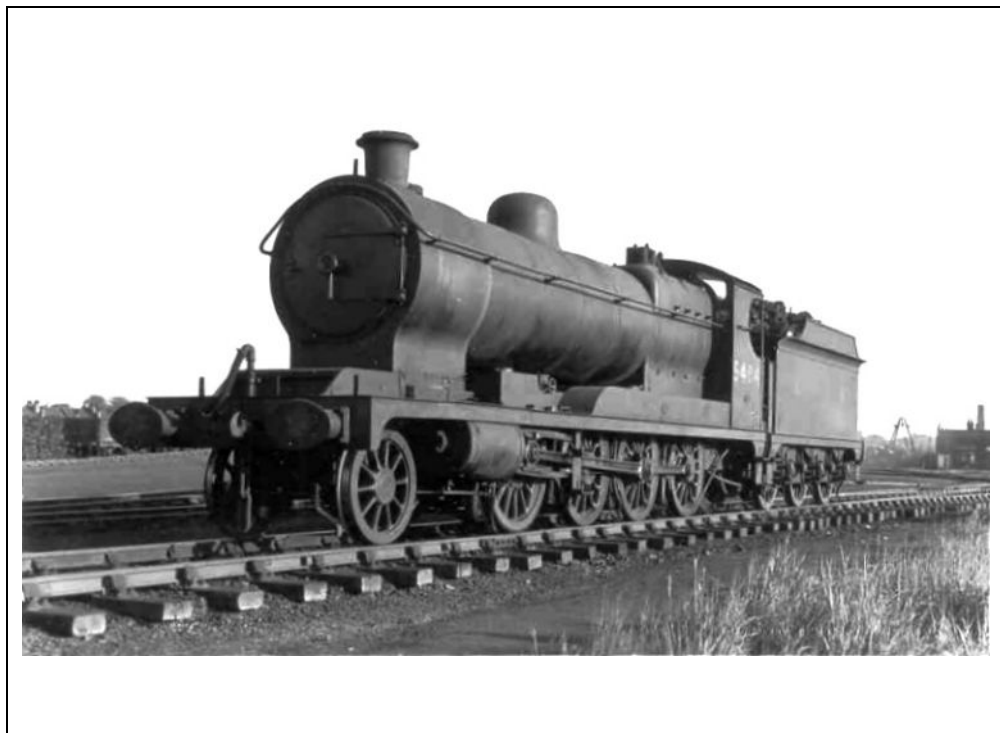


FORWARD



Journal of the Great Central Railway Society

No. 151

March 2007

Front cover caption

LNER class O4/1 2-8-0 no.5404 stands at the throat of Neasden shed on 27 May 1936. This loco was built by the GCR in 1912. It survived until 1962 as no.63664.

photo : R.G.Jarvis/Midland Railway Trust



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No. 151 ~ March 2007

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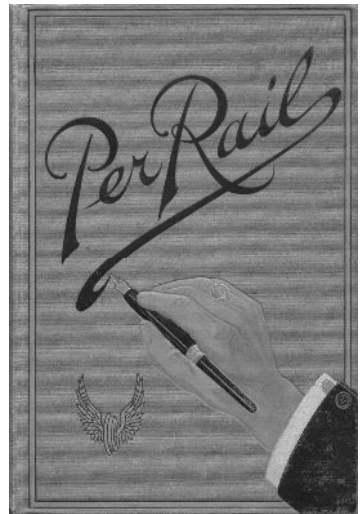
Most articles that appear in railway journals such as *Forward* are either based on personal experience eg 'Happy Memories of Woodford Halse' or are based on information gleaned from other sources eg 'The Aylesbury Accident of 1904' - both examples are from the previous issue of *Forward*. For personal reminiscence, the writer needs to have a clear memory and the ability to organise their information in a coherent way. A style of writing is needed that can capture the imagination of the reader. Such articles, when well written, are a joy to read, particularly for those of us who don't have such memories ourselves.

The subject-based article is very different. Here the writer will have done some research, organised the information and then presented it in their own particular style. Some writers can make the most uninspiring subjects really interesting. The student of the GCR already has an excellent source of information in George Dow's 3-part history 'Great Central'. Rarely does an historical article on a GCR subject not have a footnote referring to 'Dow'. There are many other books relating to the GCR which can be helpful to a researcher. If not on the writer's own bookshelf they can usually be borrowed from a colleague. However, there are pitfalls in relying entirely on secondary sources of information. The information may be incorrect or presented in a misleading way to support the theories of the writer, and the information will always be incomplete.

To dig deeper the researcher must use original sources. These can be track plans, Acts of Parliament, railway company journals, minute books, agreement books, workshop records, publicity material eg 'Per Rail', personal diaries, contemporary newspaper articles and photos etc. In the past, this meant a lot of shoe leather being used up in visiting libraries and archives such as at the NRM. Today it is possible to access some original material on the Internet. An example is www.railwayarchive.org.uk which focuses on the London Extension of the GCR with its wealth of track plans, loco plans and photos by S.W.A.Newton.

Railway societies with an historical interest in 'their' railway often accumulate original material in an ad hoc way through donations and purchases. Unfortunately the material is often stored away, often in different places, and can only be accessed with difficulty by the researcher. Unlike the individual collector, the railway society can only justify having archive material in its possession if it is easy to access and use. How refreshing then, to see the progress made by the Midland Railway Society which has joined forces with Derby Museums to create the Midland Railway Study Centre at The Silk Mill, Derby's Museum of Industry & Science*. Here, the researcher can access a large amount of material relating to the Midland Railway and study it in suitable surroundings.

The Great Central Railway Society would like to see its own collection of archive material, along with those from other bodies, made available at a suitable location for researchers of the GCR. Where would be a good place to house this material? It would need to be secure and with unrestricted access, if possible, 7 days a week. Museums, libraries and heritage railway sites offer the best options. I hope that this vision can be shared with all societies with a GCR interest and that through co-operation a 'Study Centre' can be created.



The GCR publication 'Per Rail'.

** To find out more go to www.midlandrailwaystudycentre.org.uk. Dave Harris, the co-ordinator, can also be contacted on 01283 702689.*

Directions for travelling to the AGM at the New Venture Social Club, Beeston on Saturday 12th May 2007, starting at 11:00.

By Train

The Social Club is only 50 metres from the station at Beeston. Most Nottingham-Derby services and some St.Pancras-Nottingham services stop at Beeston. If arriving from Nottingham leave the station by the small gate. You can see the Social Club across the car park. If arriving from Derby you will need to cross the road bridge and then turn right into the car park where you will see the Social Club.

By Bus

Service 36 runs from the Nottingham Victoria Centre (John Lewis) to Beeston. The bus station at Beeston is on Station Road. On leaving the bus station turn right and follow Station Road. After passing over the railway turn right into the car park and you will see the Social Club. Takes about 15 minutes to walk from the bus station.

By Car

From M1 leave at Junction 25 and follow A52 towards Nottingham. After 6km turn right onto the B6006 towards Beeston. Continue through Beeston along Station Road, go straight across the A6005, over the railway and turn right into the car park. From Nottingham turn off the A52 Ring Road onto the A6005 near the University. Turn left at the next roundabout (still A6005). Turn left at the crossroads onto Station Road, go over the railway and turn right into the car park. Car parking is free on Saturdays.

Bar snacks are available at the venue and there is a choice of other food outlets in Beeston.

Brian Slater
The Secretary

Annual Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions are due on 1 April (£12.00 for UK members; £15.00 for overseas members). Payment should be sent to Eric Latusek, cheques being made payable to 'The Great Central Railway Society'. Prompt payment helps to keep the Society's accounts in good health.

The Great Central Railway on the Internet

Thank you to readers for submitting the following web sites.

www.railwayarchive.org.uk

Put together with funding from the New Opportunities Fund (for life long learning) this web site takes a close look at the history and social effects of the coming of the London Extension of the GCR to the communities it passed through. It has original track plans, loco plans from Beyer-Peacock and lots of photos. A real mine of information.

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Nick_Tozer/booksgcr.htm

It is useful when perusing booksellers lists to know which titles are related to the Great Central Railway. Bookseller Nick Tozer has helpfully already done this for you.

<http://www.nthc.co.uk/>

The Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre at Ruddington is host to a range of transport interests based around part of a former army ordnance site (the rest is a country park!). It is also the location of GCRS committee meetings thanks to the hospitality of the Nottingham Society of Model & Experimental Engineers (NSMEE) group based there.



Passenger Services on the LD&ECR

by Lawson Little

Anyone looking at the four normally-deserted platforms at Shirebrook North (as the passenger station at Langwith Junction had been renamed by the LNER in 1924) would find it very hard to believe that at one time all four had been simultaneously busy several times each day, or indeed that the station had once boasted a through service to London! The latter was a fairly short-lived experiment by the Great Central in the period after taking control of the LD&ECR in 1907, and comprised a single coach which left Lincoln in the early morning attached to an all-stations local to Langwith Junction, where it was removed and worked forward separately via Duckmanton Junction to Heath; here it was added to an Up semi-fast which eventually reached Marylebone at 1.30pm, some 5½ hours after leaving Lincoln. The return working left London at 3.15pm as a slip coach which was dropped at Leicester, going forward from there by the same route as the Up journey and finally arriving back at Lincoln just before 8pm. Since the competing Great Northern took under three hours for the Lincoln-Kings Cross trip, there were unlikely to be many through bookings on the GCR! Incidentally this working was most unusual (possibly unique?) in starting off from Lincoln as a Down working before becoming an Up one from Duckmanton onwards, the LD&ECR being classed as Down for westbound trains.

The 'four trains together' arrangement was a much more successful idea which lasted for more than thirty years. Each weekday (there were never any scheduled Sunday trains on the LD&ECR) at around 10.45am and again at 2.15pm and 4.30pm, trains would depart more or less simultaneously for Sheffield, Mansfield, Lincoln and Chesterfield. These long-established connections were still recalled with some pride by local people years later, since they permitted fairly painless travel between all the local rail-served towns and villages. The facility only disappeared when local roads and bus services improved in the 1930s. For a few years in the late 1920s there was also a direct service to Nottingham via the GNR Leen Valley line, but this was withdrawn in 1931. Right up to the outbreak of WW2, however, Shirebrook North remained busy, with a total of 19 daily departures (and no less than 31 on Saturdays) including a particularly intensive service to Chesterfield (8 trains each way with 4 extra on Saturdays). From 1939, however, the Sheffield service disappeared 'for the duration', never to be reinstated, and by the end of the war almost all the Saturday extras had also been withdrawn, leaving only 7 trains to Chesterfield (plus a late evening Saturday working), 3 to Lincoln and just 1 to Mansfield, the latter running via Clipstone Junction.

For six years starting in September 1945, I travelled daily by train from Langwith Junction to Chesterfield, using the 8.27am departure which was specially strengthened by the addition of two open saloons for the 60 or so pupils attending the Grammar School. The saloons were marshalled at the front of the train and then remained at the buffer stops at Market Place Station until 4pm when they made the return journey. Apparently we were not deemed fit to ride in the three public coaches, despite the latter being virtually empty, even though in those more innocent days we were usually engrossed in arrears of homework, or the odd game of half-penny football, rather than indulging in the vandalism which seems to be the norm nowadays.

The two saloons were worthy of note, the older being a graduate of 1900 built by the GCR at Gorton as one of a batch of three for the London Extension; a typical flat-roofed design of the time (Dia. 5F1), it was painted a muddy mid-brown, unlike its companion which still boasted the remnants of varnished teak. The latter was one of only two of this design (Dia. 151B). It appeared from York in 1925 and was in appearance typical of LNER domed-roof carriages, though in fact it was built to a North Eastern Railway external design combined with a North British pattern interior! Both vehicles were fitted with longitudinal seats and large plate-glass windows. The GCR carriage was divided into two saloons by cross-partitions, the NER one into three, the central area of the latter still retaining its long narrow table which we used for our football pitch!

Our experiences on the school train justify an article of their own¹, ranging as they did from drama (an all-wheels-off derailment at Market Place, fortunately at low speed and without loss of life) through comedy (chiefly focused on the efforts of the East Midland bus company to get us to Chesterfield on the not-infrequent occasions when the train was unable to run) to tragedy (when the morning train collided with an excavator near Markham Jct., fatally injuring its driver). The leisurely

ten-miles-in-thirty-minutes journey was certainly never dull, and served to cement an interest in railways which has survived to the present day.

The Passenger Stock

Apart from the aforementioned saloons, the LD&ECR in 1945 possessed a large collection of coaches to cover the, by now, fairly sparse services. The original LD&ECR coaches², all six-wheel, had finally disappeared after a long innings (fifty years in some cases), though even then the ever-thrifty LNER had re-used most of them for gas tank or drum wagons (chassis only), lineside huts, or even intact as breakdown train tool vans or sleeping vans - one of the latter even survived long enough to be preserved at the unlikely location of the Midland Railway Trust at Butterley.

Most trains consisted of three non-corridor coaches (two brake-thirds and a composite being typical), and comprised a mixture of clerestory and flat-roofed types built by the GCR in the early 1900s. Curiously, although there was a large selection of both roof styles to choose from (the surplus ones mouldering gently in platforms 3 and 4 at Market Place), I only once saw a 'pure' set of clerestories! There were also a few oddities used occasionally for strengthening purposes, including one or two of the slightly later GCR pattern with bowed matchboarded sides, and even a 'Barnum' or two.



Class A5 no.69812 leaving Scarcliffe with the 12.45pm Lincoln-Chesterfield Market Place service on 5 August 1950.

photo : R.J.Buckley

As a typical schoolboy, my eyes in those days were entirely focused on locomotives, and the only coaches positively identified are those which were derailed at Clipstone Junction on 12 May 1950 :

No. 5563 a 49' Brake Third, built 1905.

No. 51671 a 49' Lavatory Composite, built 1903.

No. 51631 a 49' Brake Third, built 1903.

The 1903 examples were clerestory-roofed.

In 1948 the authorities, for once, recognised the existence of the LD&ECR by bestowing upon it some NEW stock, in the shape of a three-coach set of Thompson non-corridors, again two Brake Thirds and a Composite, to Diagrams 340 and 338, built by Metro-Cammell and Cravens respectively. Again the numbers went unrecorded, though I do recall that the Brake Thirds were consecutively numbered,

and that the set was always kept together, albeit sometimes strengthened with one or two extra coaches spliced in between. Having been brought up on a diet of ancient compartment stock, complete with fusty horsehair-stuffed bench seats and some even retaining gas lighting, the new coaches, with individual reading lamps, no less, seemed the height of luxury, though of course I only got to sample them when accompanied by my parents!



Class C13 no.67427 leaving Edwinstowe with an afternoon Lincoln-Shirebrook North service. photo : T.G.Hepburn

Passenger Locomotives at Langwith

This subject has been mentioned in passing in the article on Langwith Loco (Forward 132), but merits a more detailed look under this heading. The original LD&ECR passenger engines comprised a batch of six small 0-4-4Ts (later LNER Class G3) which even when new must have struggled on the ruling 1 in 100 gradients at the west end of the line. Although all were still at Langwith at Grouping, they gradually moved away to less strenuous duties in the 1920s, most finishing their days shunting carriage stock at Sheffield.

In their place came a group of GCR C14 4-4-2Ts plus, oddly, a pair of GNR C12s, which ruled until 1935, when all were apparently needed more urgently elsewhere. For the next four years there were no obvious passenger-type locos at Langwith, and it is not now known whether this period was covered from Lincoln or if Langwith had to manage on a diet of N5s and/or J11s. The former were sometimes short of steam on main-line duties, and the latter, whilst otherwise ideal, would have been unpopular with the men since the ancient turntable at Chesterfield Market Place was too small for their use, necessitating a trip to Duckmanton Jct. to turn when they could have been resting in the yard! In May 1939 a couple of C14s returned, only to be replaced in late 1940 by D2 4-4-0s for a year or so; these in turn gave way to D3s plus a further batch of C12s, none being popular at Langwith, where the men dismissed all Great Northern engines as 'flimsy'!

By 1945 the C12s, feeble at the best of times, were completely worn out, and despite having five or six examples to cover the two daily diagrams, Langwith regularly had to appeal to Lincoln for replacements, which to our delight included many of the 'Directors', several C4 Atlantics, and best of all, Lincoln's B17 Bradford, one of whose 'footballs' was found to be loose - many schoolboy fingers attempted its removal! Hence various trials of potential replacements were instigated, including N2 and N7 0-6-2Ts and even a 'Tilbury Tank', an awful thing which ran out of steam and was rapidly

packed off back to the Midland Region in ignominy. The 0-6-2Ts were better, but N2s had blotted their copybook by derailing a couple of times on the less-than-perfect local lines, which to be fair to my dad and the other p.w. men, were always badly affected by coal-mining subsidence. It was concluded that, just as Stirling had decreed sixty years earlier, that a leading bogie was essential to 'lay down the road', so it was a matter of great relief when the building of new Thompson L1s allowed three of Robinson's splendid A5 4-6-2Ts to be transferred to Langwith in January 1949. These grand engines, strong, fast and comfortable in either direction, immediately became local pets, and even enjoyed regular cleaning, a rare treat at the always labour-stretched shed. Three to five coaches on a 1 in 100 gradient were a mere trifle, and the A5s maintained the local services, apart from a very short interval when C13s were used, until the very end.



Class B17 no.61662 'Manchester United' arriving at Edwinstowe with the 9.18am from Nottingham Victoria on 22 August 1951.
photo : R.J.Buckley

The Final Years

I left school, and the daily train journey, in July 1951, and less than six months later BR finally abandoned its efforts to maintain Bolsover Tunnel, between Langwith Junction and Chesterfield, in a safe condition. Always very wet (its outflow was for years sufficient to serve as the sole source of water for the nearby large village of Carr Vale) and again bedevilled with subsidence, the LNER having short-sightedly declined to 'purchase' the underlying coal seam, the tunnel bore was gradually collapsing. The initial solution was to slew one road into the centre and abandon the other. Eventually even this was insufficient and from December 1951 the line was severed. By that time passenger services were restricted to the Lincoln route only, and this never carried more than a handful of passengers, so it was no surprise when after a few years it too was discontinued. The last timetabled passenger train left Shirebrook North without ceremony at 4.17pm on 17 September 1955, hauled by A5 no.69828 and consisting of the Thompson three-coach set plus a couple of strengtheners for the non-existent last-day crowds. Thus came to an end almost sixty years of service to the local community.

Editor's footnotes

¹ See article by Lawson Little in Steam World no. 79 (Jan 1994).

² Further information on LD&ECR passenger vehicles can be found in two articles by Lawson Little in Great Central Link nos. 12 and 13.

Along Cheshire Lines

Part 2 : Altrincham to Northwich (by steam too!)

by Ken Grainger



A busy scene at Altrincham on 30 April 2006 with 'Black Five' no.45407 having arrived from Chester and a Metrolink tram departing for Manchester.

photo : Laurence Wheeler

'Black Five' no.45407, which now carries the name of long faded-away Royal Scot no. 46119 Lancashire Fusilier, with the 'West Coast' rake plus her support coach, a ten coach train in uniform BR maroon, a magnificent sight. The train had been hired by the MCRUA and their Mid-Cheshire Community Rail partners to make two 'all-stations' return trips to Chester. After a previous visit to enjoy the stations along the route, we had booked for the first departure, scheduled for 10:30, but which suffered a knock-on delay when (a sign of the times) vandalism at Hale held up the preceding 10:10 'Nodding Donkey'.

Whatever the yobs had achieved had been cleared away by the time our train reached busy, bustling Hale, one of the treasures of this line. Originally named by the Cheshire Midland as 'Bowdon Peel Causeway', then 'Peel Causeway' in 1899, Hale finally acquired its current name in 1902, but other than the station name little has changed. Wholly Grade II listed (even the footbridge), its glories may be somewhat faded, and a coat of paint wouldn't go amiss, but Hale station is glorious still. On both platforms the red brick buildings are fronted by glass-and-iron canopies with delightful decorative

valancing, and the platform-end level crossing, the lifting barriers of which are the only concession to modernity, is still overlooked by the signal box which once controlled it. Over the road, very appropriately, is the 'Cheshire Midland' public house, commemorating the company which opened this railway in 1862. The pub sign is the not quite so appropriate (anticipating the later CLC) as it features the beautifully executed combined coats of arms of the CLC's three owning companies.

As urban Hale gave way to rural Cheshire, Ashley, a delightful survival of a Cheshire village, angles to the single storey booking office shelter. The station is now unstaffed and the pub is usual in such cases, fenced off from the platform.

On the other (westbound) platform the open-fronted shelter is still there, even including its decorative valance. On an earlier expedition, a steam traction engine had clanked by as I waited to photograph a train from the adjacent overbridge – the yesteryear scene was complete! With a complete absence of litter or graffiti, Ashley station is a joy to behold.



Also normally a 'by request' stop, Mobberley (Best Kept Cheshire Station 2004) was formerly

A Manchester bound train passes Ashley.

photo : Ken Grainger

more-or-less a cruciform version of Ashley, with the booking hall balanced by a small wing on the opposite side of the station house. Converted for non-railway use, Mobberley is also very well cared-for and in excellent nick, though the main building has been somewhat spoilt by extending what was the booking office section forward below the formerly projecting roof. Admittedly, this has been tastefully carried out in brickwork matching the original, but it presents a rather blank face to the railway. The 'road-side' is a delight and if the extension is what is required to make the building lettable, then it is infinitely preferable to the alternative. At the Chester end of the platforms, an original CLC signal box controls the level crossing for the road from Mobberley village and by some magnificently-chimneyed railway cottages to the Railway Inn.



All dark brick and Victorian Gothic, Knutsford is not a terribly pretty station and the removal of the westbound platform's canopy, with the building no longer in railway use, hasn't helped, but I really like it. I half expected to see bats flitting about that turret over the mausoleum-like old booking hall and if Vincent Price had ever had a private station, I'm sure it would have been like Knutsford's! A modern shelter occupies the space where once a distinctive round water tower stood, but happily the new booking office on the eastbound platform has managed to fit in without disturbing the original platform canopy.

Mobberley station and signal box looking towards Chester.

photo : Ken Grainger

We were 8 minutes down at Knutsford, but once more in open country we were now bucketing along in fine style, the smoke exhaust of fond memory drifting past the carriage windows. The promise of the early morning sun had now disappeared completely and a steady drizzle was falling, but no one was in the mood to be disheartened, not even those, young and old, gathered at each station and along the lineside to smile and wave as our train passed. Just what is the wonderful magic that compels people to wave to strangers on passing trains and vice-versa? No doubt we set some motorists' eyes popping as we steamed over the M6!



Knutsford's Gothic style station.

photo : Ken Grainger

Apart from the large wing on the station house, Plumley (Plumbley with a 'b' until 1945) is similar in style to Ashley and Mobberley. Like Mobberley, Plumley has been subject to the same bricking up under the formerly projecting roof, but it is obviously in very safe and caring hands. The station building is now the home of JPD Training, and they have set a fine example as the organisers of the annual 'Best Kept Station in Cheshire' competition since 2003. Plumley station's beautifully maintained frontage is perfectly complemented by a pair of semaphore signals. The adjacent 'Golden Pheasant' looks quite inviting too! I very nearly missed Plumley West signal box, watching a buzzard effortlessly tracking us on the opposite side of the line. Apparently these magnificent birds are doing very well hereabouts.



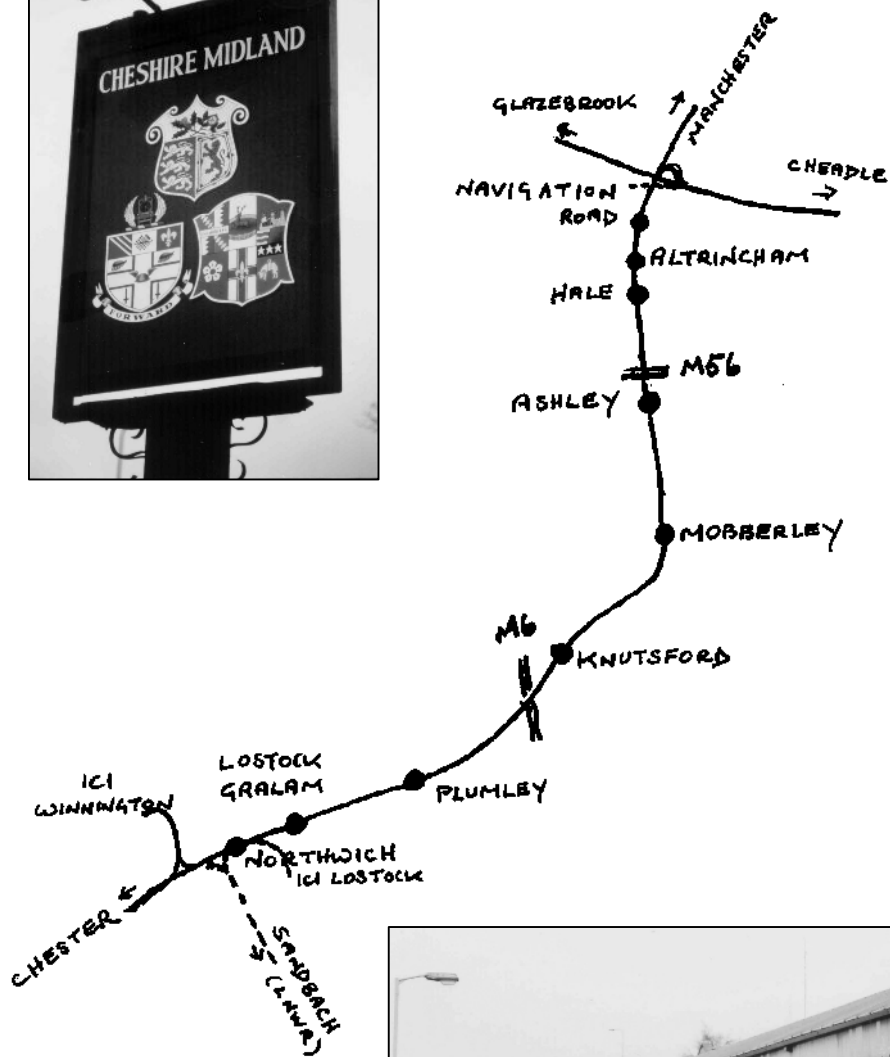
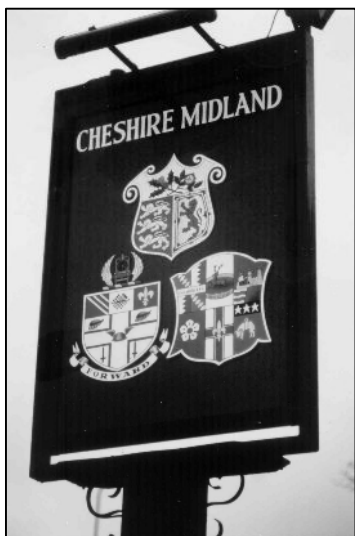
Frontage of Plumley station, home of JPD Training.

photo : JPD Training

Lostock Gralam (delicious name) was once in the same style as Mobberley, but is in a very sorry state. The building still stands, just about, but is in the final stages of dereliction and has obviously been determinedly and repeatedly vandalised. I fear it is already way beyond recovery and it will be a merciful release when it ultimately gives way to a 'bus shelter'. Perhaps one day it will be discovered which part of the brain, possibly when overheated under a baseball cap or hood, is stimulated by wanton destruction. Maybe then some treatment can be devised which, we can but hope, won't be altogether painless.

Cheshire's rural countryside was temporarily left behind as we crossed over the Trent and Mersey Canal, passed Brunner Mond's industrial complex on our left and entered Northwich. On our left, Northwich Shed (8E) has given way to des-res development, while the former goods yard, on our right, is now the inevitable Tesco, but a visit to Northwich's oddly asymmetrical station can be highly recommended.

To be continued...



Northwich station looking towards Chester. photo: Ken Grainger



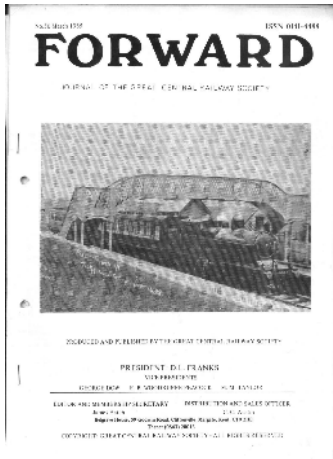
Standard Class 4 2-6-0 no.76079 passes through Hale during the first Cheshire Line Steam Day on 2 May 2004.

photo: Norman Spilsbury

Forward reaches another milestone

by Paul White

When Forward dropped through my letterbox in December I immediately picked it up and flicked through the contents as usual. I didn't at first notice that it was in fact issue 150 – something of a milestone, so, in that slack period between Christmas and New Year, I decided to look back at two other milestone editions – issues 50 and 100.

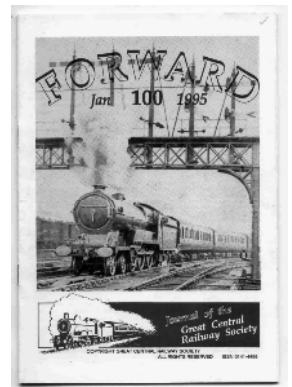


Issue 50 was edited by one of the founding members of the Society, Jim Hatch. Still in A4 format, it appeared in March 1985 and was the first to be professionally printed (ie not on Jim's duplicator). The only facility for photographs was the semi-glossy front cover, which featured on the front a picture of the first train to arrive at Tickhill Station. On the inside of the front cover was a group shot of the opening ceremony at Silkstone Station on 28th November 1984, while the remaining two Brian Leslie photographs were of an L1 and a Black Five working Marylebone-High Wycombe services. Notice of the AGM reminded members that the Annual Subscription was to stay at £5. In the news section there was a report of the Christmas shopping specials which had run from Denham, Princes Risborough and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes.

On a less cheerful note it was reported that 20 004 plus a brake-van had ventured from Sheffield to Dunford Bridge with a party of scrap dealers to assess the value of the materials to be recovered from the area. The major article in Issue 50 was part

2 of 'Robinson Locomotives - A Discussion' by David Jackson and Owen Russell. This covered the years 1900-1906, Robinson's earlier designs for the GCR, and consisted to a greater extent of a learned demolition of the opinions of Dr Tuplin expressed in his book Great Central Steam. Shorter articles dealt with the end of 1500Vdc traction in the Manchester area and a pen-picture of former GCR director Purdon Vickers.

Issue 100 appeared in January 1995, complete with celebratory cover featuring "possibly" Sir Sam Fay on "what may be" the 3.20pm down A5 glossy format, the change having taken place with Issue 62. Inside, the then editor Roger Milnes outlined the history of Forward's development over the 21 years of its existence. Articles included a reminder of the harsh conditions endured by rail staff in the late 19th century and the concomitant development of trades unionism, and an interesting feature on MSL/GC locos bearing the number 100 - surprisingly only three of them! 'Stations of the Great Central' reached no.8 and featured Chesterfield Central in an extensive article by Ken Grainger, while Sue Thompson contributed an article on the remodelling of Retford. Quite a variety!



Now here we are at Issue 150, nearly 32 years down the line from the duplicated sheet of Issue 1. I felt I had to look at issues 50 and 100 to remind myself of how far we have come as a society. Inevitably people have come and gone over the years, for various reasons. Each editor has put his own stamp on the journal, and each editor has built on the foundations laid by the previous one. And of course, each editor can be no better than the quality and quantity of the articles they receive and those in Forward are of a consistently high standard. Let's hope they keep coming!

As a member from the beginning of the Society, I am proud to possess a copy of every Forward from Issue 1, a superb shop-front for a Society with high standards. I wonder what Issue 200 will look like?

A trip over the new line to London

as reported by W.B.Paley in The Mechanical World magazine of 20th June 1899.

submitted by John Quick

Leaving the Marylebone station at 1.15 p.m. by the fastest train which is at present run, the beautiful smoothness of the newly laid permanent way is at once apparent. The remarkable quietness of the running and the absence of wheel sounds are very noticeable and are due to the special arrangements for deadening noise made in constructing the floors of the coaches. Speed rapidly increases. Harrow is passed on the left, its school buildings and old church showing well on the hill, then Rickmansworth, Amersham, Wendover and Aylesbury, all pleasant, quiet little towns which have hardly yet got used to being ignored by the fast flying expresses. On this train is run a "buffet car" or rather, a 3rd class coach containing a neat little bar or buffet at one end, from which cold lunch or afternoon tea, or chops and steak can be obtained, but regular dinners are not served. Sundry drinkables, of course, can also be had. The service is excellently appointed and the attendants are active, civil etc. Filtered water is provided in each vehicle and lavatories for both sexes. Owing to the room taken up by the corridor, the compartments only hold 3 people on each side in 3rd class and 2 aside in 1st class. Although most comfortably upholstered and well lighted, they look smaller than they really are and appear rather cramped after the ordinary sized compartments on non-corridor trains.

All along here the country is purely agricultural, not flat nor yet hilly, but looking most charming at this time of the year. It does not appear able to yield much traffic, but the new line was built to serve more important interests than those of the Northamptonshire graziers. All the roadside stations however, have ample accommodation for every species of traffic and at Rugby the cattle docks and sidings are on a very extensive scale. Here the line crosses over the L.N.W.R. by a heavy girder bridge a little south of that company's station, without any diminution of the delightfully quiet and easy running. At Whetstone, a considerable slackening of speed took place for the first time. Evidently the train was too soon, the present timing of 147 minutes for the 103 miles to Leicester without a stop being well within the capacity of a punctual engine with not much more than 100 tons. Leicester was reached at 3.38 p.m., 4 minutes before time. Here, no.860 which had brought us from London came off and no.878 replaced her for the run to Manchester. Both are new 7ft. coupled bogie engines of Mr. H. Pollitt's standard designs. Leicester station is on the west side of the town, in a part hitherto untouched by railways. It is of the island type and like Marylebone, constructed of light steelwork, painted blue, red brick offices with yellow terra cotta dressings and any amount of glass roofing. The general effect is most pleasing.

Rothley was passed at 3.54 p.m. and directly afterwards, the large reservoirs of the Leicester Water Works came into sight. There is an embankment across these. A fine wooded hill on the far side completes, with the water rippling and sparkling, a very pretty picture. Precisely at 4 o'clock we pass Loughborough, the new station being at the south end of the town and directly afterwards, a long embankment crosses the Midland Rly. and the valley of the Soar on the slant and runs up among the foothills of the Nottinghamshire wolds. North of Nottingham, the line runs of course, through a colliery district, but the pits are not so numerous as to spoil the fairly pretty country. Having to cross so many railways, the G.C.R. has to dip up and down and curve about a great deal, the country being also much broken up by deep narrow glens. Thanks to a cup of excellent tea (was this Howard Turner in a former life? - Editor), one arrives at Sheffield, not at all tired, after 4 hours of as thoroughly comfortable travelling as it is possible to get anywhere in this imperfect world. The enterprise displayed by the G.C.R. certainly deserves success and the general opinion seems to be that it will get it in due time.

Copies of the GCR Memorial Roll of Honour are available from Ken Grainger at £46. It is hoped that an electronic version will also be available at a future date.



Demolition of the GCR Birdcage Bridge at Rugby

On 25th December a large section of what remained of the landmark GCR lattice bridge at Rugby (centre and south spans), commonly referred to as the 'Birdcage', was lifted. The remaining sections were lifted in the following days.



This is an early view of the 'Birdcage' bridge at Rugby. The complex 2-level signal gantry is situated just this side of the bridge over the direct lines from Euston on the further side of the low wall. The nearer set of tracks are those from Northampton. They join just beyond the 'Birdcage' at Northampton Line Junction. The northern span on the right (mostly out of view) crosses the Peterborough line. The southern span adjoins the abutment of a road bridge. The signal gantry was built at the GCR's expense.

photo : GCRS Collection



25 Dec : The 'Birdcage' had been cut up into 3 sections before the central section directly over the tracks was lifted. The lift was a complete success taking 2 hours 10 minutes between first lift and grounding.

photo : Tim Fountain



25 Dec : After removal of the main section the two remaining parts of the bridge on both sides of the tracks can be seen in this view from the south end of the structure.
photo : David Boulton



26th Dec - The remaining section on the south side is supported on jacks.

photo : David Boulton



5 Jan. - The bridge support at the north side of the tracks after the remaining north section has been lifted and grounded nearby. The large section lifted on 25 Dec. can be seen alongside to the right. photo: David Boulton

Cast iron corner



Members and their models : 'Gerrards Cross'

The layout of the Chilterns Group of the 3mm Society described by Andrew Comben

The layout is modelled on Gerrards Cross station on the GW&GC Joint (opened exactly 100 years ago) and is housed at the Pitstone Green Farm Museum in Pitstone, Buckinghamshire. The layout is only active in the summer months as the museum closes for the winter. The scale used is TT-3 (3mm) with 12mm size track. The total length of the visible part of the layout is 12 feet. Down trains enter the layout under a tall road bridge at the south end and immediately pass through the station. They then pass the goods yard on their right, the signalbox on their left and disappear through the end partition at the north end.

We run GCR, GWR and BR period steam, so the layout detail does not correspond to any particular era, however the later addition to the station building on stilts can be removed to match the earlier periods. For the first half of the 2007 season we will be operating GC/GW trains and for the second half we will be operating BR period trains. The locomotives and rolling stock in the photos are mine. Most of the locomotives have been professionally made by Mike Edge and those in green livery were painted by Eon Bailey.

I hope that GCRS members will come and see us. You can contact me beforehand (01525 220585) to check that we are operating on a particular day.



GCR class 9K 4-4-2T no.1120 with an up stopper.



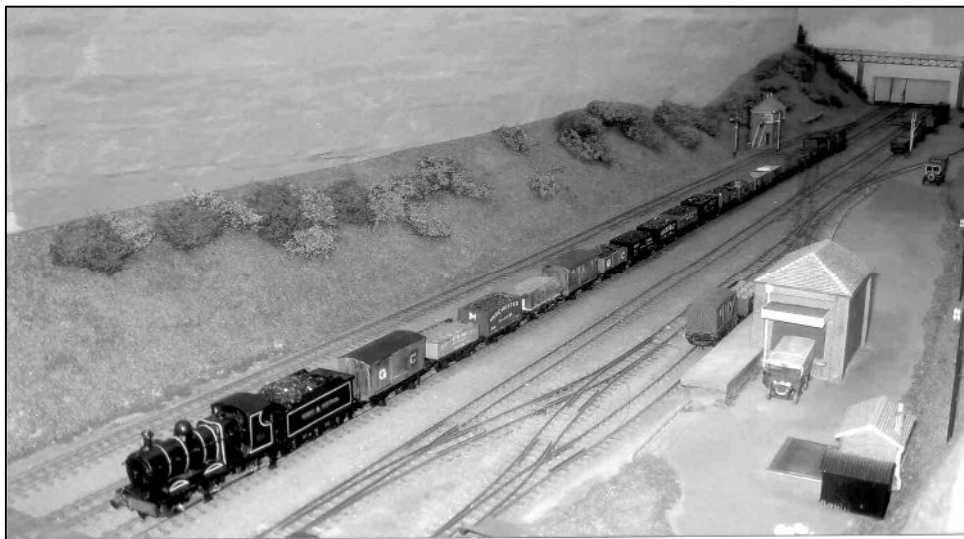
GCR class 8B 4-4-2no.1086 with an up express.



GCR class 8 'Fish Engine' 4-6-0 no.1072 with a down express.



LNER class B3 4-6-0 no.6165 'Valour' passing the goods shed with an up express. The LMS through coach is from Halifax. Yes, I know this went via Aylesbury so this must be a diversion! Coaching stock by Phil Hutchings.



GCR class J11 0-6-0 no.293 with an up goods train.



LNER class B8 4-6-0 no.5441 passes through with a down goods.

Editor's note - I am looking for more material for this feature so if you have a layout and/or GC models please send some photos with a brief description. Thank you.

A letter from New South Wales, Australia

by James W. Fox

This letter was received by the Membership Secretary. I am sure that the writer would not mind if it was included in Forward.

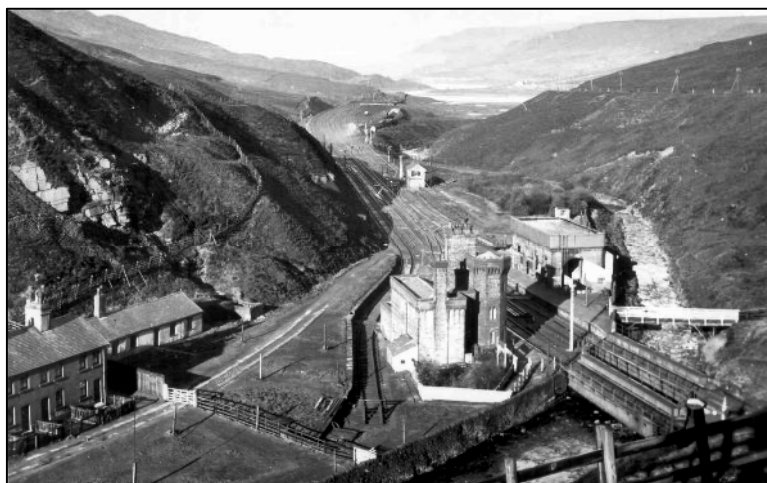
Recently I received my November 2006 issue of The Railway Magazine and noted therein mention of your Society. I wonder if you could let me have information on your activities and interests, and on the cost of membership.

My interest is aroused because my family, over the years, was associated with the GCR, particularly that section between Manchester and Sheffield. My grandfather, Emanuel Fox, was station master at Woodhead from 1907 (I think) to 1923, where my aunt also worked as porter. My great uncle, Herman Fox, was a signaller and then a guard, on the Manchester-Hadfield line before WW2. An uncle worked at the carriage plant at Dukinfield and later at Basford, Nottingham. My father became a clerk in charge of fish despatch at Grimsby after a disastrous encounter with a light engine, in which he lost a leg, while working as a shunter at Sheffield Victoria c.1912.

I was born in Grimsby in December 1913 and christened in January 1914 in the waiting room at Woodhead (where my grandparents lived) which served as a chapel on Sundays for the local community - no trains stopped on Sunday. I am probably the only Professor of Geography to have been christened in a railway station waiting room. (Did I hear a sniff from Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell?)

It was while staying at Woodhead in the summer holidays that I acquired my railway lore through the kind attention given me by the station staff, signallers and platelayers. I also developed an interest in geography by observing the names on colliery wagons as they passed by. In addition I learned from my father, with the help of a Bradshaw, the location of every railway station in Britain which accepted goods.

Every so often when on sabbatical I have ventured 'home' and visited Woodhead, but have found it a lonely place inhabited by the ghosts of the past and the ruins of the present. Memories remain, however, and have been incorporated in an autobiography for family reading. One memory of Woodhead was the occasion when my aunt rushed into the kitchen of the station house to say, 'Sir Sam Fay is outside'. However, it turned out to be the locomotive on a running in turn from Gorton, not the General Manager as we had been led to believe!



Woodhead station where James Fox spent his summer holidays as a child.

Editor's note : At 93 years of age could this be our oldest 'new' member?

Yet more thoughts on Aylesbury!

by David Wrottesley

It was an excellent coincidence that my second article on Aylesbury Town in Forward 150 was followed by Jack Turner's most interesting article about the loco shed. The town had a long established GWR depot, originally broad gauge, with outstabled Met and GCR/LNER locos as well, until 1948. This was the year when it was "demoted" and became, under the "Penetrating Lines" agreement, not a WR loco shed as expected, but controversially an ER subshed of Neasden.

I would, from a professional timetabling aspect, like to know if Jack could remember, in his BR years 1952-1955, what local time allowances were agreed at Aylesbury, these being incorporated on trainmen's diagrams for short movements, ie loco shed to carriage sidings, carriage sidings to platform, run round, platform to carriage sidings, and LD to shed and disposal. The management and decision taking by Joint Committees, particularly the two at Aylesbury, interests me considerably. There would have been, I think, only one Stationmaster appointed by a committee to actually run the station and agree with the train crews what the standard local allowances for all three companies should be at Aylesbury. The allocation of locomotives and train crew not being big enough to justify a "Loco Shed Master", I was wondering during "Joint" days, which committee agreed these allowances.

The photo on page 33 that accompanied Jack Turner's article reveals why Aylesbury was a small, but crucially important, four platform junction station that developed over the years. It was certainly not as simple as it would seem, but surely did not need two Joint Committees to make it work. The photo shows a long GWR passenger train going, in my view, all the way to Paddington via Princes Risborough and High Wycombe. It has been shunted into a position that blocks the entrance/exit road to the shed. As Clive Foxell reminds us in his book, the ultimate destination of the infamous GCR coal train, also mentioned in my last article, was not the Met or the GCR at Marylebone, but the GWR. The destination was probably Acton, after supposed agreed handover times by GCR/Met at Quainton Road and by Met/GWR at Aylesbury.

It is my view, from the evidence of this photo and the restricted layout, that Aylesbury internal workings did require special attention by operating and motive power staff of all three train companies, GWR/GCR or LNER/Met and the Joint committees. It was one of those places, where surely, it was crucial to show on the platform occupation graph, and on the station working, those planned light engine movements to/from the shed. The train timing departments of the three railways had to be in close contact with each other and with their colleagues in the locomotive/carriage department and train crew diagramming department, if correct timings were to be shown on those diagrams and punctual and efficient station working was to occur. It is obvious that, due to the proximity of the loco shed to the island platform, light engine movements to and from trains probably caused considerable concern, frustration and difficulty for train crews and operating staff.

It may be that detailed plotting of graphs of planned shunts/LD/ECS movements at Aylesbury was not done by some of the three companies that had responsibility over the years for the station platform graph. In this case light engine allowances on loco diagrams had inflated cross station movement timings to allow for possible delay. This was true for some large and also smaller less complicated junction and terminal stations, particularly branch termini, where the movements were not long, in either distance or time, to possibly affect punctuality of other trains. Pre-1923 and post-1923 railway companies and post-1948 regions often adopted very different practices for this particular aspect of railway operating.

It varied according to volume, timetable/diagram staff availability/time, and from station to station, and company to company, region to region, as to whether some planned local movement timings/allowances were shown on engine diagrams at all. The timing and plotting and inclusion in working timetables of planned long distance light engine movements and the inclusion of a departure time "off shed" followed by a train departure time, on loco diagrams, being the source of some debate between train timers, train crew diagrammers/motive power departments, and stationmasters, particularly when railway reorganisation occurred, and ownership of stations changed. In 1958, when I was at Kings Cross as an ER trainee timing clerk, I cannot remember if

internal movements were shown on the Aylesbury platform graph. I only know that there was considerable discussion/debate about what went on there.

The following is an extract from the excellent and highly recommended "The District Controllers View - Marylebone to Rugby" by Express Publishing. It reveals a remarkable and in my view, unique approach towards some southbound GCR/LNER/ER long distance expresses travelling towards Marylebone. The difficult relationship between the GCR/LNER and the Metropolitan, existed from 1898 when the London extension "part opened" until the GCR main line closed north of Quainton Road in 1966.

"Together with several other peculiarities, there is one particular aspect of the Metropolitan, that would turn any visiting railwayman's hair white, and that is the lack of additional running lines on the approach to Rickmansworth from the north. By and large, Metropolitan trains take precedence over those of the GC, particularly at Aylesbury, where Met stopping services to Baker Street have preference over all else.

A typical example concerns the 0825 ex Manchester-Marylebone which is booked to leave Aylesbury 7 minutes ahead of a Metropolitan Baker Street train. If the express is 10 minutes behind time at Quainton Road, the Baker Street will leave to time, with the result the Manchester arrives at Rickmansworth 34 minutes late. It then stands for several moments, whilst the 1404 Watford-Baker Street precedes from Watford South Junction, and then eventually limps into Marylebone 48 minutes late. The priority accorded to Metropolitan trains is a standing order, and allows little scope for discretion. Now and again an attempt is made to swim against the tide, but it invariably results in a measurable cooling of relationships between the GCR and the Met at Baker Street and initiative in this respect is not encouraged. It is up to us (the controllers) to get our trains to Quainton Road on time."

The GCR, not surprisingly, had a lack of interest in the Brill branch, but had a direct involvement in the Met and GC Joint branch from Verney Junction to Quainton Road. The fact that they were left with only the local service and ran few through trains from Verney Junction to Marylebone, has always interested me. In 1903, it became fashionable to operate Steam Rail Cars. Many railway companies went for them with indifferent success. The GCR was no exception and built three. The Metropolitan, despite its operation of the Brill branch, did not involve itself in Rail Cars, and in the 1920s abandoned any real attempt to develop traffic north of Aylesbury. Only two Metropolitan afternoon through trains from London to Verney Junction were retained, and the Met arranged, under the Joint committee arrangements, for the LNER to run a more substantial, but little known, 'Push Pull' service from Verney Junction to Aylesbury, using at times, ex-GER F7 2-4-2T locomotives.

The GCR/Met and the Joint Committee had previously decided that this branch was not suitable for the GCR Steam Rail Cars, but was acceptable for a development of the Steam Rail Car known as the Steam Rail Motor. This allowed for a one carriage train, which could have milk vans etc attached. Aylesbury shed was allocated two diminutive ex-MSJ&A 2-4-0T tank engines to haul the formation. These locos lasted until 1922. This interesting ex A&B/GWR/Met/GCR/LNER local service from Verney Junction was eventually withdrawn after the curious tram way to Brill and the Joint branch to Verney Junction closed.

The virtual withdrawal by the Metropolitan north of Aylesbury, meant that facilities at Aylesbury had to be improved. The south facing platform 1 bay at Aylesbury, which was without a run round road, was not built until well after the grouping in 1925. For trains starting/terminating at Aylesbury, the locomotives of northbound trains would, after arrival, run round on the down main line, then draw back, before propelling the carriages into the bay, unless the next southbound engine or station pilot was available to do the movement/shunt from platform to platform. A time allowance for taking of water for locomotives had to be included at times. Most pictures show a water tank on the down main but there was another at the shed. I would like to know details of how the track layout in the loco shed changed/improved over the years.



Ex-GER class F7 2-4-2T no.8307 waits to depart Quainton Road with a train for Aylesbury.

photo : J.M.Jarvis



The LNER Study Group
is for those who have an interest in the London & North Eastern Railway.

The group was started in 1965.

A Journal and a Newsletter are produced four times a year.

If you want to find out more, please contact the

Membership Secretary, David Woodward

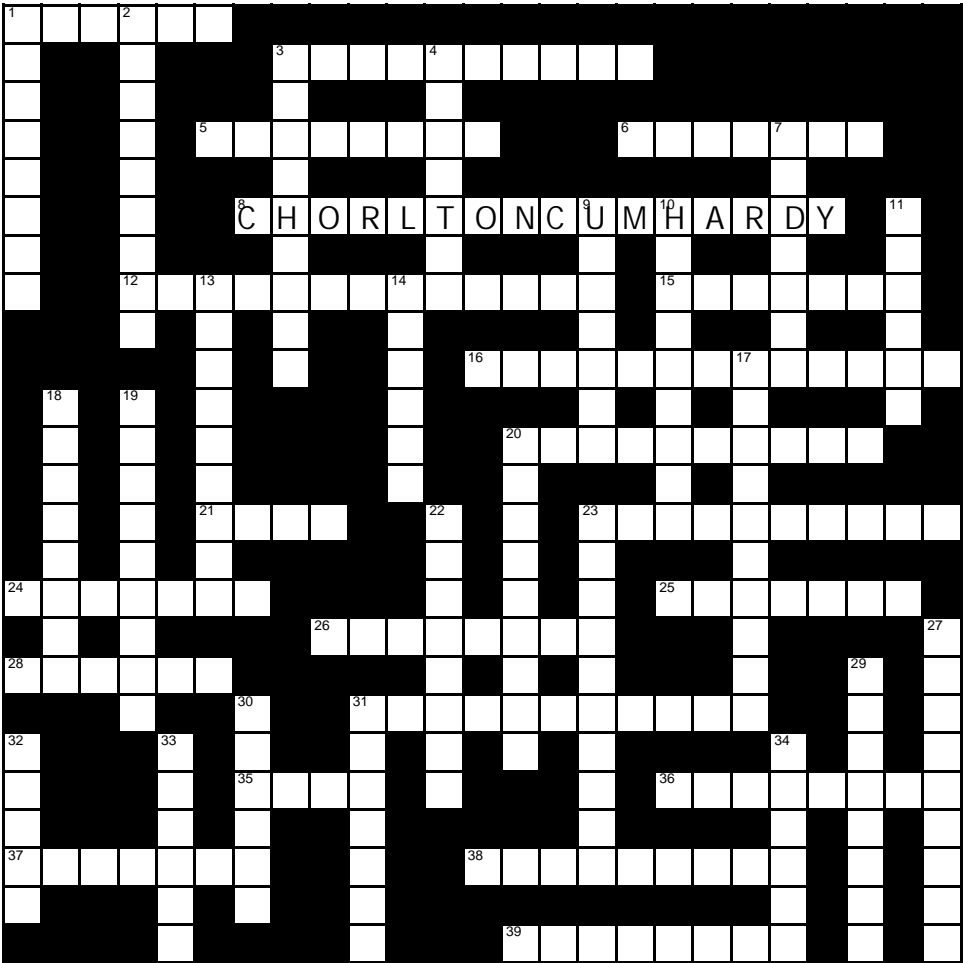
tel. 01924 251633.

CLC station word puzzle
Compiled by Bob Gellatly

For those who have time on their hands and like a challenge.

Fill in the grid with the names of stations on the Cheshire Lines Committee system. They must fit as in a crossword. One name is given to start you off on the right track. Where the station name has an appendage eg 'Southport Lord Street', only the location 'Southport' is used. Where a station serves two places eg 'Winsford and Over', both place names could be used separately. Where a place name consists of more than one word eg 'Chorlton cum Hardy' then the complete name is listed.

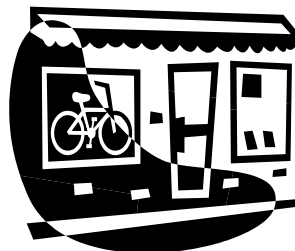
You can attempt the puzzle with or without the help of the CLC station list on page 44.
To avoid spoiling your copy of Forward why not use a photocopy. A solution will be given in the next issue of Forward .



My first visit to Neasden shed in 1942

by David Garrick

It was 1942. My father had been called up into the RAF and my mother was working at the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) Aldenham Bus Depot. This facility was not overhauling buses but under the name of "London Aircraft Productions" building the centre sections for Halifax bombers.



We lived in a semi-detached house backing onto the LMS branch from Wealdstone to Stanmore. As a train spotter my experience was definitely LMS. I won a scholarship to Willesden Technical College. My friends had pre-war bicycles and travelled widely, but having no bicycle I was left behind. On my 13th birthday I persuaded my mother to buy one of the newly introduced utility bicycles. The proprietor of the local bicycle shop, seeing a lanky youth approaching accompanied by his mother, saw his chance to sell off one of the less attractive models. "He needs a 26 inch frame" he said and I came away with a large and heavy bike with 28" wheels and rod brakes. It was the type used by the local bobby and the vicar. However, now I was mobile, I was able to enjoy the freedom to travel greater distances.

To get to school I had to take a bus to Northwick Park, catch a Metropolitan Line train to Wembley Park and then a Bakerloo Line train to Neasden or Dollis Hill. On these journeys I saw ex-GC A5s, L1s and C13s ; ex-Met Gs and Ks; LPTB owned Fs and As; and the saddle tank at Neasden depot.

One Saturday afternoon I was on the North Circular Road and having crossed the bow girder bridge over the Met at Neasden, I could see the ex-GC Neasden shed across some allotments on the left. Coming to a cinder path that looked as if it might lead to the shed, I turned off the road. Arriving at the shed I parked my bike against a coal stack and ventured across the tracks in front of the six-road shed. I asked a footplateman where I could find out about going on the footplate when I left school. He directed me to a hatch in the wall, where my knocking was answered by the chief clerk, Mr Merrit. He told me to come back when I knew when that would be. "Can I have a look round?" I asked. "Yes, but be careful and look out for engines." he replied. He didn't need to tell me as I was the proud owner of a small booklet "Notes for Enginemmen" that I had been given by a GWR fireman I met on a visit to Paddington.



Metropolitan class G 0-6-4T no. 95

I found a driver oiling up an ex-Met class G and started following him around. "What are you doing here?" he asked. I told him of my interest in working on the footplate. "You wear glasses, are your eyes good enough?". "I hope so." I replied. "Well" he said, "you might pass your eye test when you start, but in a couple of years you might fail and then find yourself without a job or prospects. Now if you were to become an apprentice fitter and learn how to repair engines you would have a trade and no such worries."

As he went into the pit to oil up underneath, I was about to follow when he said, "Don't come under here, you will get filthy and spoil your clothes. If you are really that interested why don't you become a part-time cleaner on Sundays?" I went back to Mr Merrit who asked me, "How old are you?" "Fourteen" I replied. "Alright, report to the chargehand cleaner tomorrow at 7.30am."

The next day I began a career that took me half way round the world and culminated in reaching the post of Supervising Instructional Officer at RAF Cranwell in charge of the engineering workshops. I never recall seeing that driver again but believe his interest in me and the advice he gave set me on the right road to a satisfying career.

Great Central Today

by Kim Collinson

November 2006 has been a most interesting month for the variety of traction seen on the Penistone branch. In addition to the Class 20 Sandite workings, a ballast train from Doncaster, worked by 66120/66171 was observed during the early hours of the 5th and the converted Class 150 track recording unit 95001 worked over the line on the 29th to and from Halifax.

The Sandite workings over the Penistone line which commenced in October finished on Friday the 22nd December when the final working of the year was worked by 20303/04 and passed Silkstone at 23:59.

Also during November the branch has seen other loco hauled workings as on the 5th when 66120/66171 worked a ballast train from Doncaster and was observed at Dodworth at 08:19. The Class 150 track recording unit 95001 also worked over the route on the 29th en route from Derby to Halifax and return.

Class 158 units have also been in use on passenger services on the Penistone line with them being seen on 20 occasions during November and December, the most times they have been seen on the branch, the units involved have included sets 158752/755/757/759/901/902 and 907 painted in a variety of different liveries.

Steam workings returned to the GC route through Mexborough in December when A4 Pacific 60009 Union of South Africa worked two excursions to York on the 9th and 16th of December.

The final working of 2006 over the Deepcar branch was on the 21st December when 66219 arrived at Deepcar at 19:24 and returned to Aldwarke at 20:30 with 21 empties.

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.

Reader's Requests

from John Gleeson, e-mail : gleesonj@bigpond.net.au

I am e-mailing to ask for advice on GCR footbridges, as Lochgorm Models have marketed a kit for the HR that looks very like a standard footbridge - the HR bought in structures in a kit form. The structure looks very similar to Edwinstowe LDEC footbridge, and if the GCR used a similar one, I can build a model for Stainfield. Have you any information that would be applicable?

from Albert Grose, e-mail : albertgrose@tiscali.co.uk

I am a member of the GER Society (being an ex-fireman) but I have recently acquired the brass NBL worksplate no.22145 carried by Class 04/8 2-8-0 BR no.63852. I intend to display the plate on my "railway wall" and would like to include a photo of the actual loco which, I believe, spent its final years at Sheffield (Darnall) shed prior to its withdrawal in 1964. Are any of your members able to help with any photographs? Of course, all costs will be met. Many thanks.

New station plans unveiled for Aylesbury Vale Parkway

Thanks to Des Jenkins for sending information from the local press.

Proposals for a new station at Aylesbury were made public by Chiltern Trains in June 2006 -

The new station, known as Aylesbury Vale Parkway, will be built 3 miles north west of Aylesbury town station, adjacent to the A41 and the major development at Berryfields. The existing track, currently only used by freight trains, will be upgraded and new signalling equipment will be installed. Chiltern Railways' passenger trains will provide a direct service between Aylesbury Vale Parkway, Aylesbury and other stations including Amersham, Rickmansworth, Harrow and London Marylebone.

The plans have now been submitted to Buckinghamshire County Council for approval. The council has begun a consultation period during which the public can look at the plans and make comments. This process will be completed in March 2007. The following is from the information provided by the council.

To allow passenger trains to service AylesburyVale Parkway, the existing railway line needs to be upgraded both in terms of the track itself and also the signals which control the trains. Approximately 2 miles of existing sectioned track will be removed and replaced with continuous welded track. This creates a smooth track and will ensure that the noise generated by both passenger and freight trains as they run along the track is kept to a minimum. The existing railway line is currently used by freight trains with up to 8 single journeys per weekday; 5 on Saturdays and 2 on Sundays although not all of these journey slots are currently used. Once the proposed station is open, the freight usage of the railway line will remain largely unchanged.

It is intended that trains will travel South from Aylesbury Vale Parkway 3 times per hour at peak time and once an hour at off peak times on weekdays and Saturdays and Sundays. The line speed will increase from the existing 30mph to 60mph for passenger trains with freight trains remaining at a 30mph speed limit. The platform at AVP will be capable of holding a 7 car train and will have a shelter and seating. The journey time from Aylesbury to Aylesbury Vale Parkway will be 3½ minutes. Whilst exact fares have not yet been set, it is expected that the journey from Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Aylesbury Station will cost £1 full-fare each way.

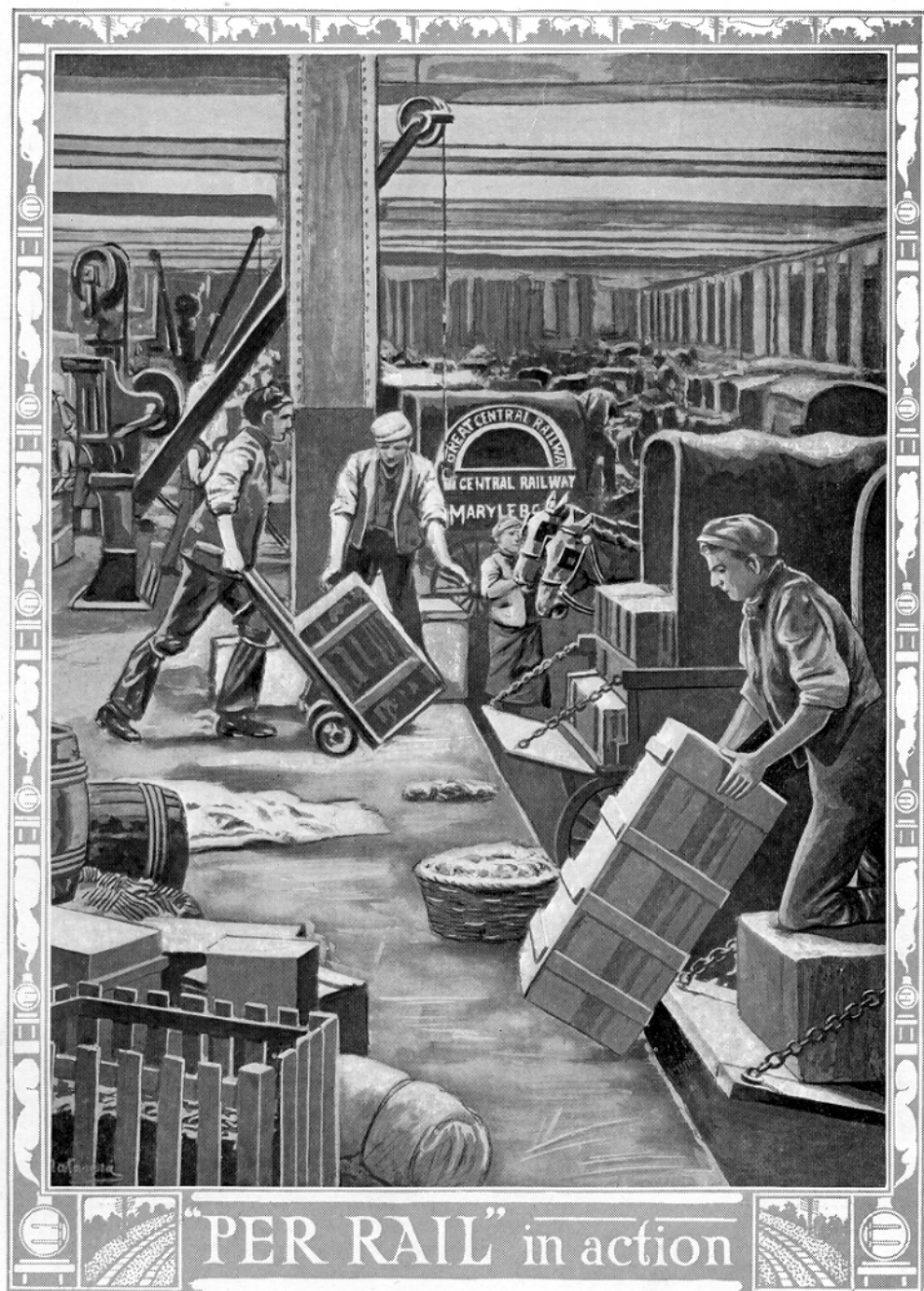


Full information can be obtained at

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/content/index.jsp?contentid=-1950503947>

Doncaster Grammar School Museum

Following the death of Tony Peart (reported in Forward 150), the role of curator of Doncaster Grammar School Museum has passed to Pete Sargieson. The museum consists of the collection of railway artifacts built up by Tony. Anyone wishing to visit the museum should contact Peter on 01709 889000 to find out the opening dates for 2007.



A description of the activity in a goods depot necessary to prepare for a departing train

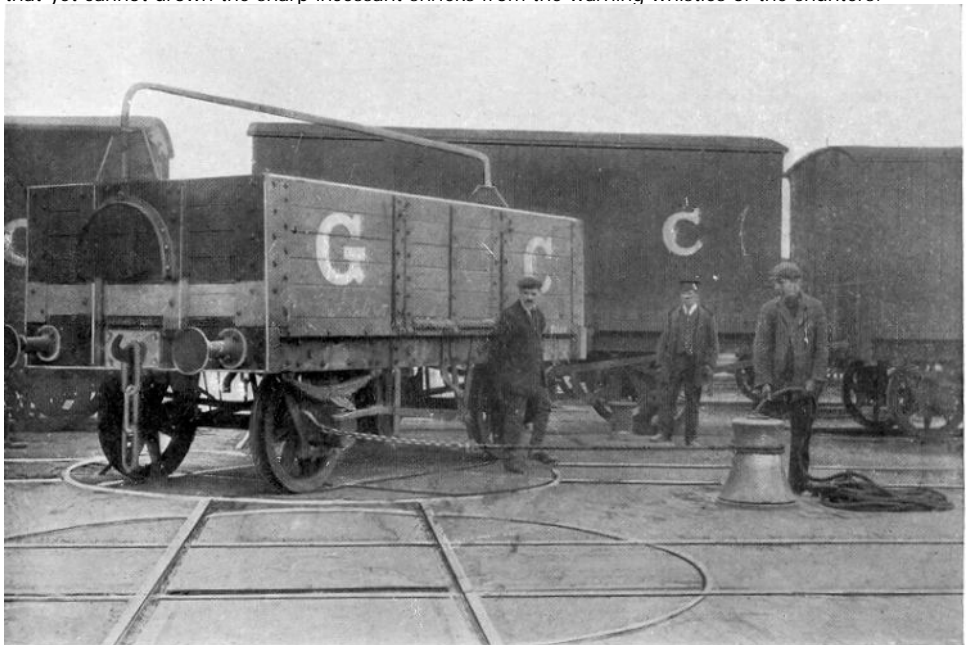
taken from the GCR publication 'Per Rail' published in 1913.

If an observer were to visit a road haulage depot today eg TNT or DHL, they would find it difficult to describe the scene in the evocative and romantic style so expertly displayed by the wordsmith employed to write this account.

We stand, let us suppose, within a goods depot at a principal station. The hour is between eight and nine in the evening, and all around is the turmoil and bustle which precedes the departure of the outward-bound goods trains.

A scene, to the lay observer who views it for the first time, of wild disorder and confusion. The vast area of the depot, over which, rising tier upon tier, floor upon floor, the huge warehouse impends, is brightly illuminated by the glare of great electric arc lamps. Long platforms, piled high with miscellaneous packages and goods, traverse it from end to end, and between these are alternately the lines of rails upon which the trucks are run alongside, and the roadways into which the horsed or motor vans are driven to be backed up and unloaded.

At every platform a long train of trucks, some open with a lowered flap, others covered, but with doors flung wide, is drawn up. Men, busy as ants, are running ceaselessly to and fro with goods of every description, the rumble of their trolley wheels upon the stage filling the air with a rattling din that yet cannot drown the sharp incessant shrieks from the warning whistles of the shunters.



CAPSTAN SHUNTER AT WORK.

At the far end of the depot the lines vanish through black arches into the darkness of the night. Beyond in the dusky gloom of the goods yard, partly lit by the powerful rays of lofty lamps, more men - blurred, indistinct figures, whistling shrilly ever and anon - are busily shunting other ponderous trucks to and fro, spinning them round upon circular turn-tables, hauling them this way and that with stout warps coiled round rumbling capstans, and sending them, with a single push as it seems, sliding off in the required direction along different sets of rails. Stumpy little tank engines, snorting

importantly, puff hither and thither in obedience to waving lanterns, pushing and pulling the long shadowy lines of trucks, arranging and re-arranging them with ingenuity almost bewildering.

Inside, it is some time before the ear can grow accustomed to the din, or the eye perceive the perfect order which prevails throughout the seeming chaos. We spoke just now of the swarms of men running to and fro "busy as ants"; and the simile of the ant-heap is not inapt. Nowhere is seen a spectacle of greater confusion and seeming chaos than amongst the scurrying inhabitants of a disturbed ant-heap: some running this way, some that; some bearing huge burdens, others going empty-handed or helping. The analogy with the scene before us in the goods depot here may seem a trifle strained, perhaps, but it is almost complete. For if close observers are to be believed, each member of this ant-community,

apparently so purposeless and panic-stricken in his haste, has yet some definite object in view; and we, on our part, as we become inured to the rattle and the row of the myriad trolleys, and are able to observe and take in all that is going on, perceive that there is not only method in the seeming madness and tumult that fills the great depot, but perfect order and organisation. Each man has his job. He knows what to do -and does it. No questions are asked, no trouble or delay ensues. When the first train, with a few slow snorts, winds its sinuous length out of the Goods Yard, the astonished observer, who was beginning to wonder what the upshot of all this hurry and confusion would be, asks himself how, when, and where the long procession of trucks was got together and packed. Later he discovers that it has all been done before his very eyes.

Watch this heavily loaded dray that comes swinging into the depot at a good round trot. The horses are pulled up smartly, and the driver, hanging up the reins, leaps to the ground. From his pocket he pulls out consignment notes which contain a description of the goods upon his lorry. A foreman is already upon the platform edge waiting to receive the notes, and as he takes them he tells the driver at what point to back up his charge.

Whilst the van is being manoeuvred into position, consignment notes are glanced over and handed to a checker, who at once proceeds with his gang to where the van is placed against the platform edge, and the process of unloading commences. As the various packages are lifted off the van the name and address, or distinguishing mark, is called out; the checker compares this with the consignment note which he holds, and the packages are placed upon the weighing machine, weight noted, and wheeled away without delay up this platform, down that, to be placed before the truck into which they are eventually to be loaded. Each truck has chalked upon its doors or side the name of the station which is its ultimate destination, and the gangmen know well in what part of the depot each particular truck is situated.

At the trucks the goods are received by the loaders and their gangs, who deposit them with due care, and also with regard to economy of space within. For purposes of reference, in case of need, the loader also enters upon a slip particulars of the contents of each truck, and this is carefully preserved in the goods traffic offices.

It is difficult to pen a picture of the extraordinary scene which the goods depot presents while the trains are in process of being loaded. To catalogue all the articles which are stacked on every side awaiting transport is impossible. Their number is legion, their variety endless. Here is a great pile of mysterious bales, neatly enveloped in coarse sacking, and marked with strange hieroglyphics; there, heaped up by the score, huge bundles of leather. In one corner, perhaps, a stack of metal tanks and



IN CHARGE OF THE TRAIN.

cisterns. Barrels, crates, packing cases, and baskets stand in serried rows, while cumbrous pieces of furniture - pianos, overmantels, chairs, and the like - hedged round with protecting frameworks of wood, block the passage at every step.

Weighing machines are dotted along every platform, and beside these are the little desks, or rostrums, at which the checkers do their work. Heavy cranes, too, thrust out their arms at frequent intervals, some picking up weighty goods, maybe, from the motor lorries which have brought them in, and swinging them on to the trucks into the arms of the loading gangs.

But when the last van and the last lorry have rumbled into the depot and discharged their loads, when the last package has been checked and put away in its proper place, there still remains much to be done. The night express goods train, say, is to be marshalled and despatched. But at present it can hardly be said to be in existence. It is dismembered, as it were, and the various trucks and sections which should form its component parts are in different parts of the depot - some on one road, some on another, from which it seems to the lay mind impossible that they should be extracted. And not only must all these component parts be brought together, but they must be arranged in a certain order - "marshalled" is the technical term - the truck which will be dropped first being placed next to the engine, and so on all the way down its length until the guard's brake van - at present waiting in the gloom outside - is reached at the tail end.



A GOODS INSPECTOR.

The uninstructed observer votes the case a hopeless one. But he reckons without that ingenious individual, the Shunter, and the latter's still more ingenious contrivance, the "traverser," a kind of low cradle, up on to which (as it lies upon the metal road) a truck may be run. The "traverser" can then be worked cross-wise from one road to another, its load discharged, and another truck lifted and whisked away. The heavy trucks themselves, are hauled to and fro by means of stout warps coiled round revolving capstans, worked by the same motive power (hydraulic) as the "traverser".

To watch the shunters at work is like looking on at some game of draughts upon a huge scale, or - closer analogy still - one of those ingenious puzzles in which a number of cubes are laid in a jumble upon a board, with a single vacant space amongst them, and have to be shifted to and fro, but not lifted, until a certain pattern or order is produced.

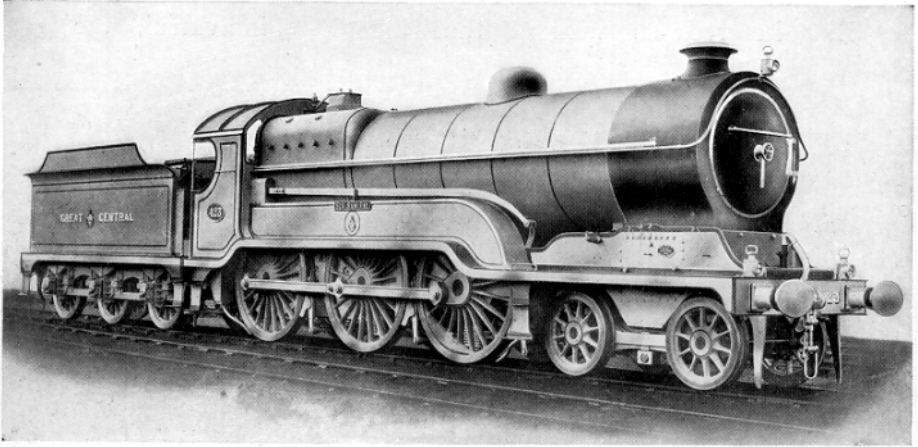
The various sections of the train having been made up, it remains only for the shunters inside the depot to send them gliding into the yard



THE SHUNTER.

outside, and then haul in other empty ones to take their places and receive the goods waiting for the next train.

The train still lacks completion, but the task now devolves upon the staff outside. The waiting goods engine, looming monstrous and powerful in the dim light, backs gently down upon the section which contains the trucks that will need to be dropped first. The coupling is speedily done; and, with these in tow, the great monster steams slowly away round the bend and out of sight. It is not gone, however. A rattling clang tells of points being shifted, and back steams the engine with its short train, but upon a different road, to pick up a second section there waiting for it. Then out again and back again, out once more and back once more, till finally the last section, with the brake-van bringing up the rear, has been attached, and the complete train, 200 yards and more in length, awaits but the signal to depart. A moment's pause, a flash of the lamp, a short whistle, and the night express goods train glides, snake-like, forth upon its journey.



EXPRESS GOODS ENGINE.



Model Notes by John Quick

GCR clerestory lavatory composite no.1648

This is another model purchased unfinished. It was made from a 'Perseverance' kit. Unfortunately, models made from these kits tend to be too high, which spoils the model. A lot of work is required therefore, to correct the various errors. The coats-of-arms are by Fox transfers and are very good indeed. It is such a pity that they seem unable to manufacture all the other transfers that we need.



GCR composite slip brake

This is a slip no.1604, one of a number built for use on the London line. I purchased this from a member, again incomplete. It was made from a kit made by Bill Bedford. Kits from Bill could be described as 'basic'. I have finished it in the attractive French grey and brown livery but I am uncertain if my interpretation of the tail lights is correct.



GCR class 12AM 2-4-0T no.24 (photos on next page)

This model was recently completed. I purchased it as an unfinished model as shown in one of the photographs. It was built some years ago by Mike Edge, a professional model maker. Someone, possibly Mike, rebuilt it to correct scale gauge and this is how I received it. Little work was required to convert it to class 12AM. Robinson rebuilt class 12AT engines to work railmotor trains, when the locomotive hauled a 12 wheel saloon carriage. A view of one of these trains is shown at the rear of Forward 118.



A Letter to the New Statesman 14 July 1967
submitted by George Huxley

Unplanned Tunnel

Sir,

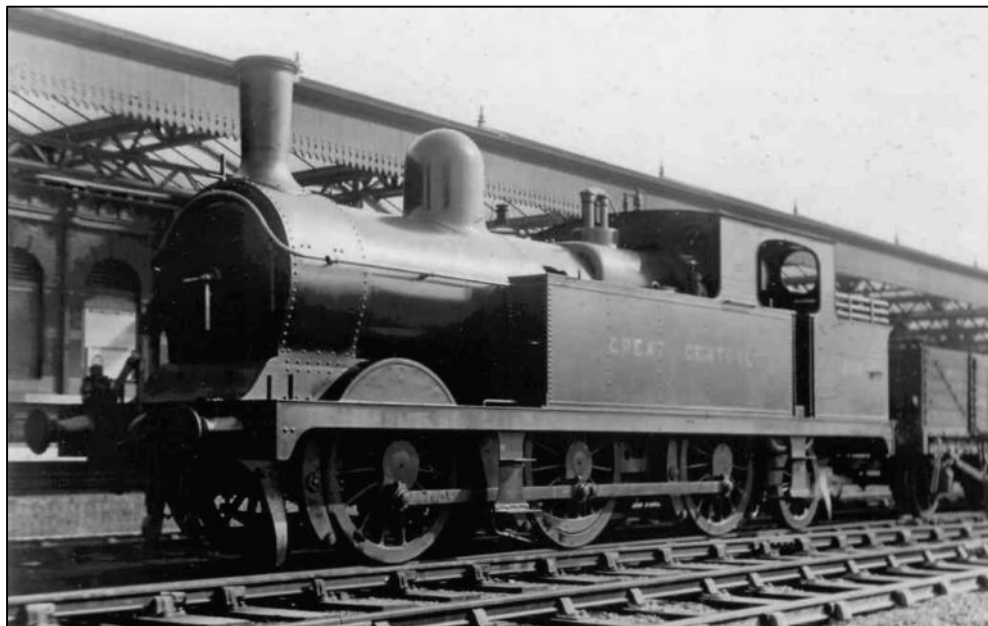
The most effective method of reducing road congestion near the Channel tunnel mouth is to take advantage of the fact that it is to be a rail tunnel. Obviously as much traffic as possible should be loaded well away from the tunnel mouth, straight on to rail in inland ports. To make economical use of the existing railway system, and to avoid the construction of grotesquely expensive motorways, piggy-back and other vehicle-carrying trains of the Continental loading gauge, together with standard European rolling-stock, must be able to run over as much of British Rail as is possible. The vital link connects Ashford with Reading; its loading gauge can be adequately widened for the cost of less than three miles of rural motorway. Beyond Reading the former broad-gauge formations of the Great Western can be cheaply adapted to the Berne gauge, and the same is true of the former Great Central line northwards from Banbury.

For years we have been pointing these facts out to the Ministry of Transport, only to have our pleas for the retention of the Great Central tracks and formation contemptuously dismissed as 'nostalgic'. There are signs that the British Railways Board is at last having second thoughts about their precipitate wrecking of the GC trunk route, but who is to educate the metropolitan mandarins and the motorway lobby in St Christopher House?

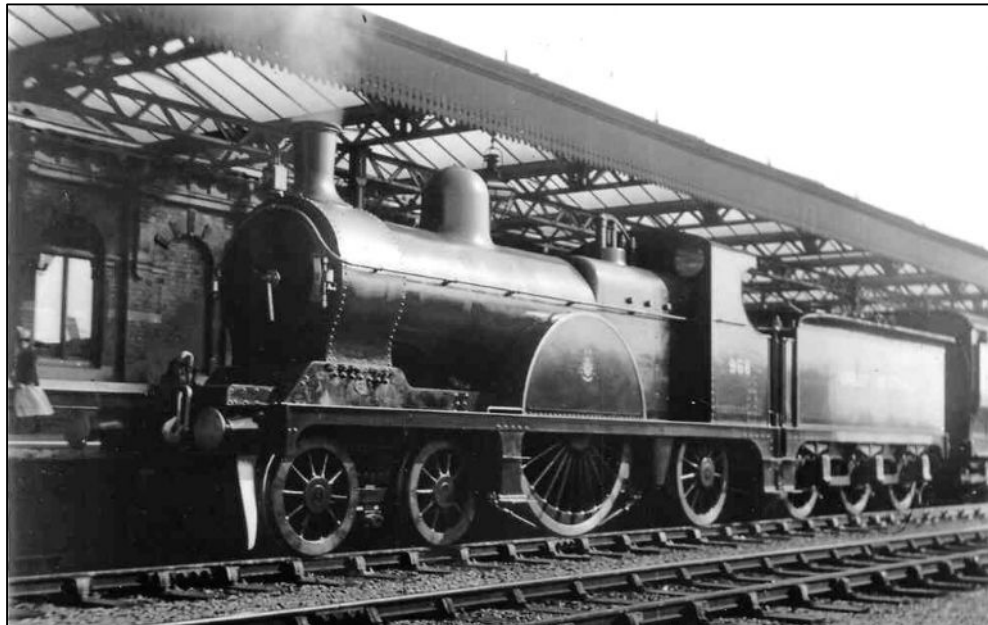
GEORGE HUXLEY
Vice-President
The Great Central Railway Association
Queen's University, Belfast

GCR locomotives photographed by G.H.Wilkinson

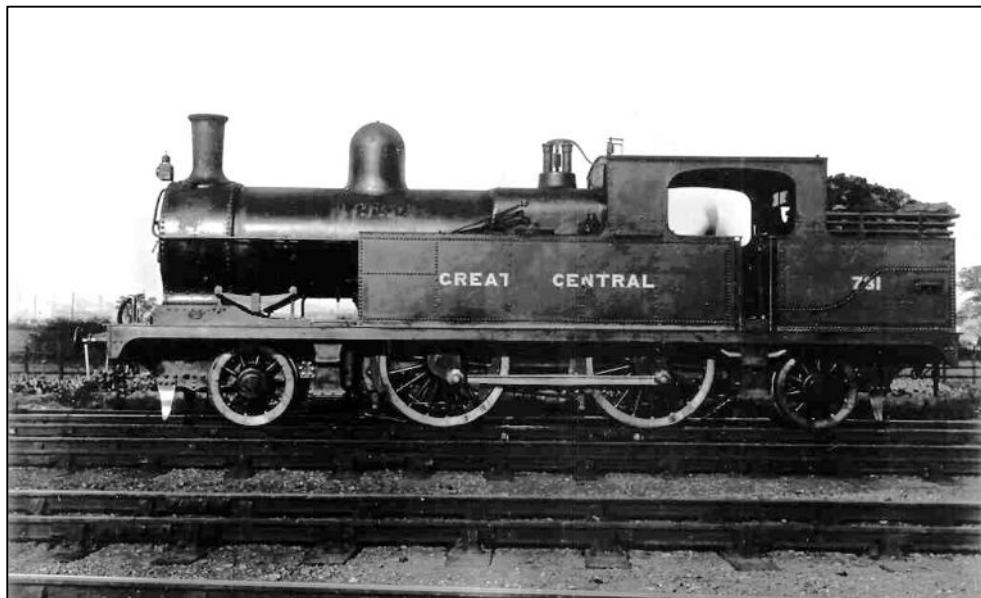
A collection of prints of GCR locomotives has been added to the Society's photo collection. These are modern duplicate copies of photos from an album containing the work of G.H.Wilkinson. He gave the album of his work to a Mr Best, who in turn passed it on to his son Don Best, who worked as a signalman at Stafford. The album then passed to Edward Talbot, the author of several books on the L&NWR. It is with his permission that GCRS member George Huxley has donated the copies to the Society. A selection is reproduced on the following pages. There is no information on the prints so the captions given have been compiled by the Editor. Corrections and additional information are welcome. The content suggests the period is 1900-04.



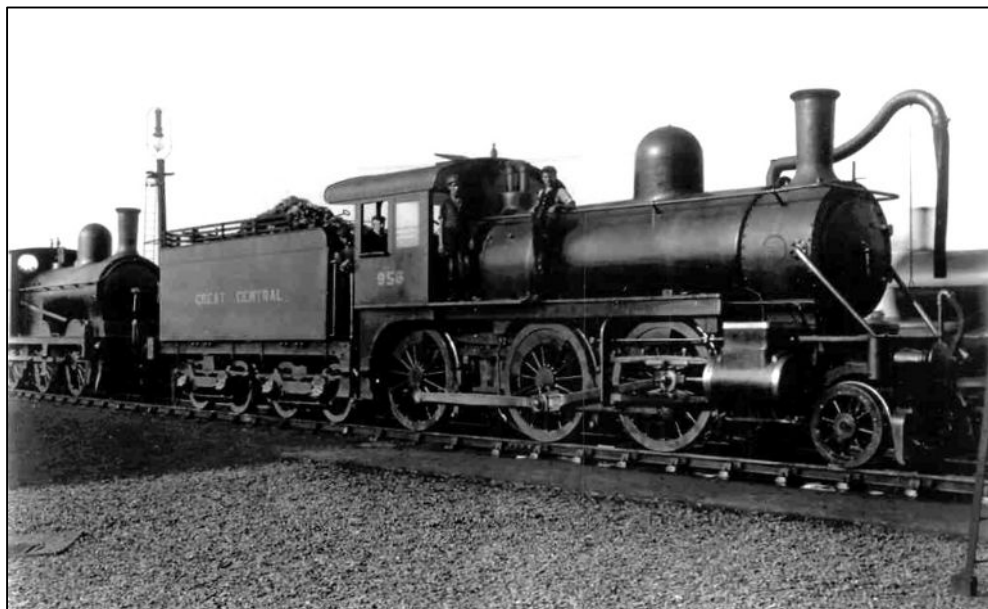
A Parker class 9F 0-6-2T at Leicester. The number could be 750 but the rivets on the bunker side make the centre digit of the painted numeral difficult to decipher. Other original features are the stovepipe chimney, uncased safety valves and taper-shank buffers.



Pollitt class 13 4-2-2 no.968 at Leicester. Originally built in 1900 for the London Extension, by 1904 they had been transferred to the Cheshire Lines. This was the last of Pollitt's designs. No.968 displays all the original features of the class such as stovepipe chimney and non-superheated boiler.



Parker class 3 ALT 2-4-2T no.731. Again the cab side rivets make the centre digit ambiguous but no.781 would have been a Pollitt class 9G with the higher pitched boiler whereas this photo shows the side tank slightly higher than the boiler side hand rail as in the class 3 ALT. The location is Neasden.



A crisis in motive power provision led the GCR, along with the GNR, to order locos from Baldwin Locomotive Works in America. These 'Yankees' arrived in 1900 in kit form and were assembled at Gorton. They were fitted with a Pollitt chimney. Class 15 2-6-0 no.956 stands on display at Neasden. All 20 examples were scrapped by 1913 and nobody lamented their passing. These were the only 2-6-0s owned by the GCR.

Footplate Memories 1952 to 1955 at Aylesbury Town Loco. - Part 2 by Jack A Turner.

My Main Link memories can best be divided into three areas.

- a) To and from Marylebone either over the Met or via the GW/GC joint line via High Wycombe.
- b) Autocar workings from Aylesbury to Princes Risborough and Banbury.
- c) Marylebone – Woodford Halse – Marylebone – Bletchley.

The local services from Aylesbury to Marylebone via the Met were as previously stated, occasionally an A5 but mainly the L1 Class. These engines varied in their steaming qualities and the amount of coal consumed. You could bank the fire up before leaving Aylesbury on some of them and you wouldn't need to touch the shovel again until you were approaching Harrow. On others you were firing again before you even got to the next station, Stoke Mandeville. In the peak period at Marylebone the practise was for your stock to be drawn off for you when the passengers had detrained. Your engine, after release, would drop down onto another set of stock drawn forward into Lords tunnel where the shunter would stop you with the brake valve. You would wait for him to release it and then set back round into the Goods Yard, it being impossible with the smoke for you to see when you were over the set-back signal or to see when it was cleared for the move.

Talking of smoke, Aylesbury men had a turn from Marylebone to High Wycombe and then back to Marylebone, which entered the tunnel at Canfield Place just as another set of Aylesbury men emerged from it en route to Princes Risborough. It was the practise for these men to shut the regulator just before emerging so filling the tunnel mouth with dense black smoke! The two crews crossed again at Beaconsfield later in the evening so there was great rivalry to ensure you were running to time. One of the other things that happened over this route was our 4.10pm departure to High Wycombe was due to join the GWR Main Line at Northolt Junction the same time as the 4.10pm Paddington to Birkenhead passed by on the Main Line so we used to race it over the four track section to West Ruislip and even though we were stopping there we did on a number of occasions beat it!

One afternoon at Marylebone, it was in fact the day before the new Woodhead Tunnel was opened, we had cleaned the fire, filled the firebox up with coal prior to the engine being coaled (this saved us having to come back on the depot later) and with just over an hour to go before we had to drop down onto the 5.29pm to Princes Risborough, sat in the cabin talking to a Woodford set of men who were road learning. To our horror when we got back on our engine the fire had gone out and we only had about 80lb of steam. Panic Stations!! We found as much wooden old sleepers etc. and piled them in the firebox completely blacking the sky out. The foreman arranged for the next working to cover our train and we were just able to make enough steam to work the 5.42pm to High Wycombe. This was booked to arrive at High Wycombe just two minutes before the Master Cutler was due to pass on the through road and this evening it had the Transport Minister and other officials travelling on it on their way to attend the ceremony at Woodhead. The Neasden Shed Master who was in attendance at Marylebone told us in no uncertain terms that if the "The Cutler" was delayed we would be in serious trouble. It was a struggle but the A5 didn't let us down and we made it to High Wycombe just on time.

We spent five days working in and out of Marylebone during the Great London Smog, an experience I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. Once you passed Rickmansworth you ran into it. It wasn't too bad from there to Harrow because you were on colour light signals and being London Transport ones they had fog repeaters. From Harrow onwards it was back to semaphores. There were fogmen out but even when you found the Junction Signal at Neasden South the fog was so dense you had to climb the signal post to check if it was off. At Marylebone when you came off your train and went to the sidings or loco, you were led there by a man walking in front carrying a flare lamp. I never want to experience anything like that again. One evening, when we had struggled to stop at the end of Harrow platform, our guard walked all the length of the train holding on to the doors to get to the loco to ask us why we had lost so much time getting there from Marylebone. The air was blue I can assure you.

On Sundays we had two lunchtime turns from Marylebone, one to High Wycombe and back and the other to Princes Risborough and back. One of the Aylesbury drivers, who liked his ale, when on the Princes Risborough turn (which arrived there after the pub had closed at lunchtime), arranged with the landlord for two pints to be left in bottles under the pub doorstep the day before. On the Wycombe turn he had time to get a pint whilst they were waiting there for the return trip. Mind you he had to climb over the fence to do so.

Talking about High Wycombe, to shorten the section to Beaconsfield a colour light intermediate section had been put in at Tylers Green. One day we were approaching it with both the distant and home signal clearly showing green, when as we were about to pass, the home signal reverted to red. We made an emergency stop and I walked back to the phone and contacted the signalman who was adamant that he hadn't replaced the signal and that his indications still showed it at green. He then said, "Hang on a minute", and I heard him speaking to someone. On coming back on the phone, he instructed us to ignore the aspect and proceed. Apparently the signal engineer was working under the box and had disconnected a wrong circuit wire.



A busy scene at Aylesbury as a V2 (corrected) passes through with a down express and an ex-GWR tank on the Princes Risborough train takes water.

For myself the saddest event I experienced on these local turns occurred on the 8th of February, 1955, when working the 6.26pm Marylebone to Aylesbury. My driver, for whom I had fired for seven years, collapsed and died on the footplate. We had just left Harrow-on-the-Hill and were dropping down to the junction signal to cross to North Harrow. It came into my view first and I called out, "It's a red". He didn't respond and when I looked over he was slumped over the controls. I quickly managed to pull on the steam brake and just stopped short of the signal. After going along the train calling for a doctor, one came forward and confirmed that Bert was dead. After a delay and a discussion with the Harrow signalman I clipped the trap points up and set back into the station where an ambulance had been called. I went with Bert to the hospital. Eventually I arrived home about midnight, three hours later than I should have been.

Before nationalisation the working of push-pull services differed on the LMS, LNER and the GWR as regards which firemen could work on them. On the GWR you just had to be a Passed Fireman to be allowed to work on them. On the LMS the fireman had to be Passed for Push-Pull Working. On the LNER any fireman was allowed to work on these services! At first this caused problems with the ex-GWR drivers if they had other than a Passed Fireman booked to work with them. Written Authority had to be given to them to cover this anomaly. Another problem came to light one evening when an ex-LNER set of men travelled over the single line with the wrong single line token. This came about when the box lad in Princes Risborough signalbox placed the wrong token in the Aylesbury holder. The token was always carried on the engine (the rear one if there was a banker) which meant the fireman on the auto car collected it and retained it on the engine. In the GWR working book he, the fireman, should, on receiving it, check that he had the correct one and then blow the whistle to indicate to the driver of the fact, the driver being overall responsible. There was no such instruction in the LNER working book so it wasn't until the train arrived at Aylesbury that the driver was aware of the error. Needless to say it caused considerable delay to the Thame train at Princes Risborough and involved a hasty taxi drive to Aylesbury by the station master to rectify the mistake.

In addition to the service over the Princes Risborough Branch we worked a morning and afternoon turn to Banbury. The morning turn in the down direction was usually uneventful. The return working was booked to follow the up Cambrian Coast Express from Banbury. If however it was running late, we left on time and would normally be held at Bicester for it to pass. This in itself was no problem and usually took the opportunity to take water as the 14xx would only have enough to reach Princes Risborough if we had a clear run. If we didn't take water and the Express was unusually late we

would be given the road to precede it. On one occasion this happened and as the express had made up some time we were stopped at Haddenham for it to pass. This left us dangerously short of water so we had to fill buckets of water and make a chain of porter, guard, driver and fireman, to replenish the tank.

The down afternoon working was quite interesting in so much as we were held at Aynho Junction to follow a Cross Country Express to Banbury, our train being a booked connection to it, which we did, following it into the station on permissive station working call-on signals. Before it had left and we could move forward, a Paddington to Birmingham Express, often worked by a GWR 'King' class would slowly pull up at the rear of our autocar. One other happening that sticks in my mind, which I mentioned earlier, was because of a failure of the booked 14xx and a shortage of a suitable replacement, the Banbury workings for almost a week had a GWR 'Manor' class as motive power. This meant running round the train on each run and problems with coaling at Aylesbury.

One of our ex-GCR turns involved a 3.00am start. We brought an engine off the shed and detached three fish vans off the overnight parcels/fish train from Grimsby which was in the platform. Having run round them, we worked them forward "all stations" to Marylebone via the Met. On arrival at Marylebone we again dropped on the back of the same train, and after coupling on, drew the vehicles up the neck and sorted them into the respective roads in the carriage sidings. We had to be very careful handling the brake as, with a mixture of 4-wheeled and 6-wheeled vehicles, some of which had quick action brakes, it was easy to snap a coupling. This was the turn on which one or two of the crews did a bit of poaching, setting their snares on the railway bank between Great Missenden and Amersham one morning and collecting their spoils the next.

Our next booking-on in this link was at 6.00am when we relieved the men off the overnight parcels to Bletchley, having worked back to Aylesbury with a stores van. After putting this away we would proceed to the carriage sidings and pick up the stock for the 6.58am service to Marylebone via the Princes Risborough Branch and the GWR/GC joint line. Rather than take water before setting off we used to gain sufficient speed approaching West Ruislip and 'put the bag down' on the troughs there.



Class 4MT 2-6-0 no.43089 and class N5 0-6-2T at Aylesbury shed on 24 Jan 1953.

The only trouble was, more often than not, the outer home signal was at danger and we had a job to stop in time. Fortunately the signalmen knew what we were at and when we spoke to them they told us to wait for it to clear. We never did get reported for over running this signal.

When we came off the joint line at Neasden South Junction we would always find a Metropolitan fast train from Watford running through so we used to race it up the bank as far as West Hampstead giving it a whistle and the driver in return hooting us. We really had to open

up to keep up with it and even more so if we managed to overtake it. On the afternoon turn we worked up to Marylebone on a local from Aylesbury over the Met, got relieved, then after a break relieved a set of Neasden Men who had brought a light engine up from Neasden to work the 6.10pm semi-fast to Woodford Halse. This was usually a B1 although on odd occasions an A3 and even a 'Green Arrow' appeared to work it.

Two of the first B1s built, which were no longer required at Stratford, came to Neasden. These were in a very poor condition and extremely rough riding. One in particular, 61009 Hartebeeste, was in such a bad state that after being given the engine two nights running the passed fireman I had with me that week and myself advised the Neasden shedmaster that if it was sent up the following night we would refuse to work the train. It was sent up and the shedmaster plus a spare set of men came with it. We refused to work it and were booked off duty with a letter to report to the Neasden Office the next morning. We travelled home on the train, which lost considerable time to Aylesbury. There the men who had been sent to work it in place of us, refused to take it any further and failed it. At that time there was quite a lot of press interest in the declining state of steam locomotives and the railway in general, so my mate rang the Daily Mirror and told them what had happened.

Later that night we got a message to tell us to book on as normal the next day and we heard no further about the incident. 61009 as far as I am aware never worked on passenger trains again.

Our regular engine was 61028 Umseke and she was well looked after. Later we had 61164 and it was with this engine, when I was doing some unofficial driving, that I got her up to 86 mph returning to Aylesbury from Woodford Halse with the six-wheeled stores van. The set of men booking on at 9.40pm relieved the return working from Woodford Halse and after putting the stores van on the shed we took the engine to Neasden Loco where we disposed of it and prepared it again before going light engine to Marylebone to work the 3.00am parcels train as far as Bletchley. This train went through to Liverpool being taken forward by a Willesden Engine.

The shunter at Marylebone had an arrangement with all of us crews, that in exchange for leaving us two pints of milk and the morning newspapers outside his cabin, we would couple up to the train ourselves, so saving him having to leave the warmth of his cabin and walk up the station to do so. On foggy/frosty nights or early mornings, to observe the signals, especially on the section between Claydon LNE Jct and Swanbourne, we had to constantly change over positions, first one of us looking out of the driver's cab window and then standing in front of the fire to thaw out and then the other one had to do the same. This particular train usually loaded up to 300 tons but around Christmas we usually had up to 20 vehicles on with 400 tons or more behind the tender. I found the B1s struggled with this sort of load especially up the heavy gradients. In contrast, on the occasions when we had a BR Standard 4-6-0 class 4 they coped with it easily. The only other working we had over this section of the line was a Saturday Only lunchtime service from Marylebone to Brackley and back to Aylesbury.

Finally some other interesting reminiscences.

Permanent Way Trains

On Sundays, in addition to our booked passenger turns, we did quite a lot of ballast train workings over the Princes Risborough to Banbury Line. The normal practise was we would work out from Aylesbury as engine and brake van, picking up permanent way men en-route, then attach wagons as required at Princes Risborough, making our way to the actual site of work from there. A light engine would be sent out from Aylesbury with a relief crew and would normally return via Ashendon Jct, Grendon Underwood Jct and Quainton Road. On one occasion, to save time on disposing of the engine when we got back to Aylesbury, we ran the fire down very low after passing Quainton Road estimating we had sufficient steam to get to Aylesbury and on the shed. To our horror we found a handsignalman out with a red flag and detonators on the line who advised us that the p. way gang were changing a broken rail. Fortunately we were only held up for a few minutes and just made it onto the shed.

Coal

Although there were two coal hoppers at Neasden they contained the same coal which in the early 50s was poor to say the least. We were on the shed one day when Leicester men brought an engine on and asked us which was the passenger engine coal. We said "Take your pick there is no difference here", which didn't go down very well with them.

Coal Shovels and Picks

The design of the bunker door on the L1s left much to be desired and if you had a number of large lumps of coal they had a habit of getting jammed in the doorway. Occasionally when trying to clear them you either broke the shaft of the pick or the shovel handle itself. It wasn't too bad if you in the vicinity of Neasden Loco as you could stop on the main line and go and grab one off any engine on the depot but it caused problems if it happened elsewhere.

Fruits of the Earth

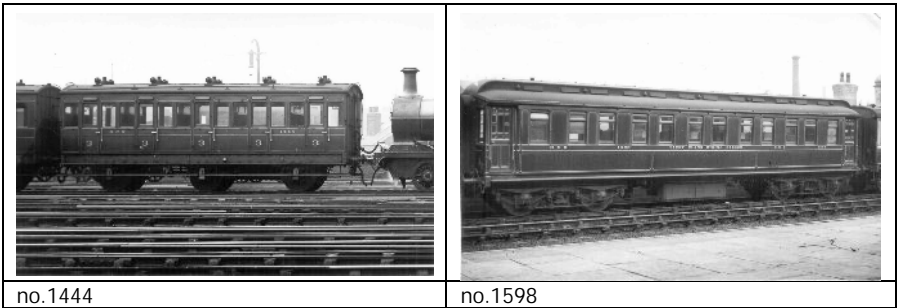
At Ardley there was a fresh water spring at the south end of the up platform which was very refreshing in the summer months. On arrival in the platform the fireman used to nip off the engine and fill the tea can up and then the driver would pick him up as he passed. For the best blackberries we found Blackthorn ideal especially when working ballast trains there on a Sunday. When working the night goods up from Aylesbury to Harrow, we were put inside at Wendover for a passenger train to pass and then allowed out up to the starting signal. Here, in season, one found a plentiful supply of wild strawberries. I have already mentioned the poaching between Great Missenden and

Amersham. The long upside shunting neck at Quanton Road gave access to a couple of fields where one could find an ample supply of mushrooms. At other places one could pick apples, plums and other fruits.

It was in March 1955 when I got married and moved to Bedford to live. That was when my footplate days came to an end, but that is another story.

GCR coaching stock photos

Readers were invited to provide information on the GCR coaching stock illustrated on page 44 of Forward 150.



from John Quick, Sheffield

Top photo : This vehicle is a GCR 6 wheel third class carriage no.1444, not a composite. It was built by Ashburys C&W in 1899 and is likely to have been withdrawn by WW2. It is finished in the so-called 'teak' livery. I suspect the photographer was P.F.Cooke.

Bottom photo : This vehicle is a first class dining saloon no.1598, built by Parker at Gorton in 1898 for use on the London Extension. This is another example of a carriage in 'teak' livery. It was withdrawn from traffic in March 1948 and later, probably January 1952, converted for use as an instruction van at Norwich. The photo was taken at Leicester Central by William Bradshaw on 13th August 1910.

from John Bennett, Brentwood

The lower of the two photos, that of clerestory dining saloon no.1598, depicts one of the three first class dining saloons (1598, 1599 and 1600) built at Gorton in 1899 for the London Extension. An illustration of the opulent interior of one of these vehicles appears on page 270 of the book Great Central Volume 2 by Dow. In later years, when displaced by more modern stock, they were downgraded to open thirds. It survived as LNER no.51598 until 1948.

There is some irony in the juxtaposition of the two photos on this page. The contemporary railway press was full of praise for the quality of the coaching stock provided for the London Extension - yet in the same year of 1899, six wheeler no.1444 was built by Ashburys to a design dating from 1879. This was a basic design for a six wheeler of length 30' 11" to accommodate five 6' 0" wide third class compartments. Vehicles continued to be built to this design until 1902 and a list compiled by the late Guy Hemingway shows a total of no fewer than 475 such vehicles in service at the Grouping, a high proportion of all GCR coaching stock. They continued to bump their way in suburban trains around Manchester and elsewhere on ex-GC metals to the dismay of passengers until most were withdrawn in 1938/39.

Readers Forum



from Carl Lardner, Herne Bay

Re. Forward 150 p5 - GCR Memorial Roll of Honour

The article on the GCR Roll of Honour was most interesting. I heartily congratulate Ken Grainger on the work he has put in to produce it. The War Memorial Committee is a shining example to the rest of the Society.

from Dr Clive Foxell, Chesham

Re. Forward 150 p16 - 'The Aylesbury Accident of 1904' by David Reidy.

I would like to add to this article, having covered the incident in my recent trilogy on the Met&GC Joint Line. This includes a picture of the offending sharp junction at the southern entrance to Aylesbury station, also several of the Payne photographs showing the crash scene. Whilst the mainly wooden coaches were 'completely wrecked', a later picture of the locomotive no.1040 when righted shows mainly damage to the running boards etc and it was later returned into service.

Secondly, one of the major disagreements of the Met with the GCR over sharing the tracks to London was the excessive speeding of GCR trains. Internal Met memos claim they often exceeded 75mph and contemporary items in the Daily Mail confirm this. The conflicts between the GCR expresses and the more numerous slower Met suburban traffic were reasons for the creation of the GW&GC Joint line, which then led to formation of the Met&GC Joint Line.

from the Editor

The end of 'Crocker's Folly'

I have been informed by some of our members that live in the London area that the public house known as 'Crocker's Folly' has been demolished. Apparently it has been empty for some time and was beginning to be an eye sore. The pub was built to tap into the trade generated by the London terminus of the GCR. Unfortunately the pub (or the terminus) finished up being built in the wrong place. Mr Crocker committed suicide by jumping out of an upper storey window. The Southern Branch of the Society have used 'Crocker's Folly' as the venue for their meetings in the past. I have visited it in its 'hey day' and was very impressed with the ornate furnishing. A sad loss not only to those interested in its GC related history but to real ale fans as well.

Word List for CLC Stations puzzle

Ainsdale	Godley	Sankey
Aintree	Hale	Sefton
Altcar	Hillhouse	Southport
Alvanley	Hunts Cross	St James
Ashley	Huskisson	St Michaels
Barrow	Irlam	Stanley
Brunswick	Lostock Gralam	Stockport
Cheadle	Lydiate	Urmston
Chester	Maghull	Warbreck
Childwall	Mobberley	Warrington
Chorlton cum Hardy	Over	West Timperley
Clubmoor	Padgate	Whitegate
Cressington	Partington	Winnington
Delamere	Plumley	Woodvale
Gateacre	Risley	

Rear cover caption

LNER class F1 2-4-2T no. 5594 with a single coach motor train at Aylesbury.

photo: Real Photographs

