a diesel locomotive. Manchester trains were diverted over the Great Central Woodhead route because of tunnel work on the Midland main line north of Chesterfield. E26000 was taken out of service in October 1968 but re-instated in 1969 to cover this additional passenger traffic.

Demolition of Staveley Central

reported by Chris Booth

Work has begun on a new road system to link the £65 million Markham Vale regeneration scheme on the site of the closed Markham Vale colliery, and surrounding areas, with the M1 motorway. Phase 1 of the Staveley Northern Loop Road scheme will provide a link road from a new roundabout on Hall Lane, loop around the north west side of Staveley and eventually join up to the new M1 junction 29A at Markham Vale. The £10.9 million construction scheme is scheduled to take approximately two years and is being carried out on behalf of Derbyshire County Council and development partner Henry Boot Developments Limited by contractor Alfred McAlpine Project Services.

Of interest to GCRS members is the fact that the works will affect the site of the former Staveley Central station, the remains of which will now totally disappear almost 44 years after closure of the station. The existing A619 bridge at Lowgates, which spanned the station and tracks, will be replaced with a new bridge spanning the new loop road and a bridleway. At Eckington Road, Staveley, a further new bridge will be built to carry Eckington Road over the currently disused railway (Hall Lane Junction to Staveley Town), a future reinstated Chesterfield Canal and the new loop road.

Good photographs of the area concerned can be found in Ken Grainger's book, 'Sheffield Victoria to Chesterfield Central Part One' on p97-108. Yet another piece of GCR history swept away, such is the price of progress.

All photos by Chris Booth



Looking south from Lowgates bridge towards Staveley South Jct. on 21 June 2007. The terraced housing on Telford Crescent is just visible on the right, beyond which the Chesterfield Loop branched off to the right.

See the centrefold for David Charlesworth's painting of this location in the 1950s.

To see more of David Charlesworth's work, visit his own web site at www.notionsbydesign.com and the Guild of Railway Artists web site at www.railart.co.uk/gallery/charlesworth.html.



The view of Staveley station site looking north from Lowgates bridge on 21 June 2007. The brick footbridge support and the edging stones on platform 2 can still be identified. The blocked off Beighton-Staveley Trail is on the right.



Looking from the cattle dock towards Lowgates bridge. The nearer brick footbridge support is on platform 4.



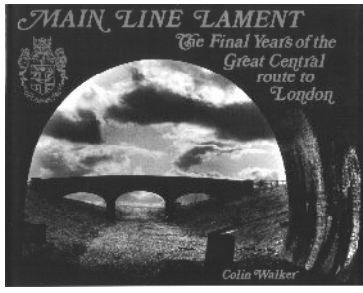
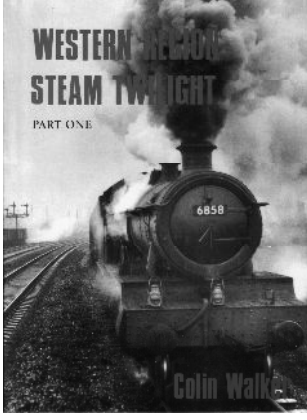

View from the new bridge looking north on 14 Oct. 2007. All trace of the station is now gone.



View from the cattle dock showing the new bridge taking shape.

Sale of books by Colin Walker

The following books of photographs by Colin Walker are available to GCRS members at these reduced prices (post free) :

	<p>Main Line Lament Pendyke Publications reprint 1999 (Centenary Edition). A photographic record of the final years of the former GC main line to London.</p> <p>Cover price £22.95 Special offer price £15.00</p>
	<p>Western Region Steam Twilight (Part One) Pendyke Publications reprint 1997. A photographic record of the final years of steam on the Western Region.</p> <p>Cover price £22.95 Special offer price £15.00</p>
	<p>London Midland Steam Twilight (Part One) Pendyke Publications reprint 1995. A photographic record of the final years of steam on the London Midland Region.</p> <p>Cover price £21.95 Special offer price £15.00</p>

Please send payment (cheque payable to M. D. Walker) to
M.D Walker, 28 Elmfield Avenue, York YO31 9LS
A donation of £2 per book will be given to GCRS funds.

On Great Central lines today

by Kim Collinson

The first coal train to operate from the reopened Hatfield Colliery ran on the 24th July operated by Freightliner Heavy Haul to Ratcliffe Power Station. Freightliner are also investing in more wagons and locomotives to move increased tonnages from the colliery including additional workings to Ironbridge Power Station. Thoresby and Welbeck Collieries are also seeing investment in new wagons and locomotives, this time by GBRf for workings to West Burton and Cottam.

The Autumn Sandite season commenced on Sunday 30th September, again using Class 20 locos, and the first working through Penistone utilised 20301/02. On Monday 1st October the Penistone line saw its most unusual workings of the year so far when during the early hours the 7 vehicle Loram rail grinding unit numbered DR 79241 to 47 made a return trip over the route. This was followed by an additional Sandite working with 2 wagons top and tailed by 37038 and 20305 which passed Silkstone at 07:34 and returned through Dodworth at 08:25. This was the first class 37 to be seen at Penistone for 3 years.

Due to the closure of the rail welding depot at Castleton a new facility has been opened at Scunthorpe steelworks, this bringing an increase in traffic of new long welded rails, with trains operating on a regular basis between Scunthorpe and Crewe and return. These services have often been worked by some of the few surviving EWS class 37 locos, an example being 37410.

If you have any news of current activity on ex-GC lines please let me know -
Kim Collinson, 18 Close Hill Lane, Newsome, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD4 6LE.
or by e-mail : kim.collinson@btinternet.com.

Cast iron corner

A Cheshire Lines Committee gate notice. Black lettering on a white ground. Notices like these would be found on occupation crossings where the user was responsible for opening and closing the gates. Sometimes the railway companies would use a standard 'Shut & Fasten Gate' notice which fitted along the top bar of a 5-bar gate.



Feedback on request for caption information to accompany Whitworth photos taken at Guide Bridge and shown on pages 28/29 of Forward 153.

from John Quick

No. 424 is in black livery. The first vehicle is no. 383, a 6 compartment third brake with armoured ends, which was built in 1916. The next carriage is a 'Barnum' saloon, built in 1910.



GCR class 1 4-6-0 no. 424 City of Lincoln with an express. W1119

from Bill Taylor

The loco is no. 431 Edwin A. Beazley.



An unidentified class 11E 'Director' 4-4-0 with an express. W1154

from John Quick

This is 11E no. 436 Sir Berkeley Sheffield. The first two vehicles are third class six-wheel saloons, then we have some 50' clerestories.

from Bill Taylor

The loco is no. 432 Sir Edward Fraser.



Another 'Director' with two 6wheelers and clerestory stock. W1155

from John Quick

This is class 1 4-6-0 no. 425 City of Manchester, which is in green livery. The 4-wheel van is for perishable traffic and is owned by the NER. The next vehicle is a slip carriage, one of 4 built in 1905 with a conventional roof. The third vehicle is an 8 compartment third, built with a clerestory roof.

from Bill Taylor

The loco is no. 425 City of Manchester.



Another 'City' with a train of assorted stock plus van. W1163

Members and their models : A Robinson 0-8-4T

A 7mm scale model described by Geoff Burton

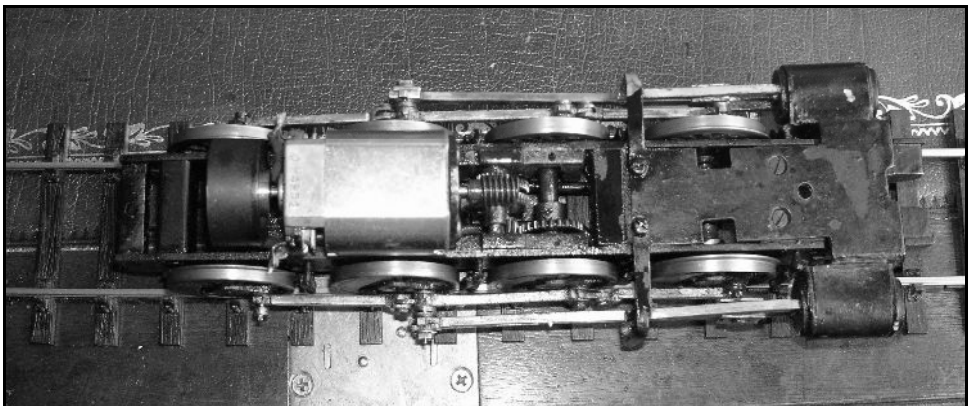
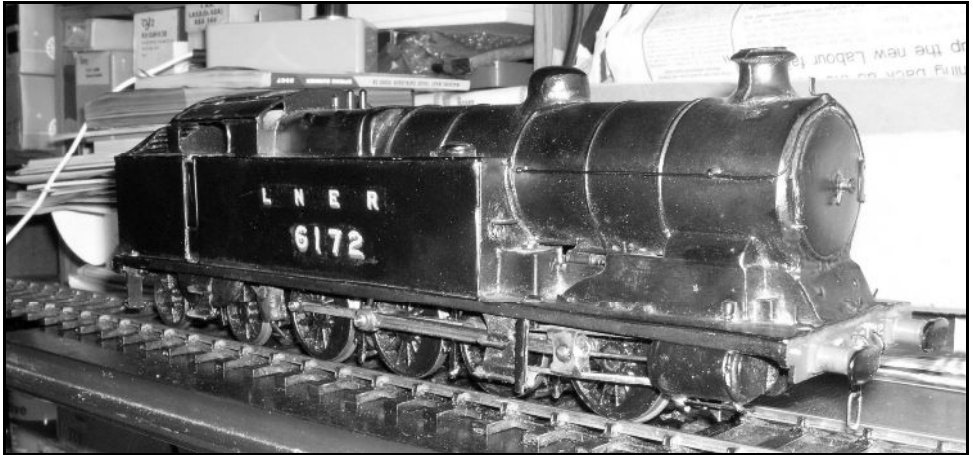
I bought this model from one of the Gauge O Guild Executor and Trustee stands in 1997. It had previously been owned by a Dr Lowe. It carries the black LNER livery and is numbered 6172.

The chassis is made of brass, but the body appears to be white metal. I don't know whose kit it was. It is similar to the Gladiator one but that is now all brass. The chassis construction is as typical Robinson as you could imagine, strong and rugged and built to last, with heavy steel connecting rods. The motor and gearbox by contrast are much more lightweight. The amazing 5 wheel gearbox gives a 5 times reduction from the top wheel to the driven axle, so the loco just crawls along - very prototypical. The motor is labelled 'JH', but I know nothing about it, except that it is a 2mm drive shaft, which is more akin to 4mm modelling. The worm drive is also from the 4mm stable.

The wheels are all iron, probably made from Walsall or CCW castings. Interestingly all of the wheels are insulated and have been flame cut and rejoined with araldite (or similar). There are pick ups on all 8 driving wheels. The middle pairs of driving wheels have no rims, so the loco will negotiate reasonable bends.

If any readers know more about the kit's origins, I would be pleased to hear from them.

Editor's note : A photo of the prototype can be found in Forward 126 on p39.



The GCRS Autumn meeting at Ruddington

A report by Paul White

The Autumn Meeting was held at the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre at Ruddington on Saturday 13th October. About 30 members assembled in the S.M.E.E. building and were welcomed by Richard Tilden Smith, who outlined current and future developments involving the site and beyond. The joining together of the two sections of the preserved GCR main line remains the most important project, which would give a route of 18 miles of former main line - what an attraction that would be! Other distinct possibilities include the shifting south of the current Leicester North terminus to a location close to the Space Museum site and in the north the securing of the site of Ruddington Station and northwards to the Ring Road for a possible 'park and ride' interchange with NET (Nottingham Express Transit) light rail system. Obviously, all these schemes require vision and the co-operation of a number of authorities - it's certainly my view that railway preservation schemes stand much more of a chance of a long-term future if they can be linked to schemes which provide more general benefits to the community.

Following Richard's presentation we had a guided tour of the site. There is a fascinating array of rolling stock of all kinds, and in all conditions, on show. All the surviving "Barnums" are there, no longer in the dismal line that we had become accustomed to, but more or less under cover and with restoration proceeding. A new building, about to start construction, will provide further undercover storage. A new chassis awaits the GC clerestory coach, one MS&L 6-wheeler is taking shape while another waits forlornly in the yard, woodwork shattered, the victim of a "rough shunt" (but not at Ruddington!). The most impressive development is the new platform - the brick faces are finished, cast iron lamp standards in place, and at the end the re-erected GC box from Neasden gives the scene an air of solidity and purpose. Unfortunately the person with the keys to the signal box was not on site. However we were compensated by being shown the new signal box at the Parkgate terminus of the miniature railway. A wonderful construction (on rails!) based on GC design.

Following a splendid hot meal provided by the café, which had been opened specially for this occasion, members were treated to Steven Gay's slide presentation, "Woodhead - the Lost Railway". These slides provided the basis for Steven's remarkable book, published some years ago and now out of print, of scenes on the Woodhead Route, which is now a long-distance route for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, part of a longer route from Southport in the west to Hornsea in the east. As someone who has been closely associated with this route in one capacity or another for the past 35 years, I found this presentation particularly poignant. Steven remains optimistic that at some time in the future sense will prevail and the route will re-open in some form. Having seen so many false dawns and proposals that can only be described as bizarre over the years, I'm not so sure.

Despite a slight hiccup in publicity, this was quite a good turnout for what was to prove an entertaining day. I enjoy reading and occasionally contributing to Forward, but I also like meeting people who share my interests, and I appreciate the effort that goes in to the organization of these events. My thanks go to all who made the day such a success and I hope that as many members as possible will attend the AGM at Northwich on 10th May. I'm sure you will enjoy it as much as I will.



End view of one of the Barnums undergoing restoration at Ruddington. photo: Paul White



Our Secretary, Brian Slater, photographing the Parkgate Station signal box at Ruddington.

photo: Bob Gellatly



The Parkgate Station signalman sets the points for the next departure.

photo: Bob Gellatly



Staveley Town South Junction by David Charlesworth
Ex-GC class O4/8 2-8-0 no. 63899 takes water on the 'Markham Road' as class A3 4-6-2 no. 60061
Reprinted by kind permission of David Charlesworth.



Pretty Polly rushes past with a Marylebone-Manchester express in the late 1950s.

Recent auction items of GCR interest



GCR single needle pegging block instrument.
Maker : Brittan of London.



GCR glass bottle.



GCR clock.
Maker : Fitton of Heywood.
Clock no. 1329.

Locomotive performance in the declining days of the GCR route

by John F. Clay

This article was originally published in the June 1964 issue of 'The Railway Observer' and submitted by Mike Kinder for inclusion in 'Forward'. Reprinted by kind permission of the RCTS.

Those whose railway interest was centred on the steam locomotive viewed the withdrawal of the GCR main line expresses as a major disaster. Many and varied were the official reasons advanced in justification and they have been fully argued elsewhere. It may, however, be submitted that those very difficulties, which so hampered the GC in its search for profit, made it all the more interesting for the recorder of locomotive performance. Coming last into the field and possessing a longer and more heavily graded route the GCR could only hope to compete by maintaining a high standard of running. In its early days very fast schedules were maintained by using locomotives which were large in relation to the loads. A GC Atlantic, even in its original saturated form, was a powerful engine for 150 tons. The Rev. W. J. Scott, who was an admirer of the GCR, was able to compare the running standards with those of the Northern Railway of France where "they had simply wiped out the gradients".

After the First World War loads were nearly double, the bookings were nearly as fast and the engines had acquired superheaters. Dogmatic assertions about locomotive performance should be avoided but it is reasonable to claim that the standard of enginemanship required on the GCR in the 1920s and 30s was second to none. Special mention should be made of the Leicester Atlantics working the up Sheffield express which left Leicester at 8.51 am and reached Marylebone in 109 minutes. They also worked the 6.20 pm down which ran via High Wycombe taking 114 minutes for the 107.6 miles. When stops replaced the slip coaches at Finmere and Woodford with only 5 minutes more added to the overall time the task was perhaps even harder. A graphic account of a run by 5363 was published by Mr O. S. Nock in 'British Locomotives at Work' published in 1947. Gorton and Neasden 'Directors' worked through to Manchester on the 3.20 pm down and the 2.20 pm up. This train left Leicester at 4.47 pm and ran to Marylebone in 110 minutes. Neasden 'Directors' worked the 4.55 pm down from Marylebone to Leicester and continued on this duty well into the 'Sandringham' era. This train was allowed 108 minutes to Leicester. Normally it was lighter than the 3.20 pm but it loaded equally heavily at busy times. I well remember a Saturday evening late in August 1934 when Prince George brought me down to Leicester, unchecked, in a few seconds under 107 minutes with a load of 295 tons. This was one of the earlier D10 class 'Directors' with outside admission valves. The later 'Improved Directors' of Class D11 were considered to be slightly better and Dr. Tuplin recorded a time of 105½ minutes with Princess Mary with 295 tons while Mr O. S. Nock timed Jutland taking 104¾ minutes with the same load.

The most difficult task set to the Neasden men was however the down 2.32 am "Newspaper" which was normally worked by a B3 'Lord Faringdon' class 4-6-0 with a load of 300 tons. This train was booked Marylebone to Brackley 59.4 miles in 64 minutes, Brackley to Rugby 23.9 miles in 24 minutes and Rugby to Leicester 19.9 miles in 20 minutes. Such hard work with a class of temperamental engines passed almost unnoticed in the small hours but as a feat of human endeavour it far surpassed the relatively simple contemporary task of spinning along Brunel's old GW main line with a well tuned Castle on the "Cheltenham Flyer". A lot of hard work also went unrecorded on the heavy 10.5 pm from Marylebone.

There were numerous fast short start to stop runs on the GCR. Timekeeping was, perhaps, not quite as immaculate as enthusiasts would have us believe but, aided by a praiseworthy absence of signal checks, it was remarkably good. In The Railway Magazine for November 1933 a summary of a day's observations near Rugby, on the first Saturday in August, was published. The average lateness of twenty GC expresses was only 3½ - 4 minutes despite heavier than normal loads. In those days there was no extra recovery time on Saturdays. Loads at holiday times could be heavy enough even for two engines. I remember a trip on the northbound "Bournemouth" when a GC Atlantic piloting a D9 4-4-0 ran from Loughborough to Nottingham, with the quick finish typical of those days, in 15½ minutes with 475 tons.

A Gresley Pacific in its original form, reputedly 1473, did a few trips on the GC main line in 1925 but GC men were not impressed. In 1931 'Sandringham' class engines made their appearance on Banbury fish workings from Doncaster. In 1933 they began to take their turn on through workings to Marylebone from Gorton but the real eclipse of the Robinson engines came with the large scale allocation of the 'Football' series from 1936 onwards. The B17 class were not Gresley's best, they were somewhat lightly built and did not stand the test of time as well as some of their contemporaries on other lines. The best work they ever did was on the GCR. In spite of the engines' evil reputation for rough riding the Leicester drivers got work from them on the 8.51 am up and on the 6.20 pm down that compares favourably with the best contemporary achievements of the 'Stars', the 'Patriots' or the 'Jubilees'.

At the end of January 1935, A3 4480 Enterprise made a few trips on the GC main line. Pacifics of the 180 lb. series and V2s were allocated to regular duties in the autumn of 1938. I remember a run on the 3.20 pm in April 1939 behind Hermit, at that time a Gorton engine, with eight bogies. We were checked soon after leaving Marylebone but, thanks to a fast climb to Amersham with speed rising to 51 mph, we were back on time as early as Aylesbury. After some initial misgivings drivers spoke well of the large Gresley engines in those days. A piloted Pacific was a heresy to be avoided on the GN main line but the September 1939 Railway Observer recorded that on 6th July of that year the 10.5 pm from Marylebone, loaded to sixteen bogies behind 5504, was piloting 2552. As the uneasy peace following Munich changed into a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitability of war there were rumours of plans for faster bookings with Pacifics but the publication of the emergency timetables in September 1939 showed that Authority regarded the GC main line with scant respect.

The main line services suffered a near massacre but minor improvements were introduced as the war progressed. In February 1941, A4 4488, normally a Scottish area engine, was working in the Manchester-Sheffield-Nottingham area, otherwise A4s have only appeared on specials. A wartime development was a through service, mainly for troops, between Newcastle and Ashford. In 1942 very heavy loads of seventeen bogies were observed hauled by Pacifics or V2s assisted by GN Atlantics. It was on this train that GCR 4-6-0 5196 with fourteen bogies 490 tons gross ran from Leicester to Rugby start to stop in 29 minutes 16 seconds, a notable effort under the circumstances. It was this very engine that 35 years earlier had run from Leicester to London in the record time of 101½ minutes with a mere 120 tons. At the end of the war Thompson A2/1 class 3697 made some rather undistinguished experimental runs on the GC.

In post war days, named trains were introduced on the GCR with the "Master Cutler" and the "South Yorkshireman". The bulk of the work was performed by A3s, V2s and B1s. The larger Gresley engines did not regain their pre-war reputation on the GCR. With greater congestion at the London end, restrictions on downhill speeds and reduced standards of fuel and maintenance, things were often very unhappy. The Leicester men, in particular, were very critical of the A3s and felt that the crocks of the class had been posted to the GC. Yet for all that their work was not always as devoid of merit as was popularly supposed. In Railways for July 1952 Mr O. S. Nock published two runs by A3 60103 Flying Scotsman and V2 60863, the drawbar h.p. being estimated at 1790 and 2065, respectively, at Helmdon. This was of course calculated by the Johannsen formula which was still generally accepted in 1952. We know now that its values are comparative rather than absolute but the work recorded compared favourably with contemporary climbs to Stoke or Stevenage.

Similarly the best work of the B1 class that was recorded on the GCR could compare with anything recorded by 'Halls', 'Black Fives', or 'Standard Class 5s'. For example Mr O. S. Nock in the November 1954 Railway World published a run with 61315 when a 450-ton train was accelerated to 45 mph at Belgrave, Loughborough was passed in 12 minutes 25 seconds and Nottingham was reached in a net time of 26 minutes. This provides an interesting comparison with the Rev. W. J. Scott's timing, in 1919, of the then new 4-6-0 1169 Lord Faringdon with 440 tons, when Belgrave was passed in 4minutes 30 seconds and Loughborough was reached in 13 minutes 3 seconds start to stop. An equally good B1 performance was published by Mr C. J. Allen in the March 1958 Trains Illustrated. Minimum speeds of 57½ mph at Finmere and 59 mph at Helmdon were recorded behind 61083 hauling 395 tons.



Class V2 2-6-2 no. 60863 in run-down condition approaching Wendover with the up 'Master Cutler'.

photo: L. V. Reason

The final stages brought 'Black Fives' and 'Standard Class 5' engines onto the Manchester expresses. The loads were decreasing and two runs I had in September 1959 were perhaps typical of average standards. On the successor to the "Master Cutler" which had, by then, become a diesel-hauled Pullman to Kings Cross, I found 'Black Five' 45223 with eight bogies. Rugby 19.9 miles from Leicester was reached in 22 minutes 53 seconds start to stop. The 83.2 miles to Marylebone were then run in 92 minutes 9 seconds (schedule 96 minutes) with pw checks below Finmere and near Amersham. The return journey, via High Wycombe, also with eight coaches, 290 tons, behind B1 61116 resulted in a time of 100 minutes 57 seconds (schedule 101 minutes) for the 87.7 miles to Rugby followed by 22 minutes 37 seconds to Leicester.

A few days before the end of the Manchester expresses I was lucky enough to record an exciting run from Nottingham to Leicester behind 73053 with seven bogies of 200 tons gross. The 23.4 miles were run in 22 minutes 31 seconds start to stop. An average speed of 70 mph was maintained from Ruddington to Belgrave, minimum at Barnston was 61 mph. From Loughborough, passed at 82 mph, to Belgrave the average was 75 mph. Speed was still over 70 mph at Abbey Lane and the final very fast finish was fully in the old GCR tradition. In the inter-war period Mr D. S. Barrie recorded times of 23 minutes 49 seconds by 'Director' 5435 hauling 207 tons and 24 minutes 3 seconds with 265 tons tare behind GN Atlantic 4412. As far as I can ascertain, the fastest time ever published southbound between Nottingham and Leicester was 22 minutes 29 seconds, timed by Mr C. Rous Marten with 4-6-0 196 in 1904 with a load of 120 tons.

There were rumours of very fast times having been made northbound but records suggest that the fastest time is a tie between a run published in 1937 by Mr C. J. Allen behind Atlantics 4420 and 6089 and a run recorded by Mr V. R. Webster in 1949 with B1 61326 and eight bogies. In both cases the start to stop time was 22 minutes 20 seconds but the Atlantics made a much faster finish from Arkwright Street so the honours rest with the B1. It fell to the lot of The Railway Observer to be the first to publish what was perhaps the most remarkable locomotive performance ever to be recorded between Leicester and Nottingham. This was the run made by 'Class 9F' 2-10-0 92164 on the northbound "Master Cutler" published in the September 1958 issue. The 23.4 miles were covered in 23 minutes 12 seconds start to stop with a maximum of 86 mph at Gotham. High speeds with small-

wheeled engines were not unknown on the GCR. In the early 1930s the north-bound Penzance-Aberdeen was sometimes worked by a K3 and I remember seeing it several times passing Quorn with rods ablur. I understand that even time runs were made by the K3s. The testimony of old GC railwaymen received confirmation in December 1960 when Mr C. J. Allen published a near even time run, 24½ minutes net, by K3 61967 on a troop special. An even more intriguing GC legend is the reputed 26 minute run made by a 0-6-0 'Pom-Pom' on a relief train. It is said that on arrival at Nottingham Victoria the driver deputed his fireman to feel the big ends!

From the beginning of 1960 GC daytime expresses from Marylebone sank to a few semi-fasts between Marylebone and Nottingham. These were originally planned for cross-country type diesel multiple unit sets and some of the bookings were very tight. The basic loads were six bogies with the addition of a few vans on some trains. A variety of mixed traffic engines from Class 4 2-6-0s to V2s were employed. Later, displaced 'Britannias' and 'Royal Scots' were used. The days of an exclusive aristocracy of engines and men were however over. At this time diesel traction was increasing on the Midland and on every possible occasion I chose the GC to travel. My journeys, however, were irregular and never did I speak to a driver before the start. The timings that follow may be regarded as a fair chance sample but I would hesitate to claim that my experiences were fully representative.

A booking of 13 minutes start to stop for the 13.1 miles from Lutterworth to Leicester was difficult if the usual speed reduction through Whetstone was made. In pre-war days, with unrestricted downhill speeds, the old 5 pm from Marylebone (allowed 14 minutes) often made the run in even time with GC Atlantics and later with 'Footballers'. In 1960 I timed a B1 with 250 tons in 13 minutes 44 seconds. Speed rose to 75 mph before Whetstone, was reduced to 70 through the station and increased again to 79 mph before steam was shut off for Leicester.

An almost impossible time was 11 minutes from Loughborough to Leicester. In June 1962 I timed 73010 with 205 tons over the 9.9 miles in 11 minutes 21 seconds start to stop. Later in the year I had 70014 with the same load. Rothley was passed in 5 minutes 49 seconds, 33 seconds less than 73010 and the 11 minute booking looked "in the bag". A more leisurely finish made the final time 11 minutes 12 seconds, but it did prove that the 11 minute booking was within 'Britannia' capacity. On



Class A3 4-6-2 no. 60049 'Galtee More' starts away from Aylesbury with the up 'South Yorkshireman'.

photo: L.V.Reason

these short runs braking skill is as important as anything else and there is no doubt that many of the old GC men were masters with the brake.

Most difficult was the seven minutes booking for the 6.8 miles from Lutterworth to Rugby. I understand that it was accomplished by a V2 with six bogies. My own best time was 7 minutes 58 seconds by 70048 with 275 tons. The 'Britannia' had done well from Leicester to Lutterworth in 15 minutes 28 seconds. After leaving Rugby there was a pw check to 30 mph near Braunston after which speed rose to 61 mph on the 1 in 176 before entering Charwelton Tunnel followed by a slight falling off before the summit. One naturally expected fast uphill work by a Pacific with eight bogies but allowance has to be made for the poor condition of many locomotives in 1962 as well as for the poor coal. Average performances in 1962 give no indication of what the 'Britannias' could have done on the GCR had they been introduced ten years earlier with the same attention that they received on the GER.

An interesting trip from Nottingham to Leicester featured an Ivatt Class 4 2-6-0 with the usual 205 ton load. This modest machine covered the 13.5 miles Nottingham to Loughborough in 17 minutes 7 seconds with speed reduced to 40 mph at Clifton, 62 at Gotham, 51 at Barnston and 62 before Loughborough. The 11 minutes booking to Leicester was obviously beyond 43063 which did quite well to take 12 minutes 58 seconds.

My most interesting run of all was on the 4.25 pm down in April 1961 when K3 61913 was at the head of a heavier than usual load of eight bogies and three four-wheeled vans (320 tons). The time to Harrow stop was 14 minutes 59 seconds. In October 1919 the Rev. W. J. Scott published a table of runs on the 5.30 pm Sunday train which was allowed 2 hours 14 minutes to Leicester with five stops. A table of six runs with 'Director' class engines with tare loads ranging from 247 to 317 tons showed a high standard of timekeeping. If allowance is made for losses caused by civil engineering work in the Metropolitan area and for restricted downhill speeds, the 1960 bookings were comparable. A booking of 14 minutes start to stop was rarely kept in 1919 even by local trains with superheated 4-6-2 tanks and loads less than those of the expresses. The K3s time of 14 minutes 59 seconds was interesting in view of Scott's contention that "15 minutes was a fair and reasonable time". I have timed no other recent run in under 16 minutes. After Harrow there were pw delays but a spirited climb was made to Amersham with speed rising, finally, to 44 mph. As the K3 forged its way upwards the sound echoing back from the woods would have made an excellent tape recording of a Gresley engine with a true beat. Mr Norman Harvey published a very similar climb by Class 5 4-6-0 45444 with eight coaches of 270 tons tare. Full regulator and 30% cut off was used on this engine. After Aylesbury the K3 was faced with a start to stop booking of 23 minutes for the 21.4 miles, largely uphill, to Brackley. The fastest run timed by the Rev. W. J. Scott on the old 5.30 pm was 24 minutes 25 seconds by Purdon Viccars with 249 tons. The K3 did well to make the run, in driving rain, in 23 minutes 37 seconds. Quainton Road 6.2 miles was passed in 8 minutes 9 seconds, speed fell from 64 mph at Calvert to 57 mph at Finmere and increased to 68 mph before the Brackley stop. From the Brackley start, up 1 in 176, the 3.2 miles to Helmdon took 5 minutes 35 seconds and with 70 mph at Culworth Junction, Woodford 9.8 miles was reached in 11 minutes 55 seconds. There was less interest about the remainder of the journey with a special stop because of cattle on the line near Staverton Road, restrained speed after Ashby and a delayed approach to Leicester. There was a momentary maximum of 75 mph before steam was shut off below Ashby. With three out of course stops and other delays, Leicester was reached a few minutes late but with a net gain to the engine. In 1961 the K3 class had a variable reputation but the driver described 61913 as a 'good one', riding well and very different from most of the engines then available on the GCR.

As engineering work on the Metropolitan was completed the impossible bookings were eased, though strangely enough 11 minutes from Loughborough to Leicester survived for a long time. In 1963 it became increasingly rare to meet anything worth recording. 'Royal Scots' and an occasional 'Jubilee' have been used but it would be unfair to the honourable record of these engines to dwell on their performance. They have generally been in poor condition and a run-down 'Scot' is a fearsome engine to ride on. The B1 class held their own well with other Class 5 engines in 1960 but in 1962/3 they were disappointing. In the 1948 trials and on the Rugby Test Plant the B1 class acquitted itself well. They were better thermodynamically than they were mechanically and their reputation for bad riding

is unenviable. It would be out of place to argue as to what would have been the best engine for the GC but a senior locomotive man who knows the GC main line as well as anybody wishes they could have had the double-chimneyed V2s in an era of good track condition.

Mention must be made of visiting engines from other lines. The SR 'West Country' Pacific in the 1948 Exchange set up some hill climbing records still unbeaten on the GCR line. GWR engines have been regular visitors to Leicester since the earliest days. Photographs of GWR Dean Singles at Leicester are in existence but records of the running of GWR engines on GC metals are rare. The Rev. W. J. Scott published details of a run by the 'City' class 4-4-0 3702 Halifax hauling a tare load of 190 tons on the southbound "Bournemouth". Lutterworth was passed in 16 minutes 42 seconds and Rugby was reached in 23½ minutes start to stop. Minimum speed on the 1 in 176 past Ashby must have been in the 48-50 mph range. This compared with contemporary best efforts by the Robinson 11B 4-4-0s and was equal to average 'Director' class running. In 1956 I timed 6979 Helperly Hall, a regular performer on the northbound "Bournemouth", from Rugby to Leicester 19.9 miles in 21 minutes 18 seconds with a maximum of 75 mph. This was probably an average performance. The load was 305 tons. After the 1962 "East Midlander" special from Nottingham to Darlington, 'Schools' class 4-4-0 30925 Cheltenham was once employed on the 12.30 pm from Nottingham. Mr H. A. Gamble photographed the arrival at Marylebone and his pictures were published in The Railway Magazine. The arrival was before time and Mr Gamble nearly missed his photographs. It is regrettable that detailed timings do not exist.



'Schools' class 4-4-0 no. 30925 'Cheltenham' at Marylebone after arrival on a service train from Nottingham Victoria on 16th May 1962.

As 1963 moved towards its close the GCR situation was depressing in the extreme. The semi-fasts had declined to a basic formation of four coaches and even those sunk to a multiple unit diesel set. On the first Saturday in August, the day which before the war produced such feasts of double-heading to delight the photographers, this train was observed approaching Leicester little more than half full. Rumours of impending doom followed each other with monotonous regularity. The stark economic facts of the situation may be irrefutable but, in human terms, there is real tragedy. The old GCR never made much profit but pride and faith were always there. The wonder is that men who felt unwanted and betrayed, facing an uncertain future, ran the trains as well as they did during the final years. The end of the GCR main line may have been inevitable but it certainly was undeserved.



The fall and rise of the GC Main Line

by Dennis Wilcock, Editor of 'Main Line'

A brief chronology of the rundown of the GC main line and the preservation milestones on the present day GCR are as follows:

1958 - On 1st February control of the former GC main line was transferred to the London Midland Region. Former LNER locomotives were replaced with LMS and BR Standard types. The "Master Cutler" runs from Sheffield to King's Cross via Retford.

1960 - The through expresses to Sheffield and the north were withdrawn on 2nd January and a semi fast service of only three trains a day between Marylebone and Nottingham introduced. The decline to closure had commenced.

1962 - Neasden Motive Power Depot closed.

1963 - Local services were withdrawn on 4th March and the small stations closed. Belgrave & Birstall, Rothley, Quorn & Woodhouse, Rushcliffe Halt, Ruddington, and Nottingham Arkwright Street all closed although the latter was to reopen briefly. The decline was accelerating.

1964 - Leicester Motive Power Depot closed.

1965 - Freight traffic withdrawn on 11th June. Woodford Halse Motive Power Depot closed.

1966 - Annesley Motive Power Depot closed. Locomotives transferred to Colwick. Closure of the through route from Marylebone to Nottingham on 3rd September. Rebuilt "Merchant Navy" 4-6-2 no. 35030 Elder Dempster Lines hauled "The Great Central Rail Tour" from Waterloo to Nottingham Victoria where B1 no. 61173 piloted classmate no. 61131 and took the train on to Sheffield and back before no. 35030 returned to Marylebone. The line finally closed in the early hours of 4th September after a shamefully short life of 67 years. The track was lifted south of Rugby Central. The line from Calvert to Quainton Road and the route into Marylebone retained. On 5th September a DMU service of six trains a day from Rugby Central to Nottingham was introduced. Leicester Central became an unstaffed halt.

1967 - Nottingham Victoria closed and the station demolished leaving only the clock tower. Arkwright Street re-opened as the northern terminus of the DMU service.

1969 - The Rugby to Nottingham Arkwright Street service was withdrawn and the line closed on 5th May. The Main Line Preservation Group (MLPG) was formed to preserve a section of the line. Sections considered included one north from Rugby and the line from Leicester to Nottingham.

1970 - MLPG gains the use of Loughborough Central station. A proposal is put to the British Railways Board for the purchase of track and land from Leicester (Abbey Lane Sidings) to Loughborough Central. Interest is expressed in the line to Ruddington.

1971 - Main Line Steam Trust Limited (MLST) was established in January and became an incorporated body on 22nd September. It became a registered charity on 12th November to take advantage of tax benefits. Fund raising through donations and covenants starts. Southern extent of line now proposed to be at Thurstaston Road.

1973 - The first main line steam locomotive, Southern Railway "West Country" Class 4-6-2 no. 34039 Boscastle, owned by James Tawse, arrives on the GCR. The Loughborough station site is open to the public at weekends and industrial locomotives no. 4 Robert Nelson and no. 39 give brake van rides in

the yard. On 24th June train services to Quorn & Woodhouse are introduced but are withdrawn to be re-introduced the following year.

1975 - The line to Rothley enjoys a civic re-opening on 8th September. The Mayor of Charnwood, Mr L. G. Duncan officiated and was accompanied by Loughborough's twin town representatives from Schwabisch-Hall and Epinal.

1976 - Great Central Railway (1976) Ltd created to raise funds by the sale of shares to meet the demands of British Railways for the price of the land. (Up to the present the company has raised £2,784,270 through the sale of shares.) All track south of Rothley removed and the down line from Loughborough Central to Rothley removed.

1977 - Belgrave & Birstall station buildings removed as a result of continuing vandalism.

1978 - Trackbed from Loughborough Central to Belgrave & Birstall and buildings purchased by Charnwood Borough Council and leased to GCR (1976) Ltd on a 99 year lease.

1983 - In September the last train ran to the Army Depot at Ruddington.

1985 - Birstall Appeal launched on the 8th July by the Duke of Gloucester. Appeal to fund the extension of the track from Rothley to Belgrave & Birstall. Trackbed clearance commences.

1987 - Track and land, including 11 acres of the former MOD Depot, purchased by the local councils to secure the line from 50 Steps Bridge at Ruddington to the connection with the Midland main line at Loughborough. MLST launches the Northern Extension Fund.

1989 - In October the GCR Northern Development Association was formed by the MLST Nottingham Area. December saw volunteers gain the first access to the Army Depot at Ruddington

1990 - The Development Plan for the GCR for 1995-2000 introduced the Double Track Project initially between Rothley and Swithland and then on to Quorn & Woodhouse. On 7th July David Clarke gave MLST a cheque for £75,000 as the first stage in establishing the double track from Rothley to Loughborough. On 15th November the extension to Leicester North was officially opened by Dame Margaret Weston. As Leicester North had not yet been built, shuttle trains ran from Rothley to just north of the former Belgrave & Birstall station. GCR(N) Ltd formed.

1991 - Leicester North Station opened on 5th July. GCR(N) negotiates lease of the Ruddington site with Nottinghamshire County Council and gets grant to restore buildings. Nottingham Society of Model and Experimental Engineers (NSMEE) and the Bus Group join the project.

1993 - Bridging the Gap project launched to link the lines north and south of Loughborough. Major track installations at Swithland and from there to Rothley completed. On 10th September local MP Ken Clarke officially opens the Heritage Centre at Ruddington.

1994 - The main line from Ruddington to Bunny Lane is purchased.

1995 - On 30th June, the line to 50 Steps Bridge was opened by the now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Ken Clarke.

1996 - The double track reaches Quorn & Woodhouse.

1997 - The double track section from Swithland to Quorn & Woodhouse opened as an independent single line. Shuttle trains, operated by a DMU, ran from Quorn & Woodhouse to Swithland.

1998 - On 1st December EWS freight trains start to run from Drax power station to British Gypsum at East Leake.

1999 - On 9th March, 100 years after the official opening of the London Extension, the Countess of Lanesborough cuts the first sod for the station buildings at Leicester North. On 12th March the last section of double track was laid just north of Quorn & Woodhouse station.

2000 - June 1st saw the formal launch, by Richard Gibbon of the National Railway Museum, of double track operation between Loughborough Central and Rothley.

2001 - On 31st March the line from Bunny Lane to Loughborough purchased.

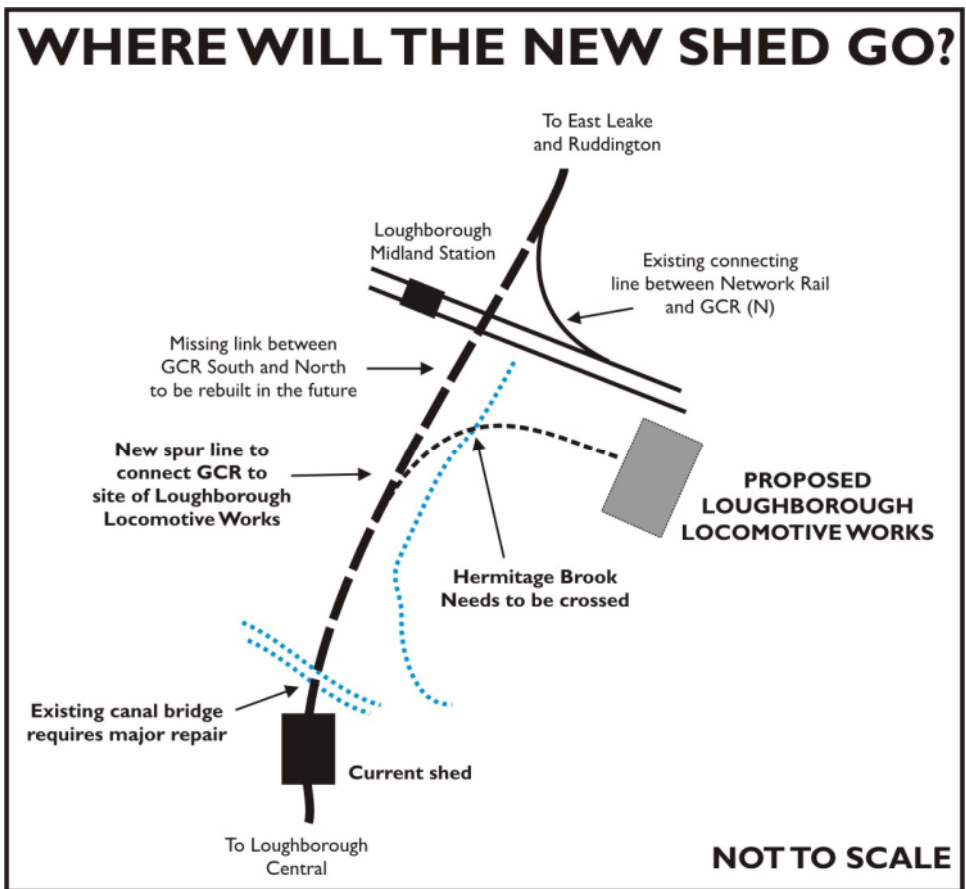
2002 - The station buildings at Leicester North are opened.

2004 - The David Clarke Railway Trust was registered as a charity on 12th July. The first steam train from the main line runs to the Heritage Centre

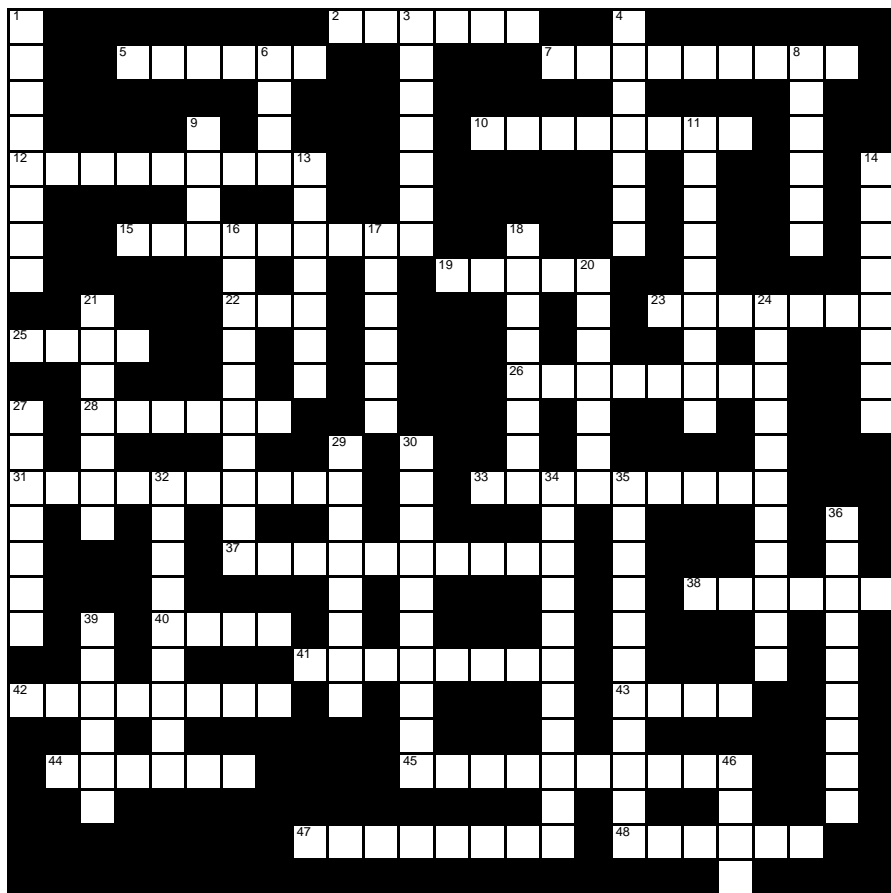
2005 - London and North Eastern Railway Company formed as the main holding company for GCR(N).

The future – The priority now is to join the two sections of line north and south of the Midland Main Line – to Bridge the Gap. Possible extension south to Leicester, close to the National Space Centre, and north to Nottingham are under active consideration. One of the most immediate projects is to re-erect the locomotive shed recovered from Workington on a site north of the existing locomotive shed at Loughborough. The new "Top Shed" will be located on an old tip site and will require the first stage of the "Gap" to be filled by the refurbishment of a bridge across the Grand Union canal.

There is plenty to do but with Wadebridge, Tornado and City of Truro all visiting the line together with Oliver Cromwell, Sir Lamiel and 45305 from the home fleet, 2008 promises to be a year in which we can show what a double track main line really looks like.



Crossword (Forward 154) : Answers in the back of this issue



Across

- 2 Author of the book 'The South Yorkshire Railway'. (6)
- 5 An expert on the Met & GC Joint. (6)
- 7 The style of Parker's chimney. (9)
- 10 Anti-vacuum valve on a steam locomotive. (8)
- 12 The hills climbed by GC trains south of Aylesbury. (9)
- 15 Station on the Sheffield District Railway. (9)
- 19 Unkind nickname for Robinson's 2-6-4 tanks. (5)
- 22 A major user of Robinson's 2-8-0s during WW1. (3)
- 23 A publisher of line histories. (7)
- 25 Workshop 'colour'. (4)
- 26 Scene of an accident in 1911. (8)
- 28 A golfer's halt. (6)
- 31 Trains on the GCR(N) halt here. (10)
- 33 Manchester railway photographer. (9)
- 37 Standard LNER shed type. (10)
- 38 GC open saloon in the American style. (6)
- 40 'West Country' that ran on the GC section in 1948. (4)

- 41 Barrier between Manchester and Sheffield. (8)
- 42 Valve gear applied to some of the 'Faringdons'. (8)
- 43 A river that gave its name to SA&M 2-2-2 no.8. (4)
- 44 Sheffield arches. (6)
- 45 GC shed with no road access. (10)
- 47 Rectangular shaped firebox. (8)
- 48 Parker's first name. (6)

Down

- 1 GC bridge at Rugby. (8)
- 3 Destination for race specials on the CLC. (7)
- 4 The home of Lord Stuart. (7)
- 6 A valley followed by lines north of Nottingham. (4)
- 8 A machine gun sound applied to GC class 9J. (3 & 3)
- 9 The county where you would find the GCR Convalescent Home. (4)
- 11 The 2.32am. (9)
- 13 Where Robinson served as an apprentice. (7)
- 14 Nickname for the MS&L class 6C (J12). (8)
- 16 National event that gave its name to Robinson's 4-6-2 tanks. (10)
- 17 Decorative piece found on gables and signal posts. (6)
- 18 Junction on the LD&ECR. (8)
- 20 A type of superheater. (7)
- 21 Depot for the Woodhead electrics. (7)
- 24 Valve gear feared by model makers! (11)
- 27 An LNER built shed in Sheffield. (7)
- 29 Engine on guard! (8)
- 30 The 'Schools' that ran on the GC section in 1962. (10)
- 32 Goods depot on the CLC in Manchester. (9)
- 34 A lubricating system invented by Robinson. (11)
- 35 A literary named contractor employed on building the London extension. (6 & 5)
- 36 CLC shed in Liverpool. (9)
- 39 Wrote disparagingly about Robinson's 4-6-0s in a book published in 1967. (6)
- 46 Seller of railway books in Stamford station. (4)

As the Forward crosswords are for fun only there is no reason not to give the solutions in the same issue. So from now on you can check your answers whenever you like by looking them up at the back of each issue.

The Warsop Curve dispute of 1908

by Bill Taylor

During the period of keen competition between the railway companies prior to 1914 there were occasions when disputes arose between them, usually with regard to rates charged either for a particular class of traffic or to a favoured customer and if it were not possible for these differences to be resolved by correspondence between the respective General Managers, as often as not any grievances would be laid to rest by placing the matter before the Railway and Canal Traffic Commissioners. Whilst the companies frequently brought or defended legal actions in which a customer or passenger was the other party it was a rare thing for two companies to lock horns in litigation against each other and rarer still for all avenues of appeal to be pursued. However, following the absorption of the LD&ECR by the GCR, the latter drew traffic of all descriptions to its newly acquired lines via the Warsop Curve which connected the Midland line to the LD&ECR section immediately north of the Midland's Shirebrook station. The assertion of this apparent right was not recognised by the Midland Railway which lost out on a mileage basis because, with the exception of

coal traffic from Shirebrook Colliery, all other consignments had been handed over to the GCR at either Shireoaks Junction or Woodend Junction, both to the west of Worksop on the GCR.

Traffic in both directions between Mansfield and Lincoln and indeed points beyond the last named place could more conveniently and indeed more profitably be carried via the Warsop Curve. The Midland, confident that right was on its side, insisted that the GCR should only take Shirebrook Colliery traffic by that route which precipitated the issue on 17th October 1908 of a writ whereby the GCR sought a declaration that it was entitled to exercise running powers for all its traffic over the Midland line between Mansfield and Worksop and over any part of it, and for that purpose to run on and off the Midland by way of the Warsop Curve, subject only to the terms of an Agreement between the two companies made in 1906 relating purely to Shirebrook Colliery traffic.

Delays in the Courts was no better then than it is today and arguably worse for it was not until 10th May 1911 that the case was resolved. This naturally did not trouble the Midland too much for its ban had held for two and a half years but the declaration itself was in favour of the GCR and from May to December 1911 they were able to work all classes of traffic by whichever route suited them best. A notice of appeal had been lodged in Court in July on behalf of the disappointed party and the Court of Appeal overturned the Chancery Court declaration on 9th December 1911, thus restoring advantage to the Derby Company without the need to impose a ban and risk having to pay compensation. Now the GCR had two choices, either to let the matter rest and use the Shireoaks route for all except Shirebrook Colliery coal traffic or to appeal to the highest Court in the land, which is what occurred. The case once more suffered delays just at a time when a swift and final answer was required, for it was not until 24th October 1913 that the House of Lords pronounced its judgement. Soon afterwards war intervened and the entire thing became academic as the government took over control of the railways thus empowering all traffic to go by any route irrespective of which company owned the track.

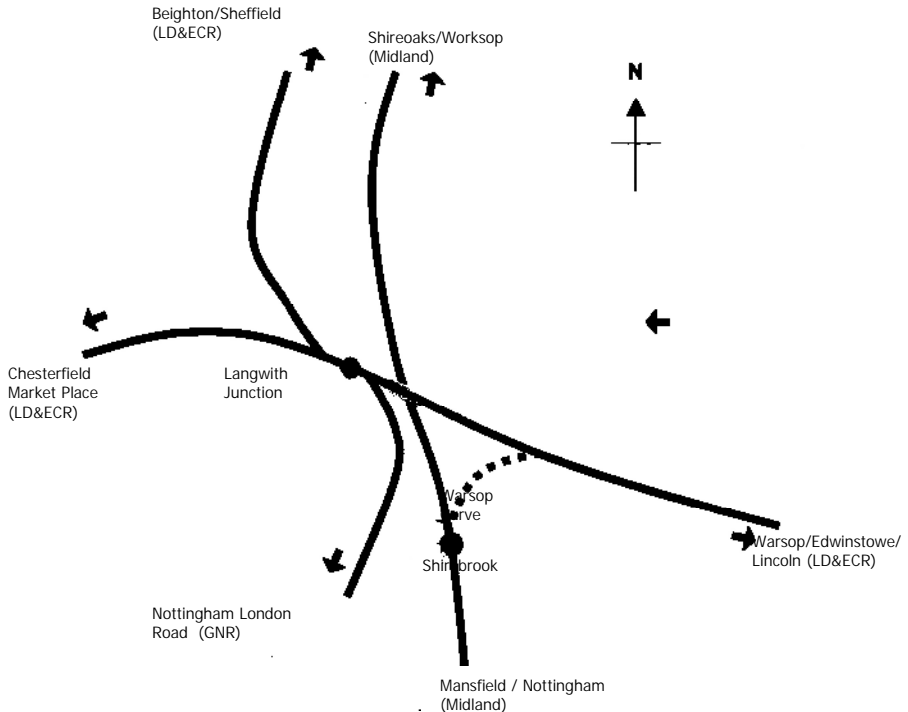
Before the House of Lords, Counsel briefed by Dixon Davies to represent the interests of the GCR argued that the original declaration of Mr. Justice Neville in May 1911 was correct and in support maintained that section 29 of the Midland Railway Act 1865 afforded the GCR's predecessor, the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway, access to Mansfield for all manner of traffic, that access being obviously by means of the junctions referred to west of Worksop. Clearly that clause over the years had a great deal to do with the reluctance of the MS&LR to involve itself in building a line of its own to Mansfield. Counsel then referred to the authorisation, construction and eventual takeover by the GCR of the LD&ECR, the lines of which were, after 1907, an integral part of the GCR system. Reference was made to Agreements in 1897 and the following year between the Dukeries line and the Midland company which related to the construction of the line from Shirebrook station on the MR to Warsop Junction on the LD&ECR, commonly known as the Warsop Curve, and the subsequent Agreements affecting coal traffic from Shirebrook Colliery passing via that Curve were not doubted. However it was highlighted that the MR opposed the proposed transfer of the undertaking of the LD&ECR to the appellant company which was in fact authorised by the GCR and Derbyshire Railways Act 1906, and that such opposition was bought off by a specific Agreement entered into between the two companies on 15th June 1906. Sections 15 and 16 of that Agreement were quoted to their Lordships in full and are worth repeating here:-

Section 15.....All routes which are now open for the passage of traffic between the Derbyshire Company's Railway and the Respondents Railway and between the Appellant's Railway and the Respondent's Railway which might be affected by the said intended amalgamation shall remain open.

Section 16..... All routes which are now open for the passage of traffic from or to places upon the Derbyshire Company's Railway to or from places upon or beyond the Respondent's Railway shall remain open.

In the context of the case report the Appellant was the GCR and the Respondent was the MR. What the GCR was arguing was that any objections which the Midland had over the proposed amalgamation and the way the GCR might handle traffic were in fact resolved by such Agreement and that the wording quoted above effectively entitled the latter to pass traffic of all kinds via the Warsop Curve as well as via Shireoaks Junction. As a sop to the MR it was also conceded that the original order of Court might have been framed slightly too generously by Mr. Justice Neville and a willingness expressed to limit the scope to running powers conferred by the 1865 Act rather than

running powers generally. In passing it might be asked what other running powers to Mansfield the GCR possessed in 1906? Additionally it must be kept in mind that the 1865 Act granted running powers via Shireoaks not merely to Mansfield but also to any point on its line between those two places.



The case presented by the MR was somewhat more complex and the essence thereof was that the GCR could use the Shireoaks route for traffic of all descriptions but the Warsop Curve was to be used only in relation to Shirebrook Colliery traffic and even then subject to the terms of the Agreements previously established between it and the LD&ECR. Pleaded in aid was the existence of a provisional grant of running powers to the LD&ECR set out in clause 2 of an Agreement dated 1st December 1897 contingent upon the construction by the Dukeries line of a separate short branch to its own goods shed in that town, and of course that little venture, much as the citizens of Mansfield yearned for it, never got beyond parliamentary authorisation. Counsel for the Midland also referred to part V of the Railways Clauses Act 1863 which was incorporated within the terms of the Amalgamation Act between the GCR and LD&ECR, and submitted that under those provisions the Companies should be placed in exactly the same position after the absorption as they were prior to it.

Clearly the arguments put forward by both sides have merit and, leaving aside any partisanship, one could be forgiven for accepting that both cases were supported by logical reasoning. True enough, the Midland cum Great Central Agreement of 1906 from which the two relevant clauses have been quoted could be construed as permitting the GCR to take all traffic by way of the Warsop Curve and there is also an attraction in regarding that Agreement as a modification of earlier ones. By the same token the aspect of the Midland case that the parties should be put in the same position as they were beforehand supports a conclusion that only Shirebrook Colliery traffic was to be taken via the Warsop Curve, and it was this simplistic view which persuaded the Law Lords to find in favour of the Midland Railway Company in a long running case which must have cost the Great Central a considerable sum. Once more the GCR faced a dilemma, to comply or to negotiate a new agreement for full running powers by way of the Warsop Curve, and I have no evidence to say that it did other than comply with the judgment.

Readers forum

from Reg Instone, Shirley, Solihull

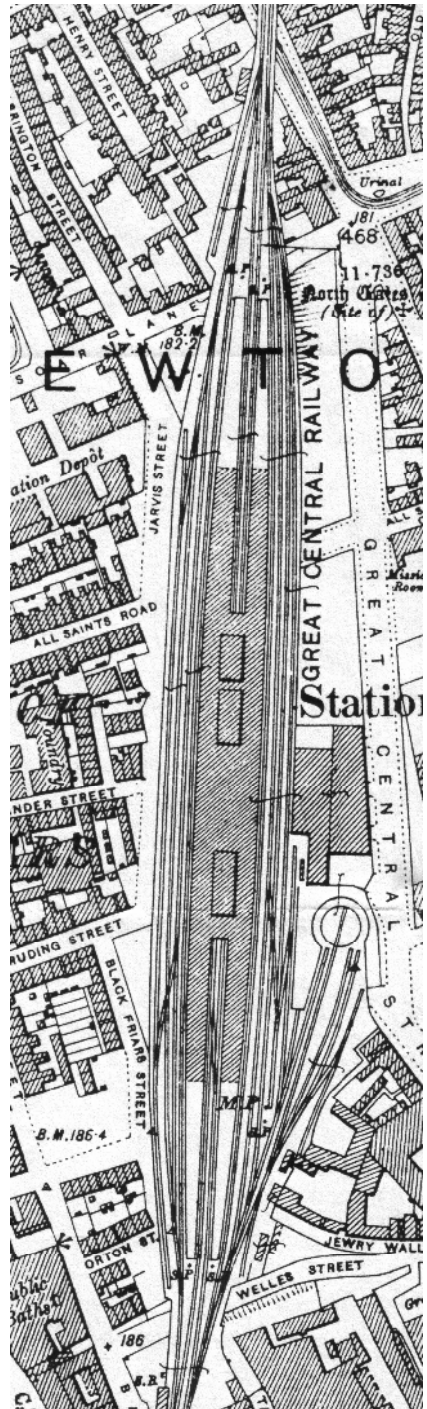
Information requested re. platform signal box at Leicester Central

No one seems to know when this box was abolished, so I should like to set out the facts, as I know them, in the hope that other readers may be able to add thereto. The signal boxes on the London Extension were listed in No.1 Supplement of March 1899 to the 1897 MS&LR Appendix No.3, and Leicester Platform is included. Supplement No.2 dated October 1900 amends the opening hours for this box to read "closed UFN" (TNA: RAIL 1136/11). Of course, when this box was closed, the block instruments would be connected through between South and North boxes. It is again listed in the 1905 Appendix, but not in the list in the 1914 WTT. John Bennett has a note that the box and signals were removed in 1908 but I'm not sure where this information came from. The Newton photo in Forward 134 p16 shows the up home signals still in situ. This photo is not dated (or is it?) but must be post 1904. The Newton photo in Forward 145 p11 shows the down side crossovers and signal box, but again is not dated. As Ken Grainger points out, the rails of the crossover are decidedly rusty and disused. Another photo by William Bradshaw (no. 34 in the RCTS book of his photos) shows the disused signal box in the background. The 1902 revision of the O.S. 25" plan (sheet no. XXXI.10, Alan Godfrey reprint) does not show the crossovers connecting with the up and down main lines, but does show the associated connections between the loop lines and sidings. In fact, it omits various portions of the trackwork so, regrettably, cannot be relied upon. The undated (resurveyed) one in Forward 133 p22/23 shows only plain line in the centre of the station. What is the revision date of this plan, please, Ken?

My conclusion from the above evidence is that the box was regularly manned only for a very short period in 1899-1900, but it, together with the crossovers and signals, remained in situ but out of use, until maybe 1908, or at least some time around 1910. Do other readers agree or disagree?

Additional notes on OS map shown on right.

The First and Second editions of the 25" plans cannot always be relied upon to depict every crossover and connection, and this sheet seems particularly lacking as regards Leicester Central. The scissors crossing between the north bays is missing, and the junctions between Up and Down sides at the South box are largely omitted. Therefore we should not attach too much significance to the fact that the crossovers between platform lines and through lines are not



shown. As the connections between lines, loops and sidings were still there in 1902, it seems very likely that the platform crossovers were as well, and indeed this is confirmed by photographic evidence.

By comparison with the later (c1920) revision of this plan appearing in Forward 133 p22/23, which I think is reliable, all these connections were later removed. I estimate that the portion of the Up platform south of these connections was about 500ft, easily enough for a short train, while a little less was available on the Down side.

Incidentally, note that in 1902, three years after completion of the station, there are still some open spaces on the west side of Great Central Street, evidence of the extensive demolition work which was subsequently infilled.

Re. Forward 146 p20: article 'The Telegraph' by P. Wortley

I was pleased that Peter Wortley drew attention to a significant but often overlooked aspect of railway working. However, it is important not to confuse the various uses to which this technology was put.

The telegraph was introduced to railways quite early on, I think in 1837. From then until Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1875 it was the only available method of communicating rapidly over a distance. I am sure that it is true to say that the development of railways would have been very severely restricted without such a system, and it was rapidly deployed despite the large cost. It was utilised for many functions including managerial, commercial and safety, and any large railway station had a busy telegraph office where many circuits converged. A large number of instruments could be connected to each circuit, providing an easy way of disseminating information and orders to staff at dispersed locations.

The Block Telegraph was developed in the 1850s to 1870s as a very specialised application of single-needle telegraph technology. Most companies adopted new and distinctive forms of block instruments, but the MR, GN, MS&L and NE continued to use single-needle instruments of the same design and construction as those used on general or "speaking" circuits (invented 1845, improved in 1869?). Although they worked on exactly the same electrical principle, and used mostly the same parts, the way they were used was significantly different, not using Morse but being "pegged over" for minutes at a time to indicate the state of the block section. In order to do this they needed some sort of catch or trigger to hold the handle in position, and it is the different designs of catch that differentiate the instruments of these four companies. The other feature of these instruments, apart from the quartered dial, is that in normal circumstances they are connected in pairs as simple "end to end" or "A to B" circuits. To some extent they were superseded by more modern designs, but only in the last couple of decades have they become rare in service.

For the transmission of messages of all kinds, thousands of single-needle telegraph instruments in stations, depots and offices (including signal boxes) reigned supreme until starting to be displaced in the late 1880s and 1890s by telephones, which by then had become more reliable, compact and cheaper than in 1875. Telephone installations took many forms, from the private exchange extension to the omnibus circuit. I would imagine, although I have no proof, that the London extension was fully equipped with omnibus telephone circuits from its opening. However, many telegraph circuits remained in use for longer distance circuits between main centres, where experienced operators could handle phenomenal quantities of messages at very high speeds. These were only replaced by teleprinters, telex, etc. in the 1930s-50s period. There must have been sufficient offices still using the telegraph in 1958 to make the issue of the code booklet worthwhile.

The establishment of traffic control offices on many railways in the 1909-15 period was entirely dependent on a network of telephone circuits to keep them in instant communication with every station, yard, depot, signal box, engine shed etc.

One very specialised function for which the telegraph survived until comparatively recently on ex-MR and ex-GNR lines was for train reporting, from signal box to signal box, and train regulation at stations, junctions etc. Typically messages might be of the form "Bradford right time Cheltenham" or "Leeds 0937 Hitchin". The circuits were quite long, and overlapped, allowing signalmen at key regulating places to receive train running information much earlier than they could easily do otherwise. This in turn would allow them to make regulating decisions while there was still time to

put them into effect, especially important on lines with high-speed traffic. Knowing the telegraph was a condition of being appointed a signaller at ex-MR boxes until at least the 1960s, as it was on the GNR, while the system remained in use on the ex-GN section of the ECML until the Kings Cross resignalling of the late 1970s. One relief signaller at Sattley ex-MR, later an inspector (and my boss) told me that he could send messages alright, but had great difficulty reading messages at the high speed at which they were usually transmitted. He used to annoy his more experienced colleagues by sending "not understand" or "repeat" until they slowed down! There was one old boy in Bromsgrove Station box who could easily hold a conversation while listening to (and understanding) the single-needle instrument tinkling away behind him.

I am not aware of any other railways that used the telegraph for train regulation, though, and I have never heard any suggestion that it was used in such a way on the GCR. Indeed, Peter makes reference to reporting by telephone at Rugby and Loughborough, and I think this was the general case.

Crucially, Peter writes that "On most railways this device was installed in the signal box. The GNR used them extensively, and I know that the LNWR and LMS boxes also had them. It seems that station staff, goods and passenger, would write out their message or query and the signaller would send it." Again, we must take care to distinguish the specialised train reporting circuits from the general administrative and commercial ones. While it may be true that signal boxes on certain branch lines acted as a telegraph office for the station, perhaps on the GNR of which I have little knowledge, I doubt that this kind of situation was widespread, or in use "on most railways" – but I may be wrong. On the GWR in 1908 some signal boxes dealt with general telegraph business after the booking office was closed for the day, but I doubt such practices survived much later than that date, due to the gradual extension of the telephone network. In other words, even if this had been the case at an earlier time, it would not have survived until the mid to late twentieth century, except in the most remote rural outposts. Certainly it would not be appropriate at busy main line boxes. Perhaps Peter could qualify his statement and quote his evidence for believing this.

So, the existence of single-needle instruments in the station offices at Rugby and Loughborough is quite surprising for two reasons, firstly that they were ever installed on the London Extension at all, given its late date of opening, and secondly that they hadn't been replaced by a telephone circuit. The fact that not all stations had them points to a specific purpose, rather than a general message system, but what purpose I can't guess. Peter doesn't give a date: do we know how late the system survived there – until closure of the line?

Are there any instructions for using the telegraph in the GCR Appendices, say of 1908 and 1914? I don't have complete copies of either.

My sources for the above piece include an extensive collection of circuit cards and circuit diagrams, patent specifications, Traffic Committee and Works Committee minute books of several railway companies, articles in the technical press and conversations with many railway staff over the years.

Re. Forward 146 p23: location of grandfather's signal box

Like John Bennett (letter in Forward 147 p43), I am convinced the location of 'grandfather's signal box' is Carrington. The combination of small type 4 signal box with brick base, station platform and tunnel mouth must surely be unique. The only supporting evidence I can provide is comparison with photos on pages 19 & 20 of "The GN in the East Midlands No.2" by Alf Henshaw, published by RCTS in 2000. Barry Elliott refers to a photo of his but this was not published.

Re. Forward 146 p42: photo of Wrawby Junction signal box

Again, I agree with John Bennett (letter in Forward 147 p43) regarding the date of the photo. At first I was perplexed by the fact that this postcard was posted in July 1915 when the box was not opened until early 1916. Then I noticed the absence of a nameboard, and, as far as one can tell, the lack of a lever frame. So I conclude that the photo was taken to mark the construction of this remarkable building, still to be fitted out, and that the old type 2 box just visible on the left was to remain in service for a few more months.

Re. Forward 147 p35: photo of Manchester Central signal box interior

May I add to Eddie Johnson's comments (letter in Forward 148 p44). The 1935 frame at Manchester Central was an American design from the General Railway Signal Co. (GRS) of Rochester, NY. Although an American firm they did have a works in England in the 1930s and also made frames for Paddington and Bristol on the GWR. Their design was all-electric and bore only a passing similarity to the much earlier BPRS Co. slide frames on the pneumatic system, as installed between Ardwick and Newton around 1905-7. Although the BPRS was an entirely British firm, some of its designs also originated in American ideas and patents, used under license.

Re. Forward 147 p45: letter from Peter Witts re. Moss & Sons siding at Loughborough

This siding is not included in the 1895 Handbook of Stations nor the 1899 Supplement. However, it is shown (as an addition) in the 1900 supplement. It is my understanding that the 1900 supplement was prepared for publication in late 1899, so this would give a date of opening in that year. I can find no reference in the minutes of the RCH Goods Managers' conference, but they were not at all comprehensive with regard to new sidings until about a decade later.

Since Loughborough is in Leicestershire, it is not included in the IRS Handbook for Nottinghamshire, and they do not have a current edition for Leicestershire to the best of my knowledge.

Re. Forward 149 p32, 150 p27 and 151 p22: 'Thoughts on Aylesbury' by David Wrottesley

There were quite a few jointly owned stations in the UK – Barnsley (Court House) and Stalybridge among them – but I believe that Aylesbury was unique in that both the joint owners were themselves joint committees. We can perhaps understand how this came about if we take a look at the history.

The GW was the first company on the site, followed in 1868 by the Aylesbury and Buckingham, which it worked. However, considerable changes occurred in the nineties; firstly the A & B was purchased by the Met in 1891, thus giving them a foothold in the station. When the Metropolitan arrived with its own line from the south in 1892 it operated to a temporary terminus at first, but in 1894 use of the GW station was agreed, and I assume that it was around this time that it became the joint property of the GW and Met companies. When the GC opened the London Extension in 1898/99 it used running powers over the Met from Quainton Road to Harrow South Junction (granted in the 189x Act), but the GW line was transferred to a new GW & GC Joint Committee from 1 Aug. 1899. Consequently this Committee replaced the GW as one of the joint owners of Aylesbury station. The same happened in April 1906 when the Met line north of Harrow was transferred to the new Met & GC Joint Committee, constituted under the Act of 1905. This was simultaneous with the opening of the joint lines from Neasden to Northolt and from Princes Risborough to Ashendon and Grendon Underwood.

All these matters were dealt with by the Board of Directors of each company, who acted in the best interests of the companies and their shareholders; they would have taken little account of the concerns of the operating officers who had to make the necessary arrangements to enable the trains to run efficiently. The latter had their job to do and they were expected to get on with it! It would have been the General Managers, with the assistance of their respective Superintendents of the Line, who met to sort out the details of how the train service was arranged, who employed (and paid) the staff and how the expenses and revenue were allocated. The excellent little LNER booklet "Routes, Running Powers, Working Arrangements and Jointly Owned Railways" of December 1930 (reprinted by Avon-Anglia in 1988) states that all three companies work their own trains over the joint lines (which we know), but that the Met & GC line is managed by those two companies alternately for periods of five years. No such arrangement is mentioned for the GW & GC. As a result, it would seem that the joint committees themselves employed very few staff. Stations and signalling on the GW & GC Joint were initially provided by the GWR, but maintenance may have been carried out by the GCR in some years; all costs would have been charged to the joint account. I don't know what the arrangements were for permanent way maintenance or what uniforms were worn by the station staff. To find more details of how Aylesbury station was operated, administered, supervised and staffed, I suspect that it would be necessary to examine the records of each of the joint committees. These are in RAIL223 and RAIL239 at The National Archives.

My own interest is in train working, signalling and operation, especially prior to 1914. Unfortunately GCR Working Timetables seem to be very rare, making research rather difficult. There are none at The National Archives (nor the NRM Library?), only the public ones in RAIL931. A volume for 1914 certainly exists, as I have a copy of the pages with the lists of signal boxes. Section 3 covers the London Extension and its branches, including the joint lines. A 1920 volume also exists, I think in the library of The Railway Club, which is open only to members. What does the GCRS Archive hold?

As regards train timing, I know that the LNWR had a Central Timing Office at Crewe after 1900, part of the Superintendent of the Line's organisation. On the GWR also, it was done centrally, the responsibility of a section in the Superintendent of the Line's Office at Paddington. I would assume that the GCR had a similar section at Manchester, but can anyone confirm this?

Compilation of timetables was a complicated business. Of course, it was very rare that a timetable would be totally recast, and in most cases it was a matter of inserting additional trains into the existing schedules, deleting and retiming others - of course, after this had been done several times the timetable might be very different!. The major changes were in July and October each year, but some retiming, especially of goods trains, might take place in other months. Until about 1912 the major companies issued new WTTs on the first day of February, May, July and October each year - presumably this arrangement was agreed though the RCH. Subsequently the commencement of each new timetable became a Monday, and the February issue was often omitted.

On the LNWR and the GWR changes to the train service would be agreed by the Divisional Officers at their "Officers' Conference" (held monthly) and the timing clerks would then have the job of turning these into workable schedules, including ECS and light engine movements, with the necessary diagrams for engines, stock and men. Was there such a conference of District Officers on the GCR? There is very little written about the process of timetabling in the pre-grouping era. We know that, in 1890, before the Central Timing Office came into being, the timing clerks from each Division of the LNWR came together at a special conference at Newton-le-Willows to negotiate and agree the revised timings (Findlay, "Working and Management of an English Railway"). Timing Graphs (or Train Diagrams) were used on the LNWR in 1890, and on the MR before 1920, probably much earlier, so it seems likely that they would be used by other large railways, including the GWR, GCR and Metropolitan, although I have never seen evidence of such. I think all four "grouped" companies universally adopted them, and various books and magazine articles of the 1920s and 1930s illustrate them (Burt, "Control on the Railways", 1926; Williamson, "A British Railway Behind the Scenes", 1933, for example).

from Mike Roberts, Polmont, Falkirk

Information requested re. Glenalmond

I've been reading David Jackson's biography of J. G. Robinson, "A Lifetime's Work", and I see on page 163 that apparently no. 4 Glenalmond annually hauled the special train conveying the Hendersons, and guests, on their autumn holiday to their Perthshire residence, Glenalmond House. Given that Great Central locos and crews seemed to pop up everywhere, is there any record that this loco worked right through to Perth? It would give me great pleasure if this was the case as it would counter good humoured criticism and justify my Glenalmond appearing occasionally on our 7mm club layout at Bo'ness. This layout is broadly based on Gleneagas station.

from Brian Holyland, Greenford

Information supplied re. 'The Master Cutler' 60th anniversary cover.

Just a reminder that 6th Oct 2007 was the 60th anniversary of the inauguration of the 'Master Cutler'. To commemorate this event Buckingham Covers of Folkestone issued a postal cover on that date. Details can be found at www.buckinghamcovers.com.



from Paul White, Staleybridge

Information supplied re. Telford rail service to Marylebone

Wellington in Shropshire (now part of Telford) was my home town. I was born there in 1948 and lived there until 1966. I subscribe to Google alerts for Telford and picked up this story. We lost the Paddington-Birkenhead trains in 1967 and the Euston link went nearly 20 years ago. I never thought we would see the prospect of getting on a London train at Wellington and getting off at Marylebone, although of course the northern end of the proposed service at Wrexham has strong GC connections - a fact which tends to be a neglected area in terms of articles, etc.

Editor's note : There was the article on the WM&CQ in Forward 152.

from Bill Gee, Felixstowe

Information requested re. ROF workmen's trains from Wakefield

During WW2 several locos of classes A5 and C14 were transferred to Ardsley to work workmen's trains from Wakefield to ROF Ranskill and ROF Thorpe Arch, both via Doncaster. Does any reader have recollections of these trains?

Editor's note : 'ROF' = Royal Ordnance Factory. Richard Hardy writes about his war-time recollections of these trains in his autobiography "Steam in the Blood" (Ian Allan, 1971) on p51-52.

from John Quick, Sheffield

Re. Forward 153 p19: caption to photo

The view of the B3/1 on p19 is of an up train, not down. I am fairly sure that it is a little less than 2 miles north of Loughborough, very close to the village of Stanford-on-Soar. The three span bridge in the background is bridge no. 317. I suspect that Gordon Coltas was the photographer and that it was taken during the spring of 1928. The first vehicle behind the tender is a third class saloon, one of only 4 examples built as part of the Bournemouth sets.

from Richard Hardy, Amersham

Re. Forward 152 : cover photo caption

The train is the 4.55pm Marylebone-Manchester probably about 1937-38 and the location is about ¾ mile north of Chorley Wood on the 1 in 105 climb to Amersham. The engine is 6166 Earl Haig, not 6168. I can tell this because 6166 had the old GC cab and 6168 the side window pattern. Also 6168's nameplate was about three times as long as 6166, which I also spotted when the cab did not look right for 6168. Old CJA, good friend though he was, never could find a good word for these engines. They worked the heaviest turns at Neasden, the Mail and the fastest of the lot, the 02.32 Newspaper.

Re. Forward 153 p18: 'The 2.32am newspaper' by '5267'.

The article by '5267' was most interesting. I'm pretty sure that '5267' was Stephen C. Townroe, the noted Southern Railway Motive Power Officer and author.

The 4-cylinders in those days were fitted with the single wide piston valve ring, as were the Gresley Pacifics and the Royal Scots. They were replaced with the Knorr-type multiple piston valve rings which revolutionised the work of all three classes, a point rarely, if ever, made. Valour used to work 17 coaches with ease from Doncaster to Wakefield in 30 minutes with two stops. When driven the modern way with short cut-off, the Caprotti's were wonderfully economical but slower off the mark than the engines with Stephenson gear.

from Allan Sibley, GNR Society

Re. Forward 153 p44: letter from B. J. Harding

Contrary to what Mr Harding says, it is virtually certain that the locomotive named Edward Thompson was not the 2000th produced at Doncaster, and that it was contrived that it should carry that worksplate. I know this is going a bit 'off topic' for the GCRS, but I have attached a copy of an article that appeared in Great Northern News no. 109 in 2000, which you may wish to use in full or in part.

Editor's note : submitted article will appear in the next issue of Forward.

from Ken Grainger, Sheffield

Re. Forward 150-152 : 'Along Cheshire Lines' by Ken Grainger

My meander along the CLC to Chester has generated some gratifyingly positive feedback. May I through 'Readers Forum' thank those who have expressed appreciation of the three-part article, not least my friend and co-organiser of the Rotherham branch meetings, Mick Hayes, who presented me with a copy of Railfilms Ltd's DVD, likewise entitled 'Along Cheshire Lines'.

The DVD, a little over an hour in duration, was produced in association with the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership and is unashamedly promotional – they want people to use the trains! The major section of the DVD very professionally depicts a modern-day journey from Manchester to Chester, looking in on attractions accessible from the train along the way and seamlessly including film and still-photo flashbacks to earlier days.

Separate sections cover freight services, primarily an 'over the years' review of the staple traffic of limestone hoppers from Derbyshire's Peak District to Northwich, and 'Specials', both steam and diesel, which have visited the line in recent years. Uncharacteristically for this video (but understandably) a little grainy amateur footage from the early preservation era is included in this latter section, but who remembers preserved steam locomotives being serviced at Northwich shed? There is nothing amateurish about the 'Bonus Section' footage covering the first visit of 45407 The Lancashire Fusilier for the 1st May 2005 steam specials, when the weather would appear to have been rather better than it was for us in 2006!

Little has changed since the programme was made in 2005, though Northwich station's refurbishment, shown in the DVD as "work in progress", is now superbly complete, as GCRS members can see for themselves at next year's AGM.

This is an excellent video which can be unreservedly recommended. It will delight those who have any regard for the CLC at all, and just might convert some of those who currently haven't.

from D. J. Tinson, Ruislip

Re. Forward 153 p34: 'Great Central Railway Great War Heroes' by Ken Grainger

I enjoyed Ken Grainger's article on the GC war heroes and hope that Ken will be able to continue the series. As my father fought in and survived the Great War, I read everything I can about it.

from Richard Graham, Wembley

Re. Forward 153 p34: 'Great Central Railway Great War Heroes' by Ken Grainger

Congratulations are due once more to Ken Grainger for a well researched and well written account of GCR losses on the first day of the Somme. You ask whether such a piece is appropriate in Forward. Clearly the Great War was a significant event in the history of the GCR and should not be omitted.



As someone interested in military history, (I am a volunteer with the 'UK National Inventory of War Memorials', see www.ukniwm.org.uk), however, I think Ken has perhaps concentrated a little too much on military matters for the general reader. Although there were some recalled reservists among the GCR's losses, the majority were in effect civilians in uniform, and this should perhaps be given greater emphasis. Walter Gibson's residence in railway housing was an interesting sidelight.

It might be worth trying to draw some conclusions from the tragic losses. For example, it has been suggested that Britain's decline in the interwar years was caused by the loss in the Great War of the most educated and dynamic members of society, those who were quick to join the colours, and this was exemplified by the deaths on the Somme. A quick look at the GC losses on 1 July suggests that about 30% were clerks, i.e. those more educated, but of course we should need to know what proportion of the railway's workforce were clerical.

In summary, I look forward to Ken continuing, but with a little less emphasis on the course of the battle: it was the fact of the death, rather than the circumstances, which in the end weighed heavier on the relatives of the fallen.

Information requested re. 1926 model of Valour

In April 1926 The Model Railway News reported on a Leeds Model Co. gauge O scale model of the GCR locomotive Valour . The following is an extract :

"The mechanism is the L.M.C. standard design fitted with an eight-pole drum armature wound for eight volts. The current collectors are arranged for outside third rail. A fair amount of external detail has been included in this model and the nameplate, which is correctly engraved in brass, bears the inscription, "In memory off G.C.R. employees 1914-1918." This is not quite the full inscription carried by the real loco but the size of the plate, which is to scale, made it impracticable to get it all on."

The note is accompanied by an illustration of the model in LNER livery. Does anyone know if it has survived?

from David Wrottesley, Sheffield

Information requested re. the GCR at Clay Cross



I recently walked with six friends over part of the Five Pits Trail from Grassmoor Country Park to Pilsley in north east Derbyshire. The route followed was not however over ex-GCR lines but predominantly over the ex-MR Grassmoor/Pilsley and Pilsley Extension branch railway from Avenue sidings to Morton sidings, via the Alma Junctions. This was followed until the site of MR Holmewood Colliery Branch Jnct. from where the MR branch was parallel to the GCR main line to Pilsley. The five pits concerned were Grassmoor, Williamthorpe, Holmewood (or Hardwick), Pilsley, and Tibshelf. The MR and GCR serviced all of them in a complex network of branch lines, connections and sidings. Dow - Volume 2 p235 tells us how the GCR built short branch connections to all these collieries, including in particular Holmewood North (or Williamthorpe) from Heath.

In LMSR/LNER and LMR/ER years before ultimate closure of these collieries, Holmewood colliery was served only via Williamthorpe towards Avenue Sidings. In addition sections of ex-MR lines towards Morton became used for wagon storage after parts of them had been operated by the NCB for extended haulage in place of LMSR/LMR/BR.

The Midland Railway System Maps (The Distance Diagrams) Book 2 Sheet 12, gives an excellent indication of the complicated network of tracks of both MR/GCR companies, including sidings. The 1909 edition reveals information about the area that I did not know, and that is that the GCR had plans to serve not only Clay Cross works, but also Clay Cross Coy No 7 Colliery at Danesmoor in the Erewash Valley. The MR Distance Diagrams show a planned GCR connection from Heath running south beneath the MR Pilsley Extension railway between MR Alma Jnct. and MR Holmewood Colliery Branch Jnct. It then ran north to pass over the MR Erewash Valley main line south of Clay Cross. There was a planned southbound connection to Danesmoor.

I would be grateful if anyone could supply me with more information about the GCR and its ambition to access Clay Cross. It would seem that following the expense of extending to Marylebone this further expansion/extension into Derbyshire could not be achieved.

from John Hitchens, Kirkby-in-Ashfield

Re. Forward 153 p43: letter from Bill Gee.

It appears to me that Bill Gee has confused the workings from the oil depot at Tuxford Central (mentioned previously in Lawson Little's article in Forward 149) with those from the Eakring oilfields. Eakring Sidings was opened sometime in 1940 and block trains ran from there to Uphall near Edinburgh via Mansfield with a departure from Farnsfield about 4.20pm. Mansfield was allocated class 8F locomotives for working this traffic. During the War, similar trains were run to Liverpool via Rolleston Junction and Nottingham, worked by Nottingham men.

In January 1959 the line was severed between Bilsthorpe Colliery and Eakring Sidings, so the latter was only accessible from the LD&EC at Ollerton. As a result of this, the trains were re-routed via Tuxford and the ECML, destination still Uphall. However, the output of the oilfields was declining and

the 1962/63 WTT shows the train as 'Q' (running as required). The sidings were taken out of use in August 1966, as was the line to Ollerton. In December of that year traffic ceased on the Farnsfield to Blidworth section of the Mansfield-Southwell line.

The 1962/63 timetable also shows an 'LE' from Retford to Tuxford Central in the late afternoon which worked back to Doncaster Decoy Yard.

The 4F reported by Bill Gee as on a Scottish oil working may well have been conveying oil tanks for Kirkby Loco to supply the diesel shunting locos.

Editor's note : A short article on the subject of the 4.22pm from Farnsfield to Uphall can be found in British Railways Illustrated vol.14 no.2 (Nov 2004). The article is entitled 'The Nottinghamshire Oil Bonanza' and the author is Bryan Wilson.

from Geoff Lane, Hatch End

Re. Forward 153 p43: letter from Richard Graham on 'Crockers Folly'

The following snippet appeared in the London Evening Standard on 15th Oct.

'A London pub has been named as one of the nation's most endangered period buildings. The Victorian Society has highlighted the plight of the former Crocker's Folly in St John's Wood, which has stood empty and boarded up for several years. The listed building is on the market for £4.25 million.'

Crossword Solution (Forward 153)

Across

2. Arkwright 5. Banbury 6. Dewsnap 8. Dixon Davies 11. Glenalmond 12. Market 14. Duckinfield 16. Unolco 18. Immingham 20. Woodhead 22. Retford 25. George 26. Tuxford 27. Director 29. Henderson 30. Pulverised 33. Dow 34. Spinkhill 38. Improved 42. Mansfield 44. Grimsby 45. Hyde 46. Forward

Down

1. Wrexham 2. Ashendon 3. Gorton 4. Marylebone 5. Brill 7. Yankee 9. Neasden 13. Bridgehouses 15. Dunford Bridge 17. Woodhouse 19. Althorpe 20. Wath 21. Metropolitan 24. Sacre 28. Dinting 31. Deepcar 32. Wembley 35. Pollitt 36. Keadby 37. Single 39. Parker 40. Verney 41. Dawson 43. Fay

Crossword Solution (Forward 154)

Across

2. Franks 5. Foxell 7. Stovepipe 10. Snifting 12. Chilterns 15. Catcliffe 19. Crabs 22. ROD 23. Oakwood 25. Grey 26. Wombwell 28. Denham 31. Rushcliffe 33. Whitworth 37. Northlight 38. Barnum 40. Bude 41. Pennines 42. Caprotti 43. Styx 44. Wicker 45. Mexborough 47. Belpaire 48. Thomas

Down

1. Birdcage 3. Aintree 4. Wortley 6. Leen 8. Pom Pom 9. Kent 11. Newspaper 13. Swindon 14. Bulldogs 16. Coronation 17. Finial 18. Langwith 20. Schmidt 21. Reddish 24. Walschaerts 27. Darnall 29. Sentinel 30. Cheltenham 32. Cornbrook 34. Intensifore 35. Walter Scott 36. Brunswick 39. Tuplin 46. Humm

Rear cover caption

LNER class B8 4-6-0 no.5004 Glenalmond. Built in 1913 as GCR class 1A, a small wheel version of class 1 (the 'Sam Fays') and named after the Scottish estate of the Chairman of the GCR, Alexander Henderson. This photo was taken at Doncaster shed in 1931. Withdrawn in 1947 as no.1349.

photo © Photomatic

