FORWARD 180

Front cover caption

BR Bo+Bo class 76 electric loco (pre-TOPS class EM1) no.76051 stops by Dunford West signal box as it heads west light engine on the last day of services over the Woodhead route - Friday 17th July 1981. Closure was pushed through despite the opposition of local councils, railway unions and anyone with an interest in the future of Britain's railways. It was claimed by the authorities that conversion of the once state-of-the-art 1,500V DC system to 25kV AC would be too difficult. This was proved wrong when the remaining section between Manchester and Hadfield was converted to 25kV AC in December 1984. To add insult to injury the 'new' Woodhead tunnel is now no longer available for future rail use after the National Grid has occupied it. This shows how shortsighted our transport policy makers are.

photo: Adrian Freeman

The Journal of the Great Central Railway Society

No. 180 ~ June 2014

Contents

Editorial

You will already have noticed that this is a bumper issue with double the number of pages. This is to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Great Central Railway Society. The committee is always looking at ways to improve our service to members. For many, the only benefit of membership is receiving *Forward*, so think of this issue as a 'thank you' for your continuing membership.

The Society's archive, now that it has a home at Immingham Museum, can be accessed at the times given on the opposite page. We know that the location is not ideal for many members, so we are in the process of scanning the material as fast as time and resources allow and making it available in digital form.

In the last issue I appealed to members to submit articles from earlier issues of *Forward* and other journals that they considered would be worthy of reprinting in our 40th anniversary issue. Thank you to those who responded. I hope you will agree that they are an eclectic mix. Apologies to those whose suggestions have had to be held over to a later issue. Some original articles are also included along with all the regular features. In all, a good issue to take away for holiday reading.

I asked our Membership Secretary, Eric Latusek, if he could give me a list of the longest serving members of the Society. I then contacted them asking - (1) How did they become interested in the GCR? and (2) how did they come to join the GCRS? Not being a long serving member myself I found the responses quite enlightening and in some ways encouraging.

At the time of writing I am looking forward to the AGM at Loughborough on Sat.17th May. It promises to be great day with our chartered dmu making a trip along the line in the afternoon. A report along with photos will be in the September issue. Details of this year's Autumn Meeting "The Cleethorpes Special" can be found on the opposite page.

Reading through the minutes of the Society's inaugural meeting in 1974 (see p4), it is apparent that from the start there was intended to be a link between the GCRS and the Main Line Steam Trust at Loughborough (now known as 'Great Central Railway'). During the intervening period that link has waxed and waned. I hope that the present links will be strengthened and that both organisations will benefit. I know that many GCRS members are also Friends of the Great Central Railway.

Bob Gellatly

The Great Central Railway Society Autumn meeting
"The Cleethorpes Special"

Sat. 11th October 2014
at 'The No.1', Station Approach, Cleethorpes DN35 8AX

If arriving by train, turn right on leaving the station. 'The No.1' is in the old station buildings on platform 1. There is a pay-and-display car park at the station.

10.00 am	Doors open with sales and displays.
10.30 am	'100 years of Immingham Dock' by Bob Gellatly.
12.30 pm	Lunch. 'The No.1' serves food and there are other food outlets nearby.
2.00pm	'Through Kirton Tunnel - A Railway Journey from Sheffield to Cleethorpes' by Stephen Gay.
4.00pm	Finish.

The current timetable shows the Northern Rail Saturdays only service from Sheffield via Retford and Gainsborough arriving at 10:13. An appropriate way to arrive if it fits in with your travel arrangements.

The Great Central Railway Society Archive

The GCRS is pleased to announce that the Society's archive is available to members on two days per month. The archive is located in Immingham Museum. The museum is situated on the corner of Pelham Road and Washdyke Lane in premises that were once part of the theatre at the Civic Centre. The opening hours are 1pm to 4pm.

Gordon Luck (01469 574637) has volunteered to open the archive on the 1st Wednesday of the month and Bob Gellatly (01909 565763) will do the same on the 2nd Saturday of the month. Members wishing to use the archive are asked to telephone the volunteer first to check that they will be in attendance.

The GCRS has installed an A3 scanner and a computer which will allow members to scan material onto storage media or to send it to their own e-mail address.

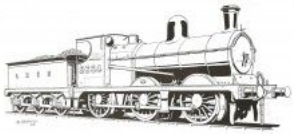
Geoff Burton, Archivist

Annual membership subscriptions for 2014

If you wish to continue your membership but have not yet renewed please do so as soon as possible. If you have decided, for any reason, not to renew please notify the Treasurer/Membership Secretary. Also if you know of any deceased members, please let us know.

The subscription rates for 2014 are £16 (UK), £21 (Europe) and £24 (rest of the world). Please send a cheque, made out to 'GCRS', with your membership details to the Treasurer.

Eric Latusek, Treasurer



MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF

GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY SOCIETY

197 Knightsbridge, 19th April 1974

Mr.Taylor opened the meeting at 6.45pm welcoming all present among whom were two members of the Main Line Steam Trust, Mr.Fred Laurence and Vice-President Mr.James G.Tawse owner of 4-6-2 West Country Pacific 'Boscastle'.

1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr.Taylor explained the function of the various offices and the following were appointed:

Chairman and Secretary	Michael M.Taylor 2 Greenway Davington Court Faversham Kent.
Treasurer	N.A.Howell 61 Pennine Way Farnborough Hants.
Programme Co-Ordinator	J.I.Hatch 14 Hope Road Benfleet Essex.
Recorder	Christopher Austin 24 Osea Way Chelmsford Essex.
Public Relations Officer and Newsletter Editor	Stuart Bailey 130 Wyngate Drive Leicester.

2. MEETINGS AND VISITS

It was agreed that a start should be made at once to arrange future meetings and a programme of visits. It was difficult to decide on a regular venue for meetings because of the geographically scattered membership and the meeting agreed that such venues could perhaps vary from time to time. The Co-Ordinator would look into the possibilities and also liaise with the Main Line Steam Trust with a view to arranging joint meetings and visits from time to time.

It was also put forward and agreed that a Midland Co-Ordinator be appointed to deal with regional aspects and encourage membership from their regions.

The Midland Co-Ordinator is R.W.Morris
44 Balmoral Avenue
Banbury
Oxon.

The Northern Co-Ordinator is D.L.Franks
28 Reader Crescent
Swinton
Mexborough.

3. NEWSLETTER

The meeting felt that a newsletter was essential and this would be published and circulated by our PRO Stuart Bailey. This newsletter would combine notice of future meetings and visits, news and views and possibly articles by authorities on the Great Central Railway. The cost of the newsletter would be kept at a minimum at this stage, its content being considered more important than an expensive format. A copy of each to be sent to the British Museum.

4. SUBSCRIPTIONS

It was proposed by Mr.Bonsor, seconded by Mr.Beecroft and carried by the meeting that:

A banking account be opened in the name of the Great Central Railway Society. The subscriptions should be £1.50 membership, 50p junior membership (under sixteen) and £2 family membership, per annum. Members would receive receipts for subscriptions from the Treasurer who would also prepare an annual balance sheet. Cheques and money could be accepted by either the Treasurer or Chairman/Secretary. Cheques could be signed on behalf of the Great Central Railway Society by either the Treasurer or Chairman/Secretary. Mr.Howell would also look into the matter of members' liability.

5. INSIGNIA

After discussion it was decided that the question of insignia should be left until the society was a little more mature.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The society did not think the appointment of a president desirable at this time but this could be reconsidered at a later date.

Anniversary memories

Some of the longer standing members of the GCRS have been invited to relate how their interest in the GC was started and how they came to join the GCRS. I am grateful to the following members for their replies. Needless to say any views expressed about the Society or its Officers may not necessarily be those of the Editor!

from Paul White

As someone born and brought up in the West Midlands I had no first-hand knowledge of the GCR, only what I had read in the railway books I could find. As a native of Wellington, Shropshire, I lived on the GW & LNW Joint line, but even in those mid-50s days I was lucky enough to see a couple of the last survivors of Robinson's O4s modified with GW fittings in the 3000 series.

In 1956 we acquired a car, which meant we could travel to my grandparents in Cranfield, Bedfordshire, more easily, mostly down the A5 - quite a journey in those days, and the journey was often broken by a stop by the "Ferodo" railway bridge over the A5 at Catthorpe, which carried the GC main line. All traces of the railway have now been obliterated here, but I can remember looking up at the bridge and seeing a couple of trains, both goods and passenger - but I can't recall the details!

I'm afraid my interest in railways dwindled with the sad demise of steam in our area in 1967, but by then I was on a teacher training course, based in Leicester nominally, but most of which took place in Northampton. I made a number of excursions to Woodford Halse and the surrounding area, having followed the London Extension's final collapse with interest and disbelief, and managed to record the station and depot just before they were demolished on a borrowed camera.

In late 1973 I noticed a small advert in *Railway Magazine* announcing the formation of the GCRS. Having become interested in the line from the above experiences, I decided to join. It was a very different experience from today's Society, with a journal produced on a troublesome duplicator, but what now looks like amateurish efforts provided the foundation for the great amount of knowledge of and research into the GCR that has been shared within the Society over the past 40 years.

Jim Hatch, Chris Austin, John Quick and others worked tirelessly for the Society in its earliest years. Field trips were exciting affairs, especially in the north where coal and steel's legacy was not yet dead, and there were interesting and at times eccentric characters on hand whose memories went back into the early years of the 20th Century - Leslie Franks and E.B.Woodruffe-Peacock to name but two, and a signalman, Tom Smith, who gained us access to many a now long-gone signal box.

Within a few years of the Society's formation came the threat to Woodhead, and I took part in the Trade Unions' opposition to the closure, which brought tremendous support from all sections of local political opinion, and the GCRS, through its knowledgeable membership, provided much useful support in terms of local knowledge and technical detail.

While I remain interested in all aspects of Britain's railways, old and new, I have never felt the need to join any other railway society, and while there have been highs and lows in the last 40 years, I am glad to see the Society is now in good health and well prepared for many more years of maintaining interest in a railway that provided us with what I shall always think of as Britain's most fascinating main line.

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from Will Adams

On 11 December 1974 I wrote a cheque for £1.50, this being my first year's subscription to the newly formed Great Central Railway Society. In return I was sent the first two issues of *Forward*, for May and August 1974, and the October 'Newsletter', with a promise that the December *Forward* would follow shortly. *Forward* No 1 was a duplicated

double-sided single sheet of A4, listing the committee members and recording the inaugural meeting in London on 19 April 1974, attended by about 40 people, and the first meeting, which was to take place on Friday 17 May at the Abbey Community Centre, Westminster, London, with a talk on 'The Great Central South of Leicester Today'. *Forward* No 5 had a simple line drawing of Dinting Viaduct, and it continued to be duplicated A4 sheets with only line drawings until 1980, when photographs began to appear. The magazine continued in A4 format until 1987, when it changed to A5, and gradually morphed into the very professional, glossy *Forward* we all enjoy today.

How I came to hear about the GCRS I cannot now remember, but I know that I would have been keen to join as the railway, specifically the London Extension, had begun to play a vague but important part in my life from the mid-1960s. I was a schoolboy in Coventry then and a keen trainspotter. My friends and I often used to visit Rugby, where there were generally richer pickings than Coventry. We used to trainspot at the south end of Rugby Midland in 'the field', a triangular patch of land between the main line and the Market Harborough branch (now a housing estate), its apex being at the foot of one of the piers of a large railway girder bridge that crossed the old LMS line at that point. We were there on 1 November 1965 when we were pleased to see 'Britannia' No 70054 crossing this bridge southbound. I can't remember whether it was a freight or passenger working, but I do remember wondering which line that might be – then thinking nothing more about it. How I would like to have kicked my 13-year-old self to have explored a little further!

My family were great picnickers, and one of our favourite spots was a remote gated lane at Braunston, south of Rugby, near the abandoned village of Wolfhampcote. Here the GCR line marched characteristically across the ridge-and-furrow fields of south Warwickshire, full of sheep and silence. Whether we ever picnicked there when the railway was still is use I have no recollection, but I do remember visiting and walking along the recently closed line with my young sister when one of the two tracks had not yet been lifted – late 1966 or the spring of 1967 perhaps? But still I was not fully aware of what the Great Central line *was* – or had been.

After the London Extension closed as a through route in 1966, I made a couple of journeys from Rugby Central to Leicester on the 'pay on the train' DMU, probably trainspotting trips. And still I was not paying sufficient attention to what was disappearing right in front of my eyes! I remember that we sat in the 1st Class compartment, at the guard's invitation, as we were almost the only passengers. I also remember that only part of the island platform at Leicester was in use, and most of the rooms were shut up. But we ate our sandwiches in the sole waiting room, kept clean and warm by the sole custodian of the station, who was gleaning bits of wood and old posters from the site to keep a roaring fire in the grate!

Then that stump of the old GCR was put out of its misery in 1969. By this time I had stopped chasing engine numbers – no point, as steam had gone – and became more interested in railway history. At last I started looking into the GCR properly, then in July 1969 a friend and myself paid the first of several visits to the remains of Rugby Central station and signal box, which were frozen in time between closure and demolition, and virtually intact apart from what the local vandals had managed to do with them and someone had emptied a loft-full of archived paperwork onto the booking office floor. Here was a treasure trove of railway and station history – pinned-together sheaves of correspondence about a myriad of trivial occurrences, hundreds of fish waybills, parcels delivery sheets, excursion handbills, train register books and forms of all shapes and sizes. Most dated from the early 1950s, but there was quite of a bit of LNER stuff, and even a few GCR items. We bore away as much as we could carry, 'preserved for posterity'.

In the late 1960s there were miles of more or less recently closed railways across the country in those post-Beeching years, still fresh scars across the landscape, and lots of

bits and bobs to find in derelict stations and in ditches, ready to be nicked – I mean *preserved for posterity*! My friend and I walked the GCR trackbed from Rugby to Woodford and beyond on many occasions, relishing its bold march across the empty countryside, with its generous bridges and viaducts and its lofty telegraph poles, unlike the narrow winding branch lines that made up the majority of disused railways at that time. This had been a *real* railway. We first walked through Catesby Tunnel, then still open, accessible and relatively dry, on my 18th birthday in 1970, and made the trip several times thereafter.

We also 'adopted' a platelayers' hut at the north end of Staverton Viaduct, driving down from Coventry in my friend's Austin A40 and spending many a happy evening there with a packet of fags, a flask of coffee and a flask of my mother's home-made curry. We fixed up the grate, used a bottomless bucket as a 'chimney-pot', gathered bits of coal and wood on our walk along the trackbed from Staverton Road, and sat in candlelight in the intense silence of the countryside putting the world to rights while spectral 'Windcutters' passed by outside. Even in 'the hut', as we called it, there was history. It was built from old sleepers, which many years ago had been 'caulked' with screwed-up newspaper and fragments of old working timetables to keep out the draughts.

Because of the way I discovered the Great Central, almost by accident, and because it is so closely associated with those far-off exciting and happy days of trackbed-walking and relic-hunting, my relationship with the line has always been more emotional than technical or historical. I recently compiled a pictorial 'Past and Present' volume on Northamptonshire's railways for Silver Link Publishing (kindly reviewed in *Forward*), which led me to revisit the line around Catesby, Charwelton and Woodford for the first time in many years. What had once been a wide expanse of weedy ballast, still recognisably a railway, was now fields, farm access, thickets, swamps and impenetrable nettle-beds, gradually settling back into the landscape. But in my memories of 40-odd years ago, it remains a railway that, because it was closed, I could become intimate with, and walk along and explore in a quite different way than if it had still been in use. Of course, if I'd known the Great Central main line as a fully working railway, my relationship with it would have been different, something I acknowledge and to some extent regret.

My long membership of the GCRS has kept alive that special connection with the line, although I'm ashamed to say that I have hardly ever attended a meeting or joined a tour – so not very 'hands-on'! Yet I always look forward to and read *Forward* – and while the detailed historical and technical articles represent vital research, it is the tales of the people and the trains, especially on the London Extension, that I particularly enjoy. As I say, my relationship with the GC has always been a very *personal* one.

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from Tony Freestone

In Leicester the Great Central main line was close to where I lived, being born within earshot of the line where it crossed Abbey Gate just north of the Central station in 1943. Like a lot of schoolboys trainspotting was a popular thing to do and being close by the GCR line it was on my doorstep.

Later railway modelling aroused my attention. I joined the Leicester Model Railway Group and at that time, late 70s, a start was made to make a 'OO' gauge model of Leicester GC station, and of course I got involved. And being involved, my interest in the GC was reignited and to further my knowledge decided to join the GCRS. Having joined I was soon in correspondence with John Quick, a modeller of perfection and a useful source of information regarding locomotives and rolling stock.

Nowadays we are blessed with models in 4mm and 7mm scale of GC prototypes. To ensure accuracy John has been consulted by Bachmann prior to production. In all I have no regrets having joined the society as I have benefited greatly.

from John Hitchens

I joined the GCRS at a Sheffield Model Railway Exhibition. I was impressed by the display of photographs and I was attracted by the idea that I might find out more about the lines in my local area, through which passed the main line to Marylebone. At the time the only source of reference material was George Dow's 3 volume history. Apart from this, until Alf Henshaw's and later Ken Grainger's books appeared, there were to the best of my knowledge only two booklets with photographs which covered the Sheffield – Nottingham Section. A stranger might well get the impression that the GCR only ran from Annesley to Marylebone.

I have always found something of interest in the Newsletter and *Forward*, and this maintained my membership of the Society in spite of some of the disagreements between members during the early years. I have attended most AGMs, in spite of the first one being the worst I have ever attended in any society or organisation. The Chair appeared to want to dominate the proceedings with what he had done and was going to do and the only report he did not do himself was the Treasurer's. The following AGMs all seem to be plagued by personality issues until a group known as the "Sheffield Party" emerged and things sorted themselves out and matters were dealt with more efficiently.

I joined an area group which was set up in Nottingham, first meeting at the University and later at Nottingham High School. I also enjoy the occasional outing organised by the Society to places on the GC. As the Secretary of the East Midlands Branch of the RCTS for many years I can appreciate the work done by the officers of the GCRS and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

As to how I became interested in the GC, I am not old enough to remember the GCR itself but I was familiar with its successor the LNER and particularly the GC section. I had a relative on my mother's side who started work on the GC prior to the Great War as a junior porter. One of his tasks at a country station was to put out all the signal and station lamps after the last train on Saturdays, so as to save the oil. He later became a goods guard at Worksop, travelling as far as Annesley and Peterborough, the latter a lodging turn. In BR(ER) he became a yard foreman at Worksop and his eldest son became a station master at Spinkhill. My first railway souvenir was a guard's green flag.

My mother and I used to visit relatives at Worksop and I recall that as a pre-school child I could identify the difference between LMS and LNER coaching stock. On one occasion I did not want to get on the train because of its LNER stock but mother insisted and we ended up at Shireoaks and catching the bus back to Worksop!

At this time we lived in a bungalow at the end of Lindley's Lane in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. From the front room it was possible to see the LMS line to Nottingham, from my bedroom the LMS Pinxton line and the GNR Leen Valley extension, and from the kitchen could be seen the smoke and steam from trains on the GC lines. The latter was important for the predecessor of the "Master Culter" passed along at about 8.20am - time to finish breakfast and get ready for school and leave the house by 8.40am. I recall only being late for school once and that was in the extreme weather of 1942 - and the school was forced to close anyway but only for one day!

Mother used to take me with her on occasional shopping trips (I think they were only window shopping) to Nottingham. These usually involved a walk across the fields to Kirkby-in-Ashfield Central station which had beautiful station gardens. From arrival at Nottingham Victoria the usual route was out by the Parliament Street entrance and through Nottingham to finish up at the Midland station for the return journey. We did sometimes come back to Kirkby Central. One journey stays in my mind - a boy a little older than me was in obvious pain and he wailed to his mother,"It's the plums", as we entered Annesley Tunnel.

As we emerged she said "It won't be long now."

"It's too late!" he exclaimed. Needless to say we were travelling in a non-corridor train.

Kirkby in Ashfield Central was the starting point for the odd day trip to the seaside, Skegness being one destination, and for longer holidays on the North Yorkshire Coast using through trains to Scarborough, although for some reason or another the return was always made to Kirkby Bentinck. When I worked for BR I made the trip to Windermere from Kirkby Central, the train having originated at Burton-on-Trent.

Another uncle on my father's side was a railway enthusiast and was for a time involved with the Attenborough Model Railway Train Spotters Club and by organising sufficient numbers was able to arrange for their excursions to pick up at stations on the Mansfield line. One trip was to Doncaster works, and another started back at Mansfield Central to Swindon. Kirkby Bentinck on the main line was regrettably unappreciated by the local travellers as it was away from the main centre of the town with a limited bus service. I first used the station to go to Sheffield. Later I found by changing stations at Chesterfield, Leeds was easily accessible and with Cheap Day returns also inexpensive.

National Service meant a departure from Bentinck to Richmond (Yorks) and later a posting to Sheffield brought a daily commute to the city until lodgings were found. By catching the 6.30am train Workmen's Tickets were available and the early arrival enabled 45 minutes of observations on the station to witness the departure of "The Master Cutler" and the arrival and departure of a number of trains. Return from National Service was followed by work on BR so privilege facilities made possible a number of long day trips, mostly from Bentinck. Newcastle, Carlisle and Wrexham were all reached although Wrexham was returned via the Midland route with approximately the same timing. When working in Nottingham District Control Office, return from morning and afternoon shifts was done to Bentinck Station and a later transfer to Leicester often involved a weekly journey out from Bentinck.

When I lived at Lindley's Lane in pre-school days and later, I used to go on my tricycle to the bridge over the ex GC main line and sit on the fence to watch the trains go by. This was in the days before Ian Allan ABCs had arrived in the area, although I once did see some older boys with a book illustrating LNER locomotive classes but this did not set out the numbers in the same way as an Ian Allan. I think I must have taken down some numbers but they must have got lost when we moved away from Lindley's Lane.

One memory that does survive was seeing an Austerity type locomotive with a small smokebox door which on passing displayed the letters USA on the tender. From about 1948 I started to go more regularly to "The Bridge" and remember clearly the day when three very clean light engines came through - Apple Green A3 locomotives with British Railways on their tenders. They were apparently en route to Leicester Central shed for working the "Master Cutler". From then on whilst I was at the local secondary school a number of us would be up early to go to "The Bridge" to see the "Cutler" with its tavern car and tail board then walk round to the the entrance to Annesley Tunnel to see the semi-fast to Sheffield, which might be a V2 or another A3 before making our way in good time to school.

Until National Service "The Bridge" became a regular Saturday afternoon haunt. I kept detailed logs of observations from 1954-56 and have a few earlier ones, but apart from a few photographs little now remains. "The Bridge" remains are buried beneath another bridge which carries the Robin Hood line over Lindley's Lane and the green fields through which the lane once passed are now covered by a housing estate.

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from John Bennett

How did I become interested in the GCR? I touched upon this in my two articles on 'Hexthorpe and the Great Central' in *Forwards* nos. 123 and 124. In our childhood, living in the Balby area of Doncaster, family outings were often to the large open spaces of Hexthorpe Flats which involved crossing a venerable footbridge, with MS&LR trespassing notices, over the Doncaster to Sheffield line.

Moving on to Doncaster Grammar School I met a fellow enthusiast, the late Tony Goode, who lived in the same area of town overlooking Hexthorpe Top Yard. We were among the founders of the School Railway Club whose collection of railway items has now grown into a well known museum. While of course there were many visits to the ECML in the town, Tony and I formed the opinion that the GC was superior to the GN in locomotives, signalling (which has remained one of my specialist interests) and rolling stock. Our interest and knowledge of the GC was increased by the many trips we made.

Inevitably we went our separate ways after school days but my enthusiasm for the GC persisted. I cannot now recall how I heard of our Society nor in which year I joined *(22 March 1979 - ed.)* but it was in the days when much of the work of the Society was in the hands of Chris Austin and James Hatch. Soon after I joined, Chris and James put on a 'Dutch Auction' of the earliest numbers of *Forward* and my bid was accepted so that I now have a full run of our magazine except for no. 4. As I was working in London at the time, I met Chris and James occasionally as well as Leslie Franks when he was in London, as we both had a special knowledge of the same area in South Yorkshire.

I also attended Society meetings in London and participated in various trips but problems associated with my wife's health prior to her untimely death last year made it difficult to attend evening meetings in London. I have now moved into Southern territory (Guildford) for family reasons but still retain my allegiance to the GC.

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from Colin Garton

How was my interest in the GCR started? I think it was in 1944 when I was eight years old. We lived in Monks Road in Lincoln and at the bottom of the street was the LNER line to Grimsby. I watched a large number of iron ore trains pulled by what I now know to have been Robinson O4s and Gresley O2s. There were lots of other goods trains of all different wagons. When the war was over by a year or two, I was allowed to stay out later than 7.30pm in the evening. There was a local passenger at that time often pulled by *Butler-Henderson*. We thought it was named after a butler called Henderson like the one on a packet of Kensitas cigarettes. Sometimes it was an 'Immingham' and sometimes it was an Atlantic. Local goods were usually hauled by a 'Pom-Pom'. Once I went to Market Rasen for the races with my grandfather. We travelled in an open saloon coach with tables. I had never seen anything like it before. It was a Barnum. So that was how I became interested in the GCR.

How did I come to join the GCRS? I was at the Sheffield Model Railway show and got talking to John Quick and Roger Milnes. They enrolled me in the GCRS! My earliest copy of the newsletter is dated Oct. 1978. For many years I attended the Sheffield group meetings at *The Brown Cow* on The Wicker. I remember many enjoyable and interesting talks. I once gave a talk there myself entitled 'Railways in Lincoln'. Someone I remember from the Sheffield meetings was Geoff Royston, a retired driver from Barnsley who had fired the Garratt on Worsborough bank. He was one of several retired railwaymen who attended the meetings.

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from Ed Davis

I've always been interested in trains as was my Dad before me and got to especially like the GCR. I loved the locos with their great livery and their shiny appearance. When I moved to Sheffield I joined the "Enthusiasts" and met John Quick. When I realised that John was a member of the GCRS I signed up as well. He was just getting going with his East Central Railway and had just built his Fish Engine which I believe is still a runner - it certainly ran beautifully even before he converted to P4. I subsequently moved to Gloucestershire where I'm originally from.

I've always been a bit of a peripheral member, living so far from GC territory, but I have always enjoyed *Forward* and did occasionally attend meetings. I sometimes got together with dear old Adrian Bulkyn-Rackowe as he lived not far away. What a character and what a loss to the Society when he died. He was a sporadic modeller (as am I) but the other calls on his time, he ran a dodgy rubberwear mail order business as well as having a high-powered job with BR, meant that he, like me, didn't get a lot done modelling wise. He did however collect some brilliant models and even had a genuine GCR nameplate.

From time to time I do a bit of transport journalism. I'm working on a piece for Classic Bus at present, but back in the 80s I did some articles for *Railway Modeller* on Parker passenger stock. Whilst I've been a fairly low-key member, it was me that recruited George Dow and Revd Peter Denny to the Society among others!

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from Ken Plant

How did I come to join the GCRS? I can't remember! I may have seen a mention in a magazine or possibly Howard Turner may have drawn my attention to it. - Howard and I are both long-serving members of the Sheffield RCTS group. Or it may even have been that I saw a copy of *Forward* (it was a foolscap duplicated sheet then). However it was, as I had an interest in the GCR and the LD&ECR I was pleased to join the Society and attended meetings at the *Brown Cow* in the Wicker.

How did I become interested in the GC? I recall being taken as a nipper by my elder brother on Sunday afternoons (possibly in a push chair!) to the Five Arches area of the LNER line out of Sheffield Victoria. That included the 'Black Bridge' (no.121) and the concrete footbridge over the western end of Neepsend Power Station sidings. I well remember seeing my first A3, it was *Tracery*, one Sunday afternoon on an up passenger.

When I was older I travelled on the bus (the Outer Circle) every day to Firth Park School and would pass under the Five Arches at about 8am. The timing would often be right to see the Penistone to Sheffield local pass over the bridge. I used to make the return journey via the city centre as the tram from Firth Park would pass along Savile Street giving a view of Grimesthorpe shed. An occasional rare cop made the longer journey worthwhile.

In the 1950s I would often spend a summer evening sitting on the fence at Batchelors Bridge, enjoying a cricket match when no trains were passing. Not infrequently an O4 on a coal train would be brought to a stop on one of the loops to allow a down express to pass. Sometimes a second O4 would also be looped before the express appeared and passed in a roar. Then came the excitement as the first O4 pulled out of the loop on full regulator, passing no more than 2ft away from me. Sheer delight!

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from Richard Graham

I have had a lifelong interest in railways, though my one attempt to work for the London Midland Region, never my favourite line, as a booking clerk nearly 30 years ago, ended in failure. In 1939 my parents moved to inner Metroland and I was born in the middle of the war, my first railway journey at the age of two weeks being on the Stanmore branch of the former Metropolitan Railway. Among my possessions are some battered volumes of the early stories of the Rev.W.Awdry, so old that the Fat Controller was then a pre-BTC Fat Director, and my first memory of reading was the tale of Henry the Green Engine whom the said director caused to be immured in a tunnel for disobedience.

Not many years later the family was on a coach trip while on holiday in my mother's native North Wales and she pointed out some of the course of *lein bach (Welsh for 'little railway' - Ed.)*, the erstwhile Welsh Highland Railway: in those pre-Beeching years I had

not known there could be such a thing as a closed railway, and it was a great pleasure last year to travel the course of the revived line.

Like most boys of my generation I took to trainspotting, albeit much of what I noted was on the London Underground. At Preston Road there was access to a now-closed pathway next to the southbound Met lines and occasionally one could see L1 tanks on trains down to Aylesbury. For some reason I don't have the same memory of up trains, but I have memories of the names of the 'Master Cutler' and 'The South Yorkshireman'. I was sorry no L1 was preserved, though I seem to remember reading they were unpopular with footplatemen. At that time I knew little of the Neasden Junction to Northolt Junction line other than a sign at Wembley Hill indicating the platform for such unheard of places as High Wycombe and Princes Risborough, and visits on Cup Final days to see trains on the Stadium Loop and visiting supporters' coaches.

In the late 1960s I went to live at Sudbury Hill, thereby having an ex-GC station as my nearest rail access, and remember the paucity of the service. The signalbox on the up platform was gaslit and I think the booking office also. The stationmaster's house was there, and the through lines also. Not long after, I briefly knew someone who worked on the railway who had been charged with remodelling the lines so that Sudbury & Harrow Road became an island platform and the platforms at Sudbury Hill Harrow were extended to where the through lines had been. I am no photographer, but somewhere at home there is a picture I took of shunting at the goods yard on the down side. The yard is now built over, the signalbox and stationmaster's house are long gone and although the booking office survives, it is in commercial use while access to the down platform is no longer direct, but via the footbridge.

Quite young I became interested in Wembley's history and became aware of that intriguing structure known to some as Watkin's Folly. With a friend who later became one of the founders of the Main Line Preservation Group, I spent time wandering the remains of the grounds of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-25, built on the site of Watkin's ill-fated pleasure grounds. Most of the Exhibition Grounds, with the exception of the Empire Stadium, had become a trading estate, but there were fascinating survivals such as the British Government pavilion with its mighty concrete lions and some of the structure of the Never-Stop Railway. Fifty years further on, little or none of the Exhibition remains.

What I have written so far shows I had more than a latent interest in the GC. I remember the proposal by an academic geographer, I think, that Marylebone should be turned into a bus station. Quite apart from physical constraints such as embankments and a tunnel, this seemed impracticable to me for the simple reason that all over Northwest London at the time London Transport had placed stickers over bus stop timetables informing passengers that severe staff shortages meant that timetabled services could not be guaranteed. Only once did I travel much of the GC: in the early 1960s I had a job interview in Yorkshire and travelled from Sheffield, noticing newly-built London Transport A stock (recently withdrawn) in Cravens' yard, to Harrow, where I foolishly surrendered my ticket, an act I still regret.

The editor was warned that I could write much more about why I became interested in the GCR than about the Society. I have memories of attending the inaugural meeting at, I think, Friends House in the Euston Road. Michael Minter Taylor, whose inspiration it was, had a specific interest in the London Extension, but in due course people from Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire in effect captured the Society. This does not cause me problems albeit I know more of the London Extension than anything else about the GC. I have never held office in the GCRS and am not qualified to write on personality clashes that no doubt took place among those who did. One or two people from the early days do come to mind. There was an elderly, to me at the time, gentleman who had begun his career in Sam Fay's office, but had had a bad time as a prisoner in Greece during the war and couldn't settle on the railway afterwards. I think

he finally found work in the peaceful surroundings of the Snowdon Mountain Railway. The late E. B. Woodruffe Peacock, a parson's son, was a charming gentleman of the old school and kindly gave me access to his bound volumes of the *GCR Journal* for a piece of research I was engaged on. He bequeathed them to the Railway Club (founded 1899), where I consulted them again, and after the regrettable demise of that estimable institution, they passed to the GCRS archives, where I hope to encounter them again.

It would be invidious to pick out those of the current membership who have helped to make the GCRS the admirable organization it is today, so I won't write about my fellow Sudbury Mafia members, Messrs Barker, Bunning and Holyland, but I cannot finish without paying tribute to one of Yorkshire's finest, Ken Grainger, whose writing on many facets of the GCR puts him in the same league as George Dow, and whose work in commemorating the company's war dead I especially commend in the centenary year of the outbreak of the Great War.

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from Trevor Kay

Born in the village of South Anston in South Yorkshire not long after the end of the war and raised not far from the site of Anston Station, what other railway could I be interested in? Walks in Anston Stones Wood involved crossing the GC & Midland Joint with its GC & Midland trespass signs and GC 'Beware of Trains' signs. Walks further afield took me to Kiveton Park Station alongside the Chesterfield Canal - all steeped in Great Central history. Bedtime reading was *Dow Volume 3* and after I had moved to London I read of the creation of the GC Society in a magazine, so I just had to join.

As time went by, I was able to travel further afield and discover the destination of all those mammoth trains of coal empties that toiled up to Dinnington, Thurcroft and beyond. Such were the later delights of discovering the Hull and Barnsley, the Dearne Valley Railway and the H&B and GC Joint. I was well and truly hooked on South Yorkshire's joint railways.

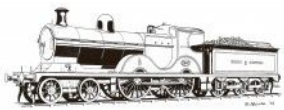
I joined British Rail in the seventies at Leeds - my mother said this would finally get railways out of my system! Initially confined to West Yorkshire my duty pass was eventually "all stations Eastern Region" so I was able to see plenty of my beloved Great Central lines. I did go on the occasional GC field trip with Alan Hoyland and Roger Milnes (former editor of *Forward*) but work gave little time for such jollies.

Now semi-retired and living in Cornwall, railways are still a large part of my life as my wife will attest, however family visits to Leeds always allow plenty of rail travel and train watching visits to Doncaster and Barnetby. I am no longer an avid collector of Railwayana being more interested in model railways now but every time we have moved house the look of dismay on the removal men's faces when they see my rail chair collection has been a sight to behold!

I have always enjoyed being a member of the GCR Society if not an active one. I look forward to receiving *Forward* which has gone from strength to strength - from a single Roneoed foolscap sheet to a proper printed journal with photographs. My best wishes to the Society, its Officers and Members on celebrating forty years.

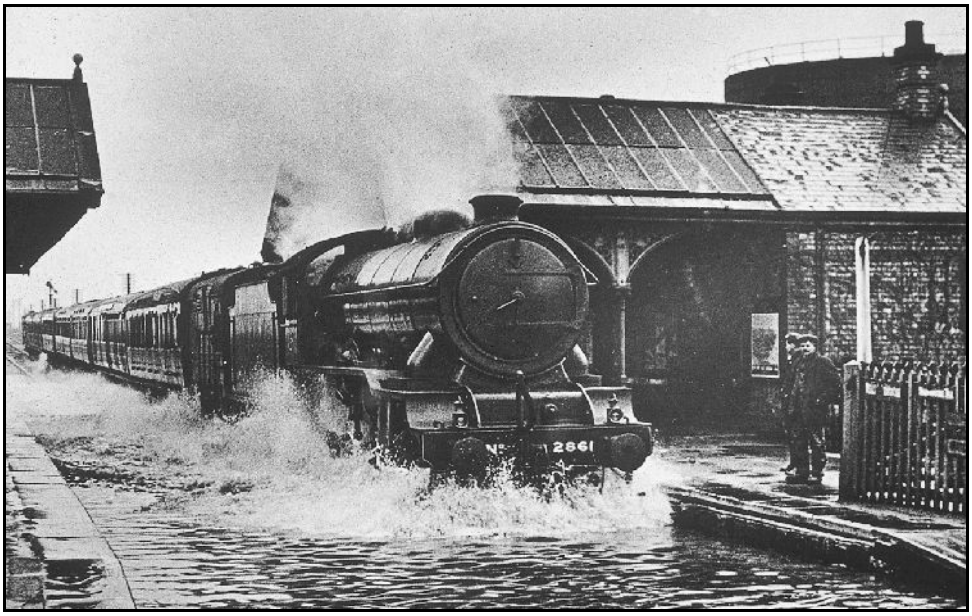
Welcome to the following new members

Mr M. Jackson, Rotherham
Mr H. Flower, Oxford
Mr H. J. Williams, Billingham, Cleveland



More Rother Valley flood photos

These photos were submitted by Mike Eggenton. The date 4th Sept. 1931 on the lower photo could well be the date for the Killamarsh flood photo in *Forward 179* p44.



above: LNER class B17 4-6-0 no.2861 'Sheffield Wednesday' charges through a flooded Beighton station with an up express. photo: Frank Syratt (Sheffield Star newspaper)

below: A flooded Rotherham & Masboro station (Central in BR days) with its staggered platforms on 4th Sept. 1931. When the MS&L opened their line through Rotherham they used the route of the South Yorkshire canal which was diverted. Looks like it has now reverted to its original route!

Memories of a Manchester trainspotter
by John Greaves

My father, who was born and bred in Sheffield, started work with the GCR on leaving school. He was a goods clerk at Wadsley Bridge until he was called up in the army (KOYLI) in 1918. By the time he had completed his primary training and been posted to the Sherwood Foresters, the hostilities had ended, but he remained in Cologne for a while. He was then sent to Northern Ireland, where the 'Troubles' were brewing, until his demob in 1923.

On returning to the company he applied for work as a clerk at Altrincham, on the MSJ&AR - a joint company of the GCR & LNWR (later LNER & LMS). The annual meeting of that company was chaired alternately by the two Company Managers until Nationalisation. Dow records that in the early days, Edward Watkin would turn up without notice at meetings chaired by Mark Huish, only to be requested to leave immediately!

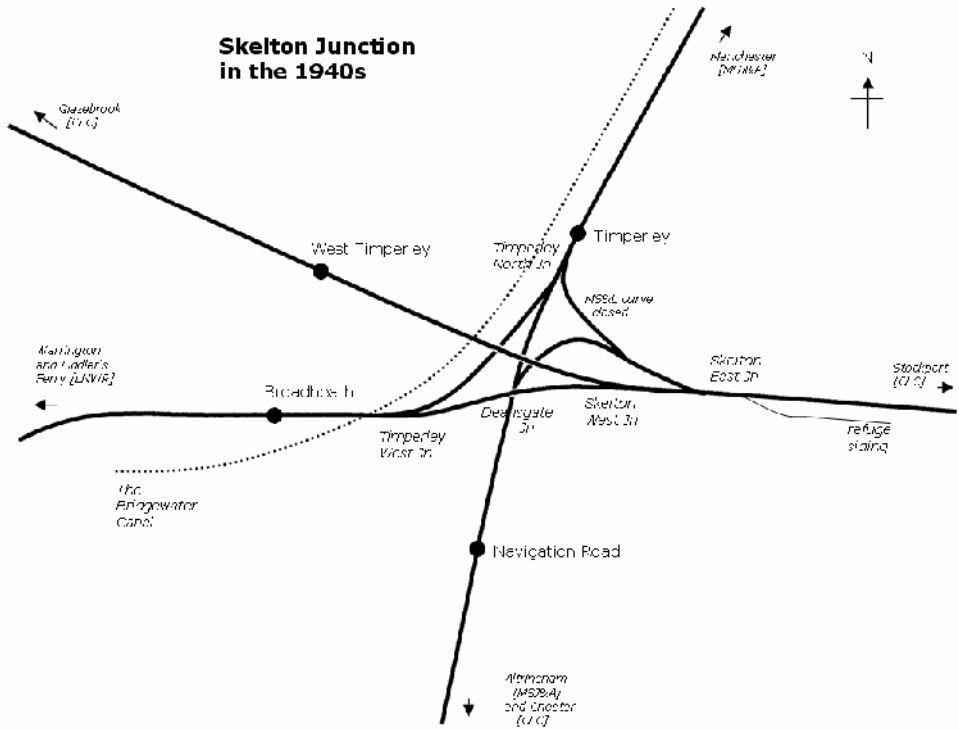
I was born in Altrincham and after leaving school in 1945 I became a clerk/trainee manager in the LNER Hotels and Catering Department, first in the offices at Manchester London Road, then taking charge at Manchester Central. When I returned after my National Service in 1950 (my job had been retained), it was obvious that BR was losing interest in 1st Class Dining Rooms on stations and, eventually, hotels, and I requalified as an accountant, helping with the re-organisation of the ex-LMS establishments in the Manchester district. (The LNER accountancy had been streets ahead of the LMS - it had a central office in Peterborough with up-to-date systems.) I left the railways in 1958 to go to theological college - co-incidentally the same one that Eric Treacy had attended.

My life-long fascination with railways included a six-year stretch (1st August 1942 to 31st July 1948) as a trainspotter. The GCR, as is well-known, ranged westwards from north Lincolnshire to Wigan, Southport, Liverpool, Chester and Wrexham - well into LMS and even GWR territory. My allegiance was to the LNER but I was assailed on all sides by lads with alien loyalties. The only time I could be accused of betrayal was later on when, employed by the LNER, I was headhunted by Crewe Works to run for their team in the BR Cross-Country Championship - they had discovered that I had come 3rd in the LNER race at Loughton, Essex, and that I lived not far from Crewe. The team I belonged to, Gorton Works, did not have the strength to take part in the BR event. The Crewe team came second on the day behind Derby Works who fielded two members of the Olympic Marathon squad.

Going back to my younger days, most of my spotting was done at Skelton Junction, Timperley, not far from my home, and near to where Sir Edward Watkin used to live. I also made many excursions to Bolton, Horwich, Liverpool, Chester, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Scarborough, Hull, and when in the army 'accidentally' found myself in London and visiting the sheds at Eastleigh and Portsmouth. And, of course, I regularly visited Gorton - on one occasion getting a permit to the shed and the works, even in wartime, as I was an LNER employee!

Skelton Junction was a goldmine of experience - there was hardly ever more than two minutes between trains all day and evening. The locos were mainly ex-LNER classes. We became very blasé about J10s, though later we would regard them with great affection. There were the more powerful J11s. The D6s and D9s appeared on the Liverpool Central to Stockport Tiviot Dale passengers - usually at great speed as if recalling their days on the London Extension. There were Q4s and O4s in profusion. The list was completed by K3s, B7s, B5s, B6s, B8s and B9s. The LMS types almost always came from or went onto the (left-hand) Warrington Bank Quay line. Our nickname for LNW 0-8-0s was 'Nancies', not 'Duck-Eights' or whatever. There were Midland 2Fs, 3Fs, and 4Fs. Occasionally we saw the sole remaining 'Claughton' no.6004 (I had just missed its companion no.6017 *Breadalbane*), an unrebuilt 'Patriot' on a goods train, an L&Y 0-6-0, an NE B16, and an 'Austin Seven' 0-8-0. The only time we saw Stanier 8Fs was on the ICI hopper trains – but more of that later. A unusual appearance was that of a Drummond ex-LSWR class S11 4-4-0 creeping cautiously down the line from Glazebrook in the direction of Stockport - we never did find out why it was there. It may have been no.395, though in the course of time I eventually saw all ten of

the class in my travels. A unique memory was seeing the precursor Bo+Bo electric no.6701 (later BR no.26000) speeding along light engine on trial on the MSJ&A in 1941.

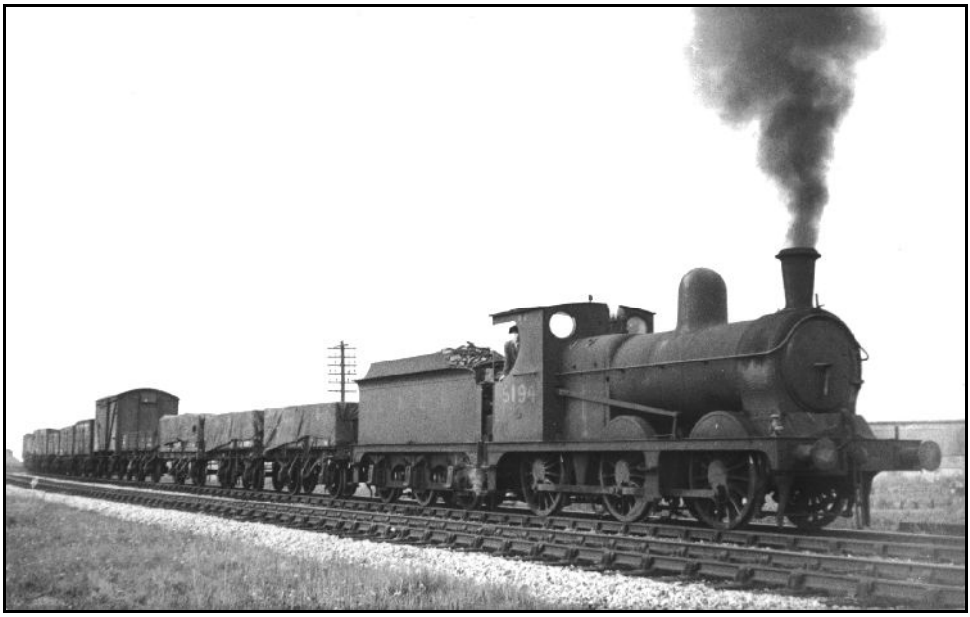


The years 1942-1948 were horrific in so many ways, but to innocent schoolboys it was a time of great excitement. Freight traffic was enormously increased, and we were really blessed at the time in the number of classes and locos which were still in existence, many reprieved from the scrapyard because of the War. A real museum piece was Kirtley's Midland Railway 2-4-0 no.20002, referred to affectionately as 'twenty million and two.' By 1945 I had ticked off (we didn't underline in those days) all the N4s, D6s, D9s, D10s, D11s (except no.5511), C13s, C14s (but one), B1s, B2s (except no.5427), B3s, B4s, B5s, B6s, B7s, B8s (except no.5444), B9s, C4s (but two), C5s, L1s (except no.5275), M1s (coming to Gorton for scrapping), F1s, F2s (except two), S1s, and a large proportion of the N5, J11 and O4 classes.

All the J10s were on the CLC at that time, though it took a long time for me to 'cop' my last, no.5080, which seemed to lead all its working life at Wigan Springs Branch shed. I eventually caught it whilst it was trespassing at Trafford Park shed.

Another event that stands out in the memory (and I apologise for the almost complete lack of engine numbers here - I had to go into lodgings in 1957 and my landlady had an abhorrence of books so I had to dispose of nearly everything - but I married her daughter in 1958!) was of a J10 which came down the Glazebrook line to Skelton Jn, stopped near the bottom, detached itself from the wagons, which stayed on the gradient thanks to the brakes on the brakevan, and then proceeded down to reverse into the goods yard. The brakes were then released on the brakevan to allow gravity to bring the wagons down to the Stockport line where they were brought to a stand. The engine then came out of the yard, coupled up, and took the train round the loop to the MSJ&A connection for Altrincham and beyond.

A similar operation at Skelton Jn but with a different destination, was when a J10 came out of the goods yard, pushing a train of empty coal wagons out towards Baguley/ Stockport to beyond the crossover points, where it stood and waited for the signalman's OK. The regulator was then pulled fully open and the train came back over the crossovers to get onto the line to Glazebrook, drawing its 57 wagons up the 1 in 72, whilst rocking from side to side and throwing out a considerable amount of its fire through the chimney to surmount the grade over the MSJ&A, the Bridgewater Canal and the LMS Warrington Bank Quay line. How did the LNER ever come to rate J10s as only class 1? BR altered them to class 2, but they always compared very favourably with the Midland Class 2Fs, not to mention GNR J4s, which were also class 2.



LNER class J10 0-6-0 no.5194 (1946 number) with a goods train for Warrington at Skelton Junction.
photo: unknown

Another recollection is of a Fowler 'Austin 7' 0-8-0, which, unusually for an LMS loco, roared up the CLC line with 29 four-wheel oil tank wagons and a brake, but after having had an excellent run at the gradient, stuck halfway up. It had to wait until a following goods train, with a J11, to push it up the remaining slope. There was much anti-LMS *schadenfreude* on that occasion.

Further shameless *schadenfreude* was indulged in on a day in mid-1944, when I had gone out from school in the lunch hour to watch an interesting spectacle at Altrincham goods yard, north of the station and near the site of the former (pre-electrification) loco shed. An LMS 'Nancy' had become derailed with its flangeless driving wheels. Attempting to pull it back onto the rails was an LNER Q4 0-8-0, which was attached to the G1 with a long chain, and after much application of wood blocks to the wheels, opened up to pull it back onto the rails. Unfortunately, the effort was too vigorous and the chain snapped. I couldn't risk extending my lunch break any longer to witness the next stage, but I assume that the operation was eventually successful.

The standard Midland/LMS 4Fs had odd valve-settings. They made a gruff sequence of 'puffs' when working hard which were definitely not equal in intensity, more like a rhythm in $\frac{6}{8}$ time that goes ♫ 𝄾 ♫ 𝄾 || ♫ 𝄾 ♫ 𝄾 || . One summer's day one of them was being turned on the goods yard turntable, and having completed the turn, the driver opened

the regulator wide, then closed it immediately, and the engine leapt forward without a sound - just a cloud of exhaust smoke.

The O4s were my favourite engines. I loved the A4s and 'Directors', but those rugged 2-8-0s, bashing their way over the Pennines through the Woodhead tunnel with endless streams of loaded coal wagons, in foul weather, usually on their way to Fiddler's Ferry power station in Lancashire on the north bank of the River Mersey, without apparent effort, never failed to impress. The ex-GC motormen on the electrics at Altrincham used to say, only half-joking, that the guard could couple their trains to a railway station, and the driver wouldn't notice any delay in re-starting. Three occasions stand out in my memory. One was the appearance of a strange sight coming round the MSJ&A loop - three foreign-looking 2-8-0s in battleship grey with 'USA' on their tenders. Their numbers, with apologies again for faulty memory, were 21xx, 22xx, and 22xx (S160s of course). They were hauled by an 04, which was not remarkable in itself, except that their connecting rods were still in place (subsequent batches had them removed and placed on their running-plates), and they thus made a 'puffing' sound from their cylinders as they progressed in the direction of Stockport.

The second 04 memory was one on my longest-ever train - 86 mixed wagons with a 65xx loco ambling up the 1 in 72 as though it had only a brakevan in tow. The brakevan would have been nearly as far back as Baguley station. The third occasion was a less happy one. I had alighted from my train from work in Manchester at Navigation Road station one Saturday midday when I became aware that a train of wagons was stationary on the viaduct over the MSJ&A and the Bridgewater Canal. I was uncomfortably conscious of the sound of a loco slipping, just out of sight to my left. Fearful that I had recognized it as an 04, though the words 'slipping' and '04' did not go together, I rang up a friend who maintained a continuous watch on all the traffic there (and still does in 2014!) who told me that it was indeed an 04, which, with 72 loaded coal wagons had been brought virtually to a standstill at signals on the rising grade of 1 in 86, fifty yards or so from the start of the 1 in 72. It had managed to get itself only to the level beyond the climb despite opening itself up in a way seldom heard from one of its class. I wonder if anyone knows why such a load as this - nearly 1,300 tons, almost twice a class 8 limit for the route, was entrusted to a class 7 loco?

I did not have the same respect for the engines of any other company, but there were two classes I did have a sneaking regard for. The Hughes superheated class 3P version of Aspinall's L&Y 2-4-2T, which, with the highest tractive effort (24,585 lb) of any 4-coupled loco (with the exception of the SR 'Schools' at 25,135 lb), used to blast their way from a standing start out of the Manchester Victoria suburban platforms with four or five coaches, unassisted up the 1 in 39 gradient to Miles Platting.

The other class I respected was the Stanier 8F. This was because there were regular ICI limestone trains from Peak Forest to Northwich via Skelton. These were made up of very modern vacuum-fitted bogie hopper wagons (manufactured by Charles Roberts of Horbury, Wakefield), introduced in 1936. Previously the limestone traffic had consisted of eleven wagons (721 tons) hauled by 4F 0-6-0s (not LNW or L&Y 0-8-0s, strangely). From 1938 onwards, trains of 17 wagons (1,182 tons) were allocated to the new 8F 2-8-0s (later reduced to 16 wagons, and then later to 15). After leaving the Peak Forest area, the gradients were largely favourable to the loaded trains, but Hale Bank, between Altrincham and Hale, though fairly short, was at 1 in 132, with a nasty S-bend in the middle, requiring fulling opening-out and prayers not to slip. The limestone trains were normally given a through run from Skelton Junction to give them a good chance of hitting that gradient at a good momentum. There was at least one instance of a train being held at signals before getting onto the MSJ&A at Skelton. I was watching, with a school friend, on the concrete footbridge spanning the goods yard, and when the driver got his road he opened out rather too vigorously and the 8F lost its feet entirely. With wheels spinning at something like a 60 miles an hour rate, she continued to slip without moving an inch for what seemed to be several minutes, by which time it had lost the road and had to stop and wait until the next train had passed.

For the sake of completeness, there was a stretch of 1 in 53 between Northwich and the ICI Winnington works. Class L1 2-6-4Ts nos.5274 and 5343 worked as bankers to the trains between 1943 and 1954. It has to be said that 8Fs were very light on their feet. With the fully-fitted brakes insufficiently released on a sharp curve with such a load, slipping might occur. A later surreptitious examination of the track would reveal several places, at 8F wheelbase gaps, of very flattened railhead.

At the beginning of the War, there used to be a refuge siding, on the south side of the running lines, between the occupation bridge and the Moss Lane bridge at the junction, with its access at the western end. It was much needed for refuge when troop trains came along, as they took priority over the freights. One day, the ICI hopper train was getting in the way and the driver was instructed to go as far as necessary up the LNE (Glazebrook) line to back down into the siding. To clear the points sufficiently, the 8F had to climb a fair way up the 1 in 72, which it managed without a slip, before reversing all the way inside. It was not long afterwards that the siding was converted into a loop, which made such manoeuvres easier.

For a short while 9F 2-10-0s were allocated 19 bogies on the limestone trains, but when steam had gone, it was interesting to compare the 9Fs with the variety of diesel power that followed. The Co-Bo type 2s were tried in tandem, EE type 4s proved defective in brake power, and class 28s in tandem were tested with 19 wagons. Sulzer type 2s of the 57xx series proved able to haul loads of 18, but they suffered from overheating of the traction motors, and dislodged wheel-tyres, resulting in failures. Type 4 classes 45 and 47 ran with 17 wagons during the 1970s, and in 1982 a pair of class 20s were tested with 22, then 24, but they struggled to maintain schedules, and class 37s in pairs were used instead on 18-20, increasing to 22 with the class 37/5s. More recently, classes 60, 66, and 70 have all been used. Comparing the initial cost, and the horsepower output of these modern haulage units with those of the displaced steam classes, there's not much question as to where our admiration lies.

Manchester-Altrincham 1,500 volts DC suburban units M28581M-M29657M-M29238M and M29239M-M29669M-M28590M at Altrincham station on 10th April 1971. The changeover to 25kV AC took place just a few weeks later on 3rd May. *Photo: Gordon Edgar*

Although we gave them scant attention as they passed by, the MSJ&A electrics were really not to be despised. (I missed the use of steam on those trains, though on engineer-occupied Sundays the redoubtable C13s and N5s came back.) Two incidents stand out in my memory. The first was a cab ride in one of them from Manchester Oxford Road to Navigation Road by courtesy of an ex-GCR motorman friend of my father's. This was a great privilege, seeing the road pass under me, and watching how the superb acceleration and braking was worked. The other was when awaiting my usual 8.20am commuter train at Navigation Road Station in pouring rain. The Longsight to Altrincham pick-up goods, with one of that shed's 3F 0-6-0s (nos.3717, 3275 and 3457) had been diverted to the loop road towards Altrincham to make way, as normal, for the next down electric to draw into the station. Unfortunately, the wet rail had got the better of the 3F, and it had slipped to a standstill, the last couple of wagons and the brake fouling the line. After several very smoky efforts, and an unwillingness to let our train pass, Control decided to let the down train draw into the station and buffer up gently to the goods train and whistle an attempt to bank it fully into the loop line. With many pyrotechnics from the pantograph, it pushed the whole lot clear of harm. My father saw a similar operation at the Manchester London Road South Junction station, when an LMS 'Jubilee', with a train of empty coaching stock, 20 vehicles, found itself unable to start away from a signal check. On that occasion too, an enlightened Control allowed a following electric to give it assistance. Apparently it was obvious to an onlooker that the 'Jubilee' did not start to exert itself until the electric had almost run out of wires. Such feats by mere commuter units are not surprising when the mechanics are looked at. The driving coach of a three-coach unit was equipped with a 325hp motor on each axle, giving a total of 1,300 hp and a tractive effort of 23,000lb. This was doubled with a six-car combination.

I had not been gathering 'cops' for many months before much more distant places became tempting. A friend came back from Doncaster with glowing tales of A4s, and it wasn't long before I had made plans for my own visit. It was on 18th March 1943 - such important dates don't fade from memory - and whenever the anniversary fell on a Saturday I went back there for several years after. The fare was 2s 7d, but if we booked to 'Leeds via Doncaster' it was only 2s 4d. The reason for the anomaly was the competition from the LMS Victoria to Leeds service, for which the charge was 2s 4d, whereas there was no competitor for the journey to Doncaster. Over the years, we took advantage when things were quiet at Donny to take the train to Leeds Central, considering we had paid for it! That occasioned my first trip behind an A4.

One visit to Doncaster was memorable, in that the return journey was headed by A1 no.4475 *Flying Fox*, which had been transferred to Gorton shed in July 1944. On leaving Sheffield Victoria, it soon became apparent that we were not picking up any speed, and before we had reached the steepening grades we ground to a halt. We had to wait for the approach of a following goods train (a J11 again, as far as we could see) to start us on our way, but the rest of the journey to Manchester was still hesitant throughout. It was after 10 pm that I reported back to two rather anxious parents. The reason for the slow journey was shortage of steam. A conjecture is that the Gorton locomen were not familiar with the Gresley engine. I remember once sitting in the refreshment room at Sheffield Victoria watching a V2 trying to restart a Marylebone train, and taking fully five minutes for the driver to get out of 'dead centre' with the valve gear – going backwards and forwards.

Something other readers may recall was the failure, through lack of steam, of the Thompson rebuild with two cylinders of B3 no.6166, shortly after its rebuilding in October 1943. It had entered Woodhead tunnel in an up direction when it happened, and it drifted backwards to where, outside the tunnel, the points had been set for a goods train to leave the loop and follow the passenger train. It crashed into the 04, forcing it into its steel-hopper wagons and destroying two or three of them. I'm afraid that some of us blamed Thompson for interfering with a GC design - this was the same reaction of some GC locomen to Thompson's rebuilding of thirteen Q4 0-8-0s as Q1 0-8-0 tanks: "A good engine spoiled." I think the B3/3 incident was hushed up at the time because of the War.

A Walk round Doncaster 'Plant' in 1945 produced the sight of the remains of the two P1

2-8-2s after dismantling. Fairly clearly, all the bits and pieces of both were there, but only the numbered cab of 2393 was visible. I felt that ethically I could tick that one off, though usually I engaged vigorously in the strict enforcement of whether to count only partial sightings!

Late one evening, as dusk was descending on Skelton Junction and we were preparing to go home, the 'pegs' came off for the Glazebrook line, and in the far distance we heard, in the quiet of the evening, the continuous sound of a Great Central whistle. Deciding to wait for the mystery to reveal itself, we saw a fitted van train hurtle into view, hauled by a B7 4-6-0. It passed under our road bridge, and we ran across the road, to see the two enginemen struggling to stop the whistle from sounding. As the train hit the gradient it slowed rapidly and the driver, leaning out and realizing where he was, threw the regulator wide open. With a roar that could have been heard for miles around, the sturdy Robinson four-cylinder lifted its load over the hill without a slip and disappeared into the night - still whistling.

An unidentified LNER class B7 4-6-0 in full flow with a van train on the GC main line c.1947.
photo: Chris Ward collection

East Markham churchyard headstone

Recently noticed and photographed by Mike Eggenton was this churchyard headstone at East Markham in Nottinghamshire.

A double tragedy for the family as the deaths of both daughter (age 4 in 1873) and son (age 15 in 1879) are recorded on the same headstone. The son, Joseph Day, was killed in a railway accident on the MS&L in Sheffield on 10th January 1879.

How good were the Great Western RODs?

by Richard Hardy

From the SLS Journal May/June 1996. Submitted by Brian Slater.

A few years ago, my attention was drawn to an article which severely criticised the performance and maintenance of the Robinson ROD locomotives built under the direction of the Ministry of Munitions from 1917 onwards and sold after the First World War to the GWR. Yet some of these locomotives worked on into the late 1950s on an alien railway and I felt obliged to correct some very adverse opinions that had been expressed to the author of that article by certain Western men who had fired and driven the RODs. I said that, as I had not only served BR for a good many years, but also the LNER (of blessed memory) from 1940 onwards, it could be argued that I was biased. Of course I was, but there was just a chance that those whose opinions were quoted might also be. So maybe we could start again from scratch!

Preserved GWR Churchward class 2800 2-8-0 no.2857 in the yard at Bridgnorth on the Severn Valley Railway on 25 March 2012. *photo: Hugh Llewelyn*

In 1989, I had the pleasure of travelling on no.2857, the Churchward 8-coupled freight engine on the Severn Valley Railway. I am an admirer of much of the great man's work but above all, I wanted to see what sort of comparison could be made with the engines I knew so well, the greatest of all heavy freight engines, John G. Robinson's Great Central class 8K, ROD or LNER class O4, call it what you will, the simplest, most rugged, indestructible and free steaming heavy freight locomotive that most certainly won both wars.

It is not easy to make a comparison between the two machines because I knew the RODs best during my earlier years on the railway when conditions were pretty rough and it was a rarity to find an O4 fresh out of Gorton works. They were abused and worked mercilessly and always came back for more. My work on the O4s was up the Worsborough bank at 1 in 40 and over Woodhead with full loads of coal, maybe with a banker, maybe not. I also worked on them as an apprentice at Doncaster Carr Loco where crossheads were remetalled when you could get your fingers between the bar

and the slipper block. That was during the war but I was also to be involved with the class in what was to be a golden era. It is a fact that I never heard a word said against the O4 either by enginemen or by the artisan staff at any shed at which I worked.

In 1949, I was appointed Shedmaster at Woodford, ten miles from Banbury (GW) and seventy from Marylebone. The Annesley-Woodford freight service was going magnificently and, although the Thompson 01 was its backbone, these excellent engines were effectively supported by the O4s. Without a shadow of a doubt, the Annesley 'Runners' formed the fastest out and home loose coupled freight service in the country. Late starts and loss of time by either traffic or engine was viewed very seriously and the successful use of the O4 on such high speed work disposes of the myth that they could not run.

Former ROD 2-8-0 as BR no.3028 on Banbury shed on the Western Region of BR.

I rode with Annesley driver, Reuben Taylor, from Rugby to Woodford and our average speed, start to stop, including the long climb to Catesby tunnel was about 28 mph, with a maximum of about 42/43 mph. The engine was worked, as always with an O4, a turn and a half up from full gear and first port until we were about to strike the bank and then the driver lifted the regulator just into the second valve. The pressure remained constant on 175 psi from start to finish, firing was no effort with a gently sloping fire, about eight (LNER) shovelfuls each firing through the little trap door which remained open throughout until running the fire down for the relief crew at Woodford. Doing the work, I was in a good position to judge. More important still, on loose coupled work, the steam brake on an O4 could stop a full load with as little as 80 lbs of steam. Not every class of locomotive could do this and there were times when men were short of steam and still had to stop in a hurry. There were times too when even an O4 would be down for steam and what they would do with 100 psi or less was remarkable. And, in answer to one of the critics, I have to say that, with either a horseshoe or hopper GC tender, the coal did not work down into the cab except at high speeds as on the 'Runners', a small problem much more easily overcome than the cascades *(of coal)* on our Austerities running down to Calvert with the Neasden 'Runners'.

So the gentle amble over the Severn Valley was different to the blood and thunder of the climb to Woodhead and the GC main line south of Nottingham. But 2857 was in excellent order so I can say in all honesty that she was a splendid old nag, smooth riding, sensitive and strong. The footplate was high and the tender and firehole door low so that the firing could be accomplished without lifting the coal, even if one was bent double. On the ROD, the low tender and the small trap firehole door, set high in the backplate, made our light small bladed shovels a necessity and kept the back supple. But a 1903 Churchward engine was ahead of its time - long travel piston valves, free running and powerful. But it was not designed for comfort with that pole reverser an encumbrance and one wonders if Swindon ever gave a thought to such triviality, for performance came first

By 1903, John G had only got as far as his slide valve eight coupled 'Tinies', good engines but inferior to the 2800s. But when the 8K (LNER O4) came out in 1911, it had high superheat, piston valves and it was very, very strong and rugged - the perfect freight engine. It was cheap to build and maintain and it was no coincidence that it was chosen as the standard design for overseas work for the Ministry of Munitions in 1917 and built in very large numbers, whilst in the last war, many were sent abroad once more and then again, in 1952 and 1956.

Now the GW enginemen who have written about these engines will have none of this! But, over the years, I have spoken to Western men who have contrary views, although we would expect them to revere the 2800s as we did the O4s. We are told that the surplus RODs that the GWR bought and kept after the First War (and some lasted up to the late 1950s) were slow, rough old things, often hard up for steam. They were said to be uncomfortable and that they rolled and had only one speed. Could these be the same engines that ran the Annesley 'Runners'? Why were the GW RODs said to be hard up for steam so often and yet so very rarely the LNER engines? Could some of the Western men have pulled them up too far which could account for the fore and aft motion which has been mentioned? And if they were as bad as they said, how was it the Western kept them going, a non-standard engine, for so long? Perhaps they were indispensable after all.

No GC engine would steam with a haycock fire, indeed no LNER, LMS or SR engine of whatever breed. It was the ultimate sin to have a haycock in the centre of the grate. An ROD would go well with a heavy fire but it had to slope down to the front and all firing had to be to the sides of the grate, the back corners and immediately under, but not forward of, the door. This was drilled into me long before I heard of 'Twmps' *(what is that? - Ed.)*. Maybe the GW fitted their own firehole door and flap which would permit the use of the larger GW shovels but, on our engines, the fire was fed through the trap door with the LNER small bladed shovel and the back hand right up so that the coal did not strike either the baffle plate or the brick arch. The presence of a haycock would have stopped the coal in its flight to the front of the box unless the shovel was put right in and past the haycock which made hard work of the job. The trapdoor would remain open to cut down smoke unless the crew were in dire trouble for steam. The big door was never opened except when at a stand to build up a fire with nobs or to keep warm when standing about. GC engines were free steamers and an O4 in normal form and fired correctly would steam for ever.

So, what can be my conclusion? And, what indeed, is yours? Churchward was the greatest locomotive engineer of his generation but John G. Robinson built engines that were suited to the GC and LNER, indeed to world-wide conditions. The 2800s cannot be faulted in their ability to do the job. Nor can the RODs, but the GC engines had the edge when the going was rough, when maintenance was at a low ebb, when fires could not be cleaned for days, and when abroad where conditions were sometimes beyond belief. The old RODs travelled the world and were never found wanting.

As an afterthought, here is an extract from an anthology put together some thirty years ago. It is a moving piece of writing by a Mr Harley and I have read it times without number.

> 'What a line that was for romance. On one of those warm still evenings which March seldom fails to bring to the Pennines, the western sky would still have its mantle of smoky pink spread above the hills which form the backbone of England, whilst in the valley, in the eastward dusk, a steady procession of Great Central coal trains would be blasting their way, one after another, up to Woodhead tunnel, the deep throated bellow of the GC RODs booming in the crannies and crevices of Wharncliffe Crags, whilst shafts of light from the firebox door would pick out the white trunks of the forest of birches alongside the line: as one train passed out of earshot round the curve to Thurgoland, another would be developing a hearty crescendo in the woods by Oughty Bridge. And so it went on, hour by hour'
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> 'Years later, in the dark nights of 1940/41, when we stood on the edge of defeat, when all we valued was thrown into the melting pot and all our hopes seemed dashed, Home Guards on their nightly duties would listen to the same old sound, the same old engines, the GC RODs pounding up the bank as of yore, as if all was well, as if the nightmare had vanished, the one reassuring note in a mad and hostile world. These were the engines that had helped us to win the First War and, with a bit of luck, would see us through to win the Second.'

They did!

Editor's note: The article quoted from, by C.B.Harley, can be found on the following pages.

LNER class O4/3 2-8-0 no.1292c approaching Penistone with a down coal train made up of an assortment of wagons in 1924. This ex-ROD loco was built by the North British Loco Co. in June 1919 and entered service on the LNER in Jan.1924 being renumbered 6292 in Aug.1924. Rebuilt as O4/8 in May 1944 and withdrawn in Nov.1963 as no.63853. It is a pity that the photo isn't clear enough to identify the wagons. The first wagon is a 4-plank GC vehicle. Would this be used for carrying coal?
photo: Eric Munday

Maiden speech in the House of Commons

by Mike Kane MP (Wythenshawe and Sale East) on 4th March 2014

submitted by Richard Graham

(Although a political speech I am happy to include it in *Forward* as he mentions the GCR, Edward Watkin, Northenden and quotes from the bible! - Ed.)

It was one of my predecessors, Alf Morris, who recruited me to public life. He said in his maiden speech that "it was Aristotle who held it to be the essence of probability that some improbable things will happen." And here I find myself, as only the fourth elected Member for the Wythenshawe and, now, Wythenshawe and Sale East constituency. I must from the outset acknowledge the role played by the Prime Minister in my success. In a rather heated exchange at Prime Minister's questions before the by-election, he and the Leader of the Opposition clashed over my candidature in the election. I want to place on record my thanks to the Prime Minister for the ensuing publicity in Manchester, helping Labour to secure one of the highest ever shares of the vote in the history of the constituency.

I want to thank the electors of Wythenshawe and Sale East for returning me here and many Members on both sides of this House for the welcome I have received since coming here. It will be a privilege to sit on these Benches as a Labour MP, following in the footsteps of Keir Hardie, who created the party 114 years ago and is a hero of mine. It filled me with immense pride to welcome the leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), to the constituency twice in recent weeks.

I wish to pay tribute to my predecessors. In November 1950, the first MP for Wythenshawe, Eveline Hill, a Conservative, won the ballot for a private Member's Bill and introduced the Deserted Wives Bill, which would have given security of tenure to women who had been deserted by their husbands after the war. Without enough votes, the Bill fell. In 1952, she, along with two female colleagues, wrote to *The Times* urging Conservative associations to adopt more women to help secure more progressive legislation - 60 years later it would seem that the advice still applies.

I mentioned Aristotle at the top of my speech, and it is often an Aristotelian confluence of events that brings any of us to this place - in my case, they were events that no one from any part of this House would have wished for. Paul Goggins was an extraordinarily dedicated public servant, and was loved and respected by all in this Chamber. He was a friend to many in this place, including to me and my wife Sandra. Justice and peace were his driving passions, and his ministerial work in the Home Office and Northern Ireland reflected that. His work with the victims of contaminated blood products and asbestos-related diseases was an extension of Alf Morris's work in helping people who were chronically sick and disabled. As I walk these corridors, I am being constantly told that I have big shoes to fill, and it is true - I do. However, I know that in one area at least, our shared and abiding passion for Manchester City football club, I will not let him down.

Paul believed in the Augustinian notion of the world as it is and the world as it should be. He believed that we should strive on all sides, despite the tensions we face in this place and in this country, to create a better world. Such tensions currently include: the

bedroom tax - or spare room subsidy; welfare reform; how to create a stronger economy; and the worrying situations we face in Syria and Ukraine. We cannot create that better world together without those tensions, and where better to do that from than the House of Commons, which has been the world's leading instrument of revolutionary but peaceful societal change.

I am proud to have been born in the constituency, to have lived in the constituency all my life and to have taught in the constituency. Now I am proud to represent the constituency. If we are to ensure that Wythenshawe and Sale East is to continue as a thriving place in which to live and work, supporting our transport infrastructure will be critical. The country's first municipal airport, Manchester, lies within the boundaries of the constituency. Granted a licence in 1929, it was established in 1933 by the Manchester city council by just one vote - 56 to 55. Now it is one of the biggest drivers of the economy in northern England.

Light rail is critical to the constituency. There is a long-established line through Sale and a route in development through Wythenshawe to Manchester airport. Heavy rail is also critical, with the establishment and growth of the rail hub at Manchester airport. Unfortunately, we still have no railway station on the Stockport to Chester line that passes through the constituency. We look forward to welcoming High Speed 2 and its station in Wythenshawe at some stage in the future.

Speaking of HS2, Edward Watkin, who was a Member of this place in the 19th century and a resident in Northenden in my constituency, oversaw the construction of the Great Central main line, a purpose-built high-speed railway line of its day; and also oversaw a failed attempt to dig a channel tunnel under the English channel to connect his railway empire to the French rail network. That vision was realised only l00 years later, but as Disraeli said 200 years ago: "What Manchester does today the rest of the world does tomorrow."

More unusual routes through the constituency include the trans-Pennine trail, a cycling and walking route along the banks of the River Mersey, an off-road intercontinental route from Hull to Liverpool in the UK, and a route from Galway to Istanbul across the rest of the continent. The Bridgewater Canal is also highly significant. Built by the Duke of Bridgewater in 1761, it brought coal to power the industrial revolution in Manchester, which changed the world.

To create that better world that we all want to see, we must continue to champion the people whom we represent, to listen to their stories and to help them build their own power through strong relationships and action. Eveline Hill believed in a better world in which deserted wives would have greater rights and in which there would be more representation and diversity in this Chamber.

Alf Morris believed in a better world for people who were chronically sick and disabled. He successfully introduced a ground-breaking Private Member's Bill in 1970, recognising their rights to lead a life of dignity and worth. Likewise, Paul Goggins believed in that better world for people with HIV and hepatitis C infection from contaminated blood products and for asbestos victims.

As the son of Irish immigrants, I am proud to serve in this legislature. My parents strived for a better world. I remember at the age of 10 being rehoused in an affordable three-bedroom council house. I saw how that lifted their spirits. I envision a world where all people can have a home, regardless of their status, that lifts their spirits and does not sap their energy; where people can access the job of their choosing and be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace; where more people are paid a living wage and are free from the tyranny of the loan sharks and where people have access to fair credit.

The primary purpose of our leadership in this place must be to create more leaders, not followers. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians implores us all to lead a life worthy of our calling. I hope to do so.

Hazlehead - Memories of a GC Station in the Pennines

by C.B.Harley

From 'Railway World' Sept. 1964 and submitted by Ken Grainger.

One day in the school holidays I picked up one of my brother's magazines and was astonished to discover in it an article entitled *Walks near Sheffield*. "Nonsense!" I thought, nobody would choose to go for a walk around Sheffield! How wrong can one be? Some years later I went to live there and was soon made aware that between the capitals of steel (Sheffield) and cotton (Manchester) there lay an extensive stretch of rocky moorland, topping the 2,000 foot contour in places and offering days and evenings of pure delight to the hardy walker. One of the better known routes is called the Cut Gate. It begins near the Flouch Inn on Thurlstone Moor, dips down to cross the River Don at Brookhouse Bridge and then ascends a long easy slope to the head of Mickleden. Eventually it tumbles down Cranberry Clough to join the Derwent stream, not far below its source in boggy Bleaklow, and follows its valley past the Howden and Derwent reservoirs down to Bamford, on the Dore and Chinley line of the Midland Railway - 15 miles of energetic but not difficult walking.

In the far-off days of the 1920s, before the motor bus began to spread its oily trail beyond the suburbs, the most practical way of reaching the Flouch Inn was by Great Central Railway train to Hazlehead station, a wayside construction half-way between Penistone and the eastern portal of the Woodhead Tunnel, not far from the scene of the Bullhouse disaster of 1884.

Now the Penistone district is no grove of Arcady. There may be places on earth where the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, but the blasts which sweep across the Thurlstone moors could almost do the shearing themselves without assistance from the knife. Consequently most trains pounded through Hazlehead station as though it were not there. Certainly anyone standing on the up platform (which was about 50yds long, four bricks high and wide enough for a wheelbarrow) while an express passed through received an object lesson in the majesty of the machine no less than the insignificance of man. Access for the feet to the carriage footboards from this platform was feasible for the young and active by clinging to the door-handles, but elderly Yorkshire men and women are apt to be nimbler in their wits than in their limbs so that a portable set of wooden steps was kept handy to assist in loading the heavyweights. The west end of the platform terminated in something like a small garden shed, which provided shelter for a handful of intending passengers.

It may be judged, therefore, that the walking fraternity using Hazlehead as a starting point had to adjust their schedules to a rather sparse train service. Indeed, the station probably assumed its busiest aspect about half-past seven on Sunday morning, with the arrival of a westbound stopping train which left Sheffield at 6.35am and picked up the Barnsley contingent at Penistone. I have seen the fireman of the Robinson 4-4-0 lean out of his capacious cab, tapping his forehead and shaking his head in amazed derision at the sight of the detraining ramblers staggering about the platform, lashed and buffeted by squalls of rain or snow; but equally I have known days when not a wisp of grass moved in the still air and the lark sang high in the misty blue. Such a one was my initiation to this delectable spot.

The timetable showed that on Saturdays only the 1.46pm semi-fast from Sheffield called conditionally at Hazlehead to take up for Manchester. If to take up for Manchester, thought I, why not to set down from Sheffield? Full of youthful importance I wrote off to the company and made the suggestion, which to my surprise was at once agreed to. Having been brought up, as it were, in the shadow of the Big Three (and who those were, you may guess) it took some little time for the fact to sink in that the Great Central attended to passengers' requests and complaints with a promptitude and courtesy which were positively disarming.

The up platform at Hazlehead with railway staff (and families?). *photo: Ken Grainger collection*

Anyway, armed with the confirmatory letter from the Superintendent's Office I presented myself at Sheffield Victoria station the following Saturday and showed my credentials to guard of the Manchester bound train. "Oh yes, I've heard about it, it's all right". It was not exactly the red carpet which was unrolled at Hazlehead that day; in fact, the rear half of the train as usual was off the platform. Trained to the habits of a third-class season-ticket holder on the LNWR, I was preparing to jump down on to the ballast to save the company any further time and trouble when I was warned to stay put - they would "draw up" for me to get off, and so they did.

The only other time I felt so important on a railway journey was at the end of a summer holiday at Dunbar. The 1.15pm ex-Waverley was scheduled to call conditionally to take up for the South, and again I happened to be the sole consignment. Showing the ticket at the platform gate shook the staff out of their midday siesta and a message to the signal box sent the points snapping over from the main line to the platform road. In a few minutes Class Z Atlantic No.716 was protesting loudly at the home signal as she was nearly brought to a stand before being allowed to creep into the loop with her heavy train. Although it only took about three seconds to shove me into a handy corridor it must have been nearer three minutes before the train began to move forward again. If anyone thinks that three-cylinder engines were better at starting their trains than two-cylinder, let him observe what happens when the three-cylinder machine is restricted to 65 per cent maximum cut-off. I imagine I cost that driver about ten minutes by the time we had laboured up Cockburnspath.

But to return to our muttons— Hazlehead, unlike Somerset Road, was not a place to linger at. Trainspotting didn't offer a strong counter-attraction to walking the moorlands. Photographically it had its points, but the camera was almost too near the subject and speeds were generally too high for all but the expensive types of camera shutters.

There was always a strong Yorkshire flavour about the scene and its frequenters. Coming off the moors drenched to the skin in one of the summer downpours of 1922, I stepped into the diminutive cabin at the end of the up platform. Being too wet to

sit down in comfort made no difference, since the benches were filled with a party of men and women returning from some jollification - possibly a funeral wake. Beef-red faces and china-blue eyes shone amid the steam of wet clothes and the reek of strong tobacco. Every so often one male member of the party would venture a remark which was taken up by the rest in the manner of a Greek play chorus - swaying and nodding their assent, the old crones would intone a succession of "ayes", "ees" and "ahs".

"What time's this train of ours?" came a question.

"We're due outen 'ere at eight minutes t'eight" returned a burly oracle, one corner of his mouth biting hard on his pipe stem as he looked out with solemn satisfaction at the pouring July torrent of rain.

"We've had a grand day!"

"Aye! A grand day...grand day" came the refrain.

So it went on until, prompt on time at 7.52pm, the little cabin began to shake and shudder as the up stopping train clattered in over the points of the crossover, the engine blowing off steam like fury and gratuitously announcing its arrival with a blast on the hoarse GC whistle. Local trains always seemed to be in a frantic hurry. The robust Gorton engines would stand having the regulator-handle shoved well across at the start without losing their feet, and in next to no time the teak six-wheelers would be hammering out their *allegro vivace* of dum-di-di dum-di-di dum-di-di as they bucketed off to the next station where, with a short series of grinding jolts, the whole procession would be brought up sharp.

GCR class 1 4-6-0 no.425 'City of Manchester' at Hazlehead with a down stopper in 1922.
photo:C.B.Harley

What a line that was for romance! On one of those warm still evenings which March seldom fails to bring to the Pennines, the western sky would still have its mantle of smoky pink spread above the hills which form the backbone of England, whilst in the valley, in the eastward dusk, a steady procession of Great Central coal trains would be blasting their way, one after another, up to Woodhead tunnel, the deep-throated bellow of the 2-8-0s booming in the crannies and crevices of Wharncliffe Crags, whilst occasional shafts of light from an opened firebox door would pick out the white trunks of the forest of birches alongside the line. As one train passed out of earshot round the curve to

Thurgoland another would be developing a hearty crescendo in the woods by Oughty Bridge, and so it went on, hour by hour. The squeaky chaffering of the L&NW 0-8-0 which pushed its way into the parade somewhere in the course of the evening sounded almost insulting.

Years later, in the dark nights of 1940 and 1941, when we stood on the edge of defeat, when all we valued was thrown in the melting-pot and all our hopes seemed to be dashed, Home Guards on their nightly duties would listen to the same old sound from the same old engines, as if all was well, as if the nightmare had vanished, the one sane reassuring note in a mad and hostile world. These were the engines which helped us to win the first world war and, with a bit of luck, would see us through to win the second. Good old Great Central! Peace to its ashes!

Wanderings around the Internet
with Bob Gellatly

"A History of Market Rasen Railway Station" at http://community.lincolnshire.gov.uk/Files/Community/489/PART_1_STATION_HISTORY.pdf

There is a lot of good local history (including railway history) on the web but it is not always easy to find. Much of it is to be found on local community sites that encourage contributions related to their particular geographical area. So if you are looking into the history of the railway in a particular area it is a good strategy to see what these local community websites have to offer. This contribution by Brian Ward on the history of Market Rasen station is worthy of an academic dissertation. It is presented as a pdf file of 57 pages. That's more than some books on a complete railway history! It includes photos and maps and the treatment is comprehensive.

"Real Time Trains" at www.realtimetrains.co.uk
"Open Train Times" at www.opentraintimes.com

When train watching or travelling it is useful to know the state of play regarding timekeeping or even to know whether a train is actually running. This applies to passenger, freight and engineering movements. Type in a location and a time and a list of trains comes up on the screen. The information is linked to Network Rail computers and is generally reliable.

The train IDs given for passenger services are correct but for freight movements they are fictitious. Apparently this is considered by the operators as sensitive information. You need an industry contact if you want the correct freight train IDs. I have found this information invaluable when writing captions for photos taken when out train watching. Although I don't have a smart phone I have noticed other train watchers using them lineside to keep up-to-date with the information.

Which of these two sites you use is down to personal preference. The information is the same, but the presentation is different. Open Train Times links to its own maps which Real Time Trains doesn't have. Try them both.

"Railcam" at www.railcam.org

The name of this site is slightly misleading. Although it provides links to railcams around the country its main asset is its signalling diagrams. These are facsimiles of the displays that would be seen in signalling centres. Not all areas are covered but the most important, the South Yorkshire Joint, is included in 'Worksop-Retford'. This means that I can sit at home and watch the progress of any freight movement - I am watching a Felixstowe-Doncaster freightliner at the moment. If I want a photo I know when to go trackside - no longer do I have wait in hope! The identity of any train on the diagram is provided by a link to 'Real Time Trains' (see above) although I have found that some trains the link doesn't work. A donation via PayPal is requested from users of this site but well worth it if you watch trains and you want to know what you are watching.

On Great Central lines today
by Kim Collinson

The severe winter storms that affected large parts of the rail network did not cause widespread disruption to GC lines, however there was a knock on effect to services as a result of damage elsewhere on the network. For several days in February no services could run between Marylebone and Birmingham. Also during the month a land slip at Unstone near Chesterfield resulted in all southbound East Midland and Cross Country services from Sheffield being diverted via the GC through Darnall and Beighton and then the 'Old Road'.

The commissioning of a new waste energy power station at Runcorn in March will see all the waste trains from the Manchester terminals at Bredbury, Northenden, Dean Lane and Pendleton being rerouted there during the coming months so bringing to an end the long running flows of household waste trains to the Roxby landfill terminal at Scunthorpe.

Class 20 locomotives have again been in use in the Barnsley area since January on engineering trains, on the 24th January a triple headed combination of locos 20302/303/312 were observed at Barnsley at 21:30, and during the early hours of the 20th March 20303/309 passed through Penistone around 02:00 en route to Doncaster.

There have been some interesting workings and developments at the southern end of the GC. On 4th February the three remaining operational class 121 single car DMUs, 121032/121034/960014 worked from Tyseley to Aylesbury, this was followed on the 9th by a railtour from Marylebone to Oxford hauled by D1015 and 47773. This was the second occasion that the preserved Western hydraulic has been used on GC lines in this area since 2013.

From the 14th February the Didcot to Bicester MOD and return freight is being rerouted via the GW/GC via Princes Risborough, Aylesbury and the former GC main line via Calvert to Claydon LNE Junction due to upgrading of the line between Bicester and Oxford for the introduction of the Marylebone to Oxford services in 2016.

Sunday 23rd February saw 'Sprinter' dmu 155345 work four return services through Penistone - these units are only seen on the branch on rare occasions.

Friday 4th April a Network Rail test train from Leeds passed through Penistone at 22:23 en route to Huddersfield before returning again at 23:55 and then going on to Rotherham Central and Deepcar then via Woodhouse to Derby. It was worked by 31285 with three vehicles.

An interesting sight passing through Guide Bridge on Saturday 22nd March was the afternoon Leeds to Crewe freightliner triple headed by 66534/538/589.

On the 28th February locos 37612/37667 worked over the LD&EC to Thoresby Colliery Jn on a test train from Derby.

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.

above: Diverted because of the Unstone landslip south of Dronfield on the Midland main line, the East Midlands Trains 07:42 Liverpool-Nottingham service passes Beighton signal box on 6th March 2014. The train is made up of 'Sprinter' units 158788/780. If Beighton station was still standing, the train would be in the up platform. *photo: Bob Gellatly*

below: D1015 'Western Champion' and 47773 at Quainton Road on the Marylebone-Oxford leg of the 'Chiltern Champion' railtour on 9thFeb.2014. The train had travelled via Princes Risborough and will continue via Bicester Town. *photo: Nigel Gibbs*

Woodhead - the final hours

by Chris Corroy

From 'Forward' no.32, March 1982, and submitted by John Bennett.

Even on Friday 17th July 1981 it still seemed incredible to believe that the last hours of the Woodhead rail link were upon us. The Manchester-Sheffield-Wath (MSW) electrified system had had so many narrow escapes in the preceding months that a peaceful, planned closure seemed unlikely. After the drama of the accidents at Dinting in March and Hadfield in April, there followed action by rail unions leading to the reprieve of the line from 1st June to 20th July and then with little over a week to go it seemed that nature had brought a premature end. On 9th July a freak rainstorm in the Longdendale Valley had caused a landslip over the track between Crowden and Torside, Local BR management deemed that the line should not be repaired, yet amazingly the BRB over-ruled this decision - the line was repaired and normal operations resumed for the final week.

Rumours were rife in February 1981 that the Class 76 locomotives would be replaced by diesels before closure and such stories continued to circulate into the final week. On this last afternoon I was informed by a contact in Sheaf House that all Bo+Bos had been specially worked to Guide Bridge and so there would be no more electric-hauled trains worked by Rotherwood or Wath men, but Guide Bridge crews were expected to work normally during the evening and night. The unknown factor being whether or not Class 76 operation would continue to the end. It was with this knowledge that my wife and I set off for our last session of watching trains over Woodhead. We decided to go to the most convenient parking place at the heart of the MSW, Dunford Bridge. Here a fine view is afforded into the Eastern portal of the Woodhead tunnel and of the stretch of track through Dunford station and away curving eastwards towards Hazlehead.

We arrived at Dunford at 19:45 with the sunshine we had encountered driving through Sheffield having given away to more gloomy conditions with black clouds threatening over the other side of the Pennines. What a surprise it was to find about 30 cars parked in the disused station yard around the Dunford West signal box. As expected enthusiasts had been out in force throughout the day but as I parked a number were leaving and I soon discovered that there was a general belief that with all the Bo+Bos now west of the Pennines, all the remaining trains would be diesel-hauled.

Having spent a considerable number of evenings at various locations along the line during the past few months it was not surprising that I should see someone I knew amongst the large number of "spectators" present. He told me that the last train had been at 16:45, a westbound MGR headed by 76010 + 76016. This had been followed by a couple of light electrics, 76051 at 17:35 and 76022 some 15 minutes later. A power failure earlier in the afternoon had necessitated halting all traffic at either end of the tunnel and obliging drivers had allowed a number of enthusiasts to undertake a journey of a lifetime in the cab of a Class 76 through the tunnel.

Ironically, we had not been at Dunford for 10 minutes when there was a word from the box that an Up train was "on line". There was a frenzy of activity as photographers moved to vantage points. What, I wondered, would be the motive power? The next five minutes seemed endless as I peered into the tunnel. Eventually two white lights became visible and the lack of sound indicated that it was electric haulage, but it was approaching very slowly and it was 20:11 when two 76s emerged from the darkness heading the Trafford Park to Parkeston Quay "Speedlink". They stopped momentarily and then crawled into the station and halted by the box. Cameras clicked as 76014 + 76006 stood with a train of long vans, small tankers, and empty car transporters. The driver was receiving instructions to proceed, but with the passing of this train normal working was to be resumed with the effects of the power failure cleared. The train left at 20:15.

It was then a matter of waiting in increasingly dismal conditions as the cloud cover thickened. Although one or two cars arrived, more departed and so gradually the ranks began to thin. Patience was rewarded at 21:00 when a shout from the box said that another Up train was en-route, and after a sharp shower, 76016 + 76010 raced through at 21:28 with 8E73 Dewsnap - Tinsley mixed freight.

The last day at Dunford Bridge - a Bo+Bo passes the Dunford West signal box at 13:10 with a down train of MGR wagons (they look empty - hence the single loco). photo: Adrian Freeman

Soon there was news of another Up train. Although it was too dark for photographs, there was still sufficient twilight to see clearly and the lights of the box illuminated the scene. At 21:50 76007 + 76012 came out of the tunnel with 32 empty HAA hoppers on 6Z81 Fiddlers Ferry - Mansfield/Shirebrook.

There was still a fair number of enthusiasts around the box but numbers could not compare with those now enjoying themselves in the nearby "Stanhope Arms" which stands on the southern side of the station overlooking the line. Patrons had been arriving throughout the evening and I gathered that a local hunt was holding a dinner, so no doubt making this one of the local social occasions of the year. With a friendly signalman I was able to ascertain that no more trains were due and so we took the opportunity of calling in at the "Stanhope". The lights and laughter contrasted sharply with the gloom of the railway. Our stay was brief and by the time we had returned to the Yard the Down signal had turned to green to herald the approach of the first westbound train for over five hours! With darkness almost total it was necessary to take advantage of the bright light shining from the box over the line in order to read the locomotive numbers and determine the type of wagons on the train. There was the unmistakeable purr of a diesel as it battled against the gradient as 47411 appeared with a Freightliner of 15 vehicles at 22:27 on 4Z63 Stourton - Garston.

Before long the Down signal again turned to green and at 22:50 76006 + 76014 eased past with 6M46 Barnsley Junction - Fiddlers Ferry consisting of the usual 30 HAA hoppers. The signalman called out that this was Woodhead's last MGR train as it had

been scheduled to leave Barnsley Junction at 03:44. We returned to sit in the car. A few enthusiasts had returned to the Yard after visiting the "Stanhope" but gradually cars began to depart as there was no sign of further activity. Looking eastwards down the line one could only see the blackness yet the valley would at times be dominated by the sound of bawdy singing from the "Stanhope". Nevertheless the irony of the situation was soon forgotten as the Down signal returned to green and the regular diesel-hauled Freightliner 4M55 Newcastle - Trafford Park approached. Its two class 37s were not making such heavy weather of the climb as I had seen on occasions in the past. The leading loco sounded its horn as it swept past at 23:54, with 37064 + 37094 conveying 20 vehicles.

A signal failure at around 13:00 on the last day meant that trains had to stop at the Dunford West signal box for instructions. Here a single Bo+Bo stands alongside the box with an up train of scrap bound for Tinsley yard. Note the semaphore signals visible beyond the 5th wagon that are standing guard at the end of the up yard. *photo: Adrian Freeman*

Midnight arrived and there was news of a pair of light engines following the Freightliner. Within moments their lights were visible as they slowly approached the box. The signal was still red as the Freightliner had still not cleared Torside, the next manned signal box to the west. Electrics 76012 + 76007 halted nearby at 00:03 but a minute later the road ahead cleared and they continued their journey towards the lights of the tunnel. The general air temperature had increased during the past hour, but this few degrees of extra warmth brought the first signs of the old enemy in these desolate parts, the fly. Fortunately, activity continued on the line and at 00:20 76010 + 76016 rattled through with 23 mineral wagons on 6M10 Tinsley - Warrington. So, yet again there was a situation of no electrics left on the eastern side of "the hill". However, there was hardly time for me to dwell on the point when at 00:28 76028 swept through the arc of light coming from the box as it gathered speed in the descent towards Sheffield heading a train of 30 mineral wagons on 8E43 Dee Marsh - Tinsley.

The burst of activity was over and we returned to the car for what was to be the longest wait of the night. The "Stanhope" was closed and the few enthusiasts had dwindled to ourselves, a man from Leeds who had now parked next to us, another man who was

parked someway down the yard and a youth from Stoke-on-Trent who had travelled by motor-bike and had settled in the signal box for the night.

Towards 02:15 I decided to pay my first visit of the night to the Dunford West signal box. Signalman Mathers was busily explaining the workings of the box to the motorcyclist and I listened as he referred to the box diagram which covered the track from Dunford East to a point 1,002 yards inside the tunnel. Suddenly a bell rang and Mr Mathers announced that 6E80 was on its way, this being the Ince - Barton-on-Humber anhydrous ammonia tanker train. This had made national news last April when one of the tankers had overturned in Hadfield station and fears of leakage of this lethal chemical necessitated the evacuation of nearby residents. At 02:55 76014 + 76006 burst from the darkness with a train of 7 tankers which were separated from the locomotives and guard's van by a long flat truck at each end. Soon another train was offered by Torside, the return 4E71 Trafford Park - Newcastle Freightliner, and at 03:11 47341 passed with 20 vehicles. Once again the waiting was brief as Mr Mathers signalled 8M26 Tinsley - Warrington and at 03:18 76028 rounded the curve with a train of mineral wagons.

Mr Mathers informed me that yet another train was on its way from Torside, 6Z82. Mr. Mathers commented on all the additional trains which had run in the last couple of weeks, referring to these "Z" trains as "Zebras". Soon 56063 (or at least that is what we thought it was) hurtled through at 03:23 with a train of 32 empty HAA hoppers, presumably from Fiddlers Ferry. This frenzy of activity had not ended as there was already news from Huddersfield Junction of another westbound train, 6M27 Immingham - Runcorn. I knew from "inside information" that this train would be diesel-hauled, worked by Rotherwood men, as the Bo+Bos were no longer available to them. Soon 37219 came to a halt by the box at 03:33 with the Down signal still showing red as the previous train had not cleared Torside. The crew stared in amazement at the sight of a group of people standing by the line at this time of the morning. Soon the line cleared and the train, consisting of eleven ICI tankers, moved off into the night.

The last day at Dunford Bridge: A pair of Bo+Bos climb up to Dunford Bridge with a fully-loaded train of MGR wagons, probably bound for Fiddlers Ferry. The grade is noticeable when compared to the level sidings in the down yard on the right. *photo: Adrian Freeman*

For the first time in an hour nothing was "on line", but soon Torside offered another "Zebra", 6Z64 Garston - Mansfield. The first signs of dawn were already in the eastern sky as 47381 charged past at 04:01 with a train of 30 HBA hopper wagons. Back in the box, Mr Mathers received reports from Control that the end was nearing with only one more train scheduled, the 6M62 Parkeston Quay - Edge Hill "Speedlink", referred to as the "car man" as it usually contained transporters with imported cars amongst its mixed traffic. This would presumably be hauled by 76006 + 76014 as they were the only electrics on this side of the Pennines. Mr Mathers speculated that the train would leave Rotherwood at any time now, reaching Dunford at around 05:00. The most intriguing question was whether this would be the last train or whether the final working would be 37219 returning light engine to Rotherwood. At 04:20 we heard that 6M62 was on its way and some 15 minutes later we knew it would be the last train, for information from the Manchester Division was that 37219 on 6M27 had still not reached Guide Bridge as it had suffered an engine failure.

Daylight was almost fully established when at 04:45 a bell rang and the train was offered by Huddersfield Junction. It was accepted and similarly offered to and accepted by Torside and then the Down signal went to green for the last time. At 05:02 bells rang to say the historic train had now entered the section of line controlled by Dunford West signal box. It was time to take up a suitable position to watch the last train enter the Woodhead Tunnel. The sky in the east was pink in colour with sunrise only moments away as the lights of the leading locomotive came into view. As the train approached the Dunford box the driver gave a long blast on the horn. I glanced at my watch, it was 05:08½, and then 76006 + 76014 swept through the platforms at a fair speed with their train of Polybulk vans, small tankers, Ferrywagon containers and long vans. Within seconds it had gone. We dashed to watch the tail lamp move away in the tunnel but it was soon to be lost as the first rays of sunlight fell onto the portal.

We walked back to the box to thank Mr Mathers for his hospitality. He was busily going through the procedure to close the box and at 05:16 he turned off the tunnel lights. We drove away from the station yard towards the main Woodhead road, the sun was now high in the sky and it was promising to be another pleasant summer day. Yet for Dunford no day would ever be the same again with the last train now gone, and similarly by this time (about 05:35) the last train would have passed through the Longdendale Valley. The Woodhead route had closed and class 76 operation had ended.

Dunford Bridge station and the Stanhope Arms c1910. The proximity of the "Stanhope" to the station can be seen in this view taken from the north side of the station. photo: John Law collection

The cover story
by the Editor

A few members may have a complete set of *Forward* magazines, but most of us only have the copies issued since we joined. I thought it would be good to look back and see how the appearance of our magazine has changed over the last 40 years.

In the beginning, the newsletter that went under the name of *Forward* (does anyone know who decided on the name?) did not have a cover. The title FORWARD simply appeared at the top of the first foolscap sheet. The production process involved typing out stencils and running the copies off a duplicator (those were the days!)

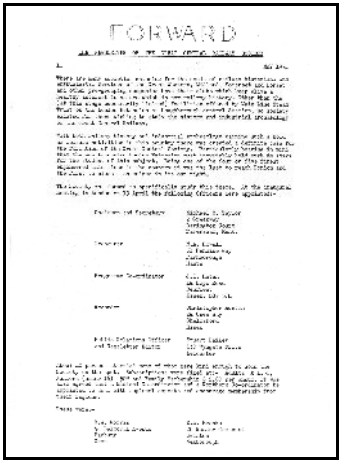
Issue no.**24** saw the introduction of a separate cover sheet featuring a 7x5 in. black & white photo and a list of the Society's officers below it on the front and further photos on the inside. The cover was in superior glossy paper compared to the remaining sheets. The number of sheets had slowly been increasing from the original 1 to 14.

A major change in the format took place with issue no.**62** when the size was changed from foolscap to A5 - as it is today. The cover was considerably improved in design and an orange colouring was given to the top FORWARD banner and the issue no. at the bottom of the page which featured a black & white image printed to a much higher quality than before. The cover was printed on glossy card. It had been designed by Barry Lane. Sadly the print quality of the contents remained poor (by today's standards). The back cover was also used to print good quality images.

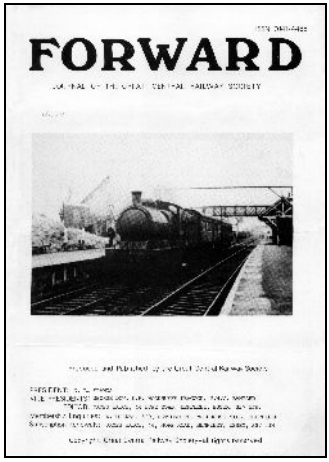
The quantum leap from a duplicator to professional printing took place with issue no.**68**. Card was no longer used for the cover which was printed on the same quality paper as the rest of the magazine. From issue no.**71** the monotone colour was changed from orange to green. The number of pages had by now reached 28.

A fresh modern design, also using green, was introduced with issue no.**95**. This was produced by the printers Interlith of Dinting, which I thought was very good. However, this was soon replaced by an in-house design of all-over green with issue no.**110**. The the cover reverted to card. A retrograde step on both counts in my opinion. However the number of pages was increased to 32 and eventually to 44 in this format.

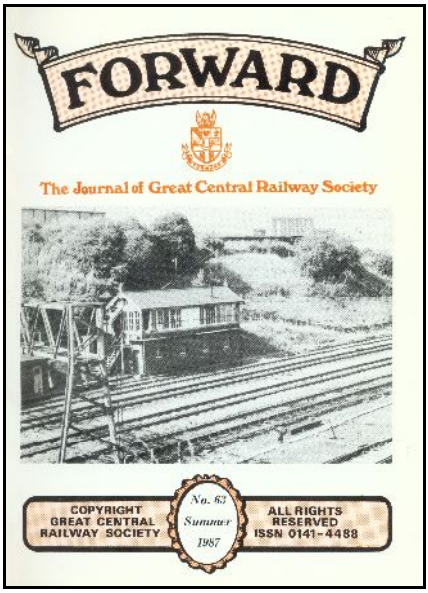
The present design by Paul Bambrick first appeared on issue no.**116**. At the same time the cover reverted back to paper. The number of pages was still 44 - a short run at 48 pages had to be terminated when some members were being charged postage due! Truly professional in appearance it is little wonder that Paul's design is still on the front of this issue no.**180**. It will be a brave committee that decides to change it!


FORWARD

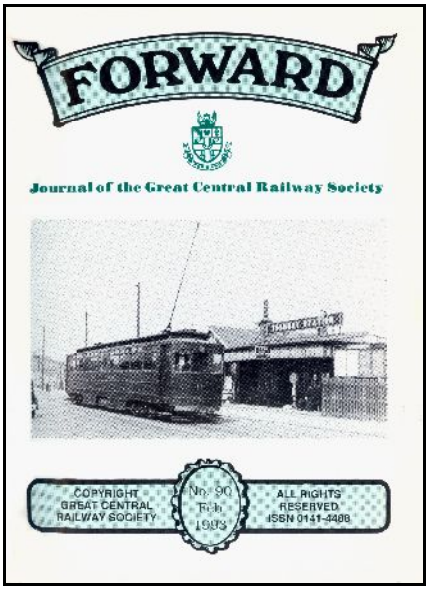
The front page of issue no.1


FORWARD

The cover of issue no.24



Issue no.63



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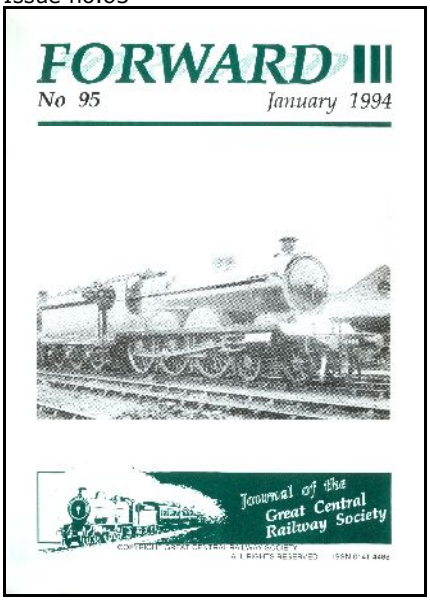
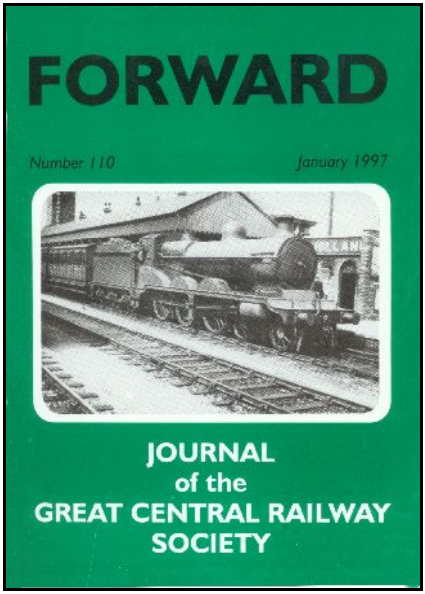


Issue no.95



Issue no.110

Previous Forward Editors

1 - 12 : Stuart Bailey
13 : Stuart Baily / James Hatch
14 - 61 : James Hatch
62 - 64 : Roy Chapman
65 - 67 : Editorial committee
68 - 107 : Roger Milnes
108 - 120 : Bryan Longbone
121 - 148 : Brian Bell

A pair of Bo+Bos at Dunford Bridge. It is the last day of traffic on the Woodhead route - Friday 17th July 1981. Many enthusiasts have gathered at Dunford Bridge at the east end of the Woodhead tunnel to watch the demise of this great feat of railway engineering. Electric locos 76006 + 76014 pass Dunford Bridge at 15:35 with 6Z64 Mansfield-Garstang and head towards the tunnel with a rake of new HBA wagons, the type used for export coal - traffic which would soon disappear. *photo: Adrian Freeman*

Some recent items from Great Central Railwayana Auctions
Auctions will take place at Stoneleigh Park on 12 July and 11 Oct. www.gcrauctions.com

A silver plated condiment holder, LNER MARYLEBONE, by Walker and Hall. Sold for **£150**.

A Great Central Railway dining car silver plated sugar bowl by Walker and Hall. Sold for **£180**.

A totem from Princes Risborough, a GW&GC Jnt station. Sold for **£1,400**.

A Great Central Railway train following board GCR, TO BE RETURNED TO CHESTER LIVERPOOL ROAD, 25½"x17¾", with integral handle. Sold for **£200**.

A Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway 12" roundhead wall clock. Sold for **£860**.

A Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway china tea plate, 7¾" diameter, by Copelands. Sold for **£230**.

Godley S&T workshop and wartime control centre demolished
by Paul White

The Godley S&T workshop and wartime control centre has recently been demolished and replaced by Kerry Way, a new road leading to an industrial park named after a local food processing company and opened on March 13th this year. No trace now remains of this once imposing and substantial building, which I was lucky enough to photograph in 1993 and late 2011.

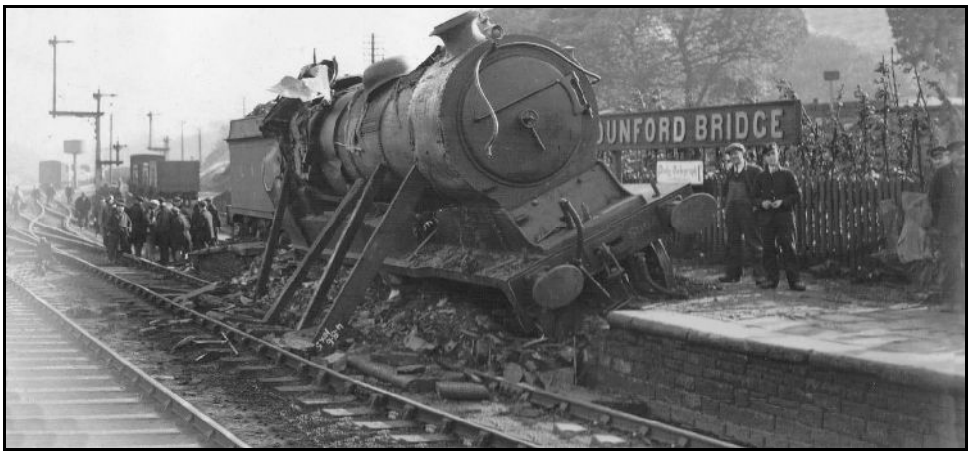
The MS&L Board Minutes of September 19th 1873 record the decision to build the Signal and Telegraph workshops at Godley in order to expedite the work of the interlocking of points and signals on the company's system by their own staff rather than using outside contractors. The workshops were completed in February 1875 at a cost of £9,940 and replaced Guide Bridge as the centre for signal and telegraph work, being equipped with a smithy, fitting shed and sawmill. A CLC traffic control office was also based here. At the time of World War 2, the site also became a District Emergency Control Centre, one of thirteen listed by the Airfield Information Exchange. This is described in *Scenes from the Past 29 - Woodhead Part One* as "...one of the LNER's wartime operational headquarters .. controlling operations as far east as Wath and Doncaster".

The building consisted of a long, flat-roofed stone building with a reinforced concrete roof and heavy steel shutters to the windows on both sides. Described in *Woodhead Vol 1* as "deemed to be bomb-proof", it too has succumbed to the demolition ball. No mention of the building or its origins appeared in press reports of the opening of Kerry Way by the Leader of Tameside Council, Kieron Quinn, on March 13th. It is a pity that this piece of our railway, and indeed our wartime heritage, did not receive a mention in its passing.

References
Great Central Vol 2 by George Dow p56.
Scenes from the Past: 29 Woodhead Part One by E.M.Johnson p81 plus a number of excellent pictures on subsequent pages. Also referred to on p104 of *Scenes from the Past: 29 Steam over Woodhead - Part 4.*
http://www.rmweb.co.uk/community/index.php?/topic/70092-godley-wartime-lner-hq-demolition.

The now demolished Godley S&T workshop. *photo: Paul White*

Glenalmond in trouble at Dunford Bridge
by the Editor



LNER class B8 4-6-0 no.5004 'Glenalmond' is perched on top of the crumbling down platform at Dunford Bridge. This photo was taken on 10th Oct. 1935. photo: "Lisa"/Flickr

The following report appeared in the 10th Oct. 1935 edition of the *Hull Daily Mail*

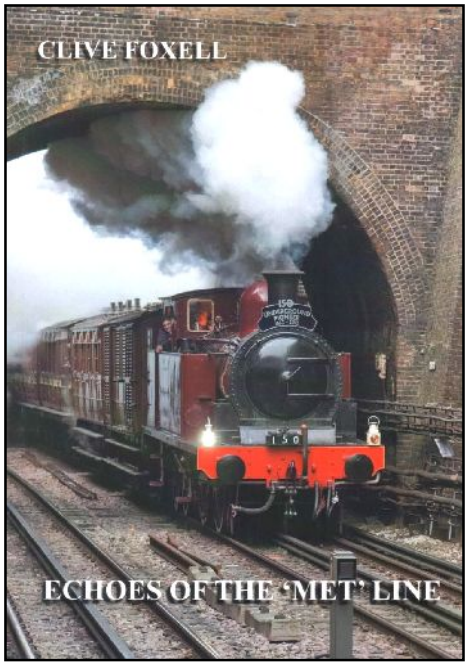
> NIGHT TRAINS IN STATION CRASH
>
> Manchester-London Line Blocked
>
> Traffic on the main line from Manchester to Sheffield and London was disorganised early to-day by two train crashes at Dunford station. One engine became embedded in a platform, and later part of the wreckage was struck by another train, the engine of which, with a number of wagons, was derailed. No one was injured.
>
> The train involved in the first mishap was the 11.35 p.m. train from Colwick, near Nottingham, to Manchester. Coming out of the loop outside Dunford station, which is midway between Manchester and Sheffield, it ran into the stop blocks at the station. The engine and two wagons were derailed, blocking the down main line, the engine becoming embedded in the station platform.
>
> The second train (the 2.35 a.m. duplicate mail and parcels train from Sheffield to Manchester) ran through Dunford station and struck the wreckage of the first train. The engine of the 2.35 a.m. train and eight wagons were derailed, blocking the up line.
>
> The driver of the first train had a remarkable escape. He was thrown on his face, but suffered only minor cuts. Cases of fruit and vegetables were strewn over the lines. Breakdown gangs were rushed to the scene. Some goods trains were cancelled and others were diverted.

From the newspaper report it would appear that *Glenalmond*, which would have been shedded at Colwick, had taken over a goods train carrying perishables at Colwick, possibly for Deansgate Goods in Manchester. When coming out of the loop at Dunford Bridge, instead of regaining the main line it had continued through the buffer stops and continued along the down platform (see photo on p37).

I cannot find any official report of this accident and I am puzzled as to why the *Hull Daily Mail* seemed to be the only newspaper to carry the story.

Arrivals on the bookshelf

"Echoes of the 'Met' Line" by Clive Foxell
Self published by Clive Foxell, 2014, at £9.00.
ISBN 978 0 9564178 3 1. Softback A5 format 104 pages with over 200 illustrations. Available from JPS Stationers, 7 Market Square, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1HG. Tel: 0149479144. info@jpsstationers.co.uk.



Dr Clive Foxell CBE FREng is a GCRS member and has written several books on the Metropolitan Railway and its associates. This is his final book (his words) and is a follow on from his previously published "Images of 150 years of the Metropolitan Railway" (2012) and contains much material which came to light after the publication of that book. This volume is a pictorial record of the Metropolitan Railway arranged in sections covering the main periods of railway from its inception to the present day.

Clive grew up with the Met from his schooldays and has obviously retained his love and interest in the system throughout his life. The book, although arranged in historical order, does not claim to be a history of the company. As Clive says in his preface, this has been adequately covered by himself and others in the past.

The Met's history is inextricably linked with that of the Great Central Railway and the influence of Sir Edward Watkin, as part of his grand design for a railway from Manchester to Paris, via the London Extension of the GCR, the Met, the SER, the Channel Tunnel and the Chemin de Fer du Nord. This scheme collapsed due to the ill health of Watkin and we can only speculate on what might have been had the scheme proceeded. This left the Met with a loss making main line to nowhere which they had to share with the GC and which was to be a perpetual thorn in its side.

The development of Metroland under the management of Robert Selbie was the direct result of the efforts to make this line pay and dramatically improved the fortunes of the company as well as providing poetic inspiration for John Betjeman. The Met was reluctantly absorbed into London Transport in 1933 but has managed to retain something of its original character even today.

The book is essentially a photographic record. The photographs are arranged two to a page with brief but adequate captions. A map of the system is included thereby enabling the reader to place the photographs in geographical context although, due to the A5 format, it is a little difficult to decipher for those of us with less than perfect eyesight. The reproduction quality is excellent, quite an achievement considering the age and condition of some of the earlier photographs. The printing is on high quality art paper and although the occasional typo creeps into the captions, the production quality is good - altogether a high quality publication.

I must admit at this point that my knowledge of the Met is fairly sketchy, my only physical experience being a trip over the joint line into Marylebone in 1949 and a journey from Chorleywood into the capital just before privatisation. This book therefore

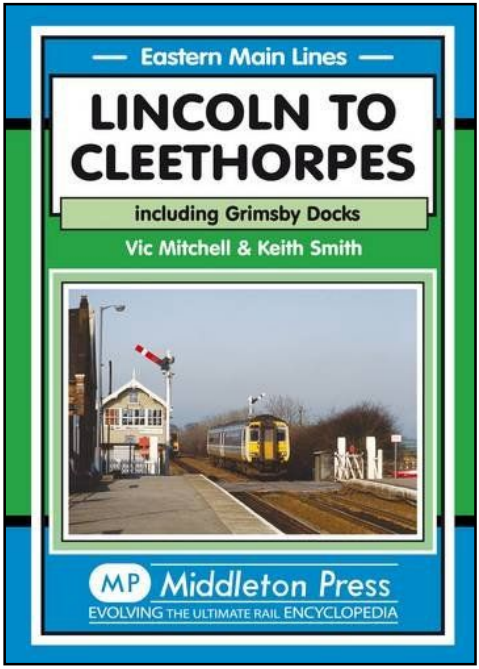
provides a fascinating introduction to the system and has whetted my appetite to delve further into its history

There is plenty of interest to the GC enthusiast with several photographs of GC, LNER and BR expresses and goods trains working over the joint lines. The disagreements and downright animosity between GC and Met is highlighted in the text as are the difficulties of operating the joint lines caused by these.

Anyone wanting a comprehensive history of the Met will not find it here - what they will find is a well presented pictorial record from its conception to final absorption into the London Transport system of today. The Met may be dead but its spirit lives on. I guarantee that even the most avid Met fanatic will find something of interest, the rest of us will find a lot that is new and informative, and at the modest price of £9.00 it is an absolute steal.

Dave Bell

"Lincoln to Cleethorpes including Grimsby Docks" by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith.
Published by Middleton Press (www.middletonpress.co.uk), 2014, at £17.95.
ISBN 978 1 908174 56 7. Hardback, 96 pages, 120 photos.



This is yet another book in the most extensive series in current railway publishing (over 500 titles and counting) which claims to be "evolving the ultimate rail encyclopedia". For each line chosen, a general thumbnail sketch is produced using photographs, maps and timetable extracts with short introductions to topography and historical background. So far vast swathes of Southern England, Wales and East Anglia have been covered and this is the first venture into the Great Central's heartland, although four volumes already deal with the main line as far north as Loughborough. More are promised.

This volume, "Lincoln to Cleethorpes", is absolutely typical of the genre and is welcome because this is a line which does not often appear in the great pantheon of railway literature. The historical background, though, is delivered sparingly and gives no impression of the complex politicking and intrigue that went on in North Lincolnshire before the line was built. Nowhere is there reference to the rerouting of the Cleethorpes line beyond Fish Dock Road in 1894 when the No 2 Fish Dock was extended. Still, it is reasonably priced at £17.95 and contains 120 photographs and 28 maps and the reproduction is mostly good.

Having said that, there are a scattering of errors and omissions which call its ultimate value into question. The maps are a particular case in point. Each station or significant site along the route has its own OS extract from the 1:2,500 series but some of these, Reepham and Claxby, carelessly excise significant pieces of the layout. The caption to the 1933 survey of Lincoln (1:10,560) is wrong in indicating that the Midland's engine shed is east of the city near Pelham Street – this was the GC's shed which is later correctly identified in a photograph caption (17). Although closed in 1939, locomotives

continued to use the GC shed (turning and servicing) throughout the Second World War and even after the depot had been bombed. Its roofless shell was eventually demolished and the site became Lincoln's new DMU depot.

The 1946 map (XV West of Barnetby) lacks definition and has reproduced very badly, being blotched and blurred. The large scale maps of the lines in Grimsby are somewhat disjointed and make it difficult to get an overall impression of the layouts for anyone unfamiliar with the town. Map XXIV cuts the Grimsby engine shed in half and incorrectly identifies the accumulator on the map as the famous Dock Tower which is at the entrance to the Royal Dock. Although the tower makes an appearance in plate 97 there is no reference to what is easily Grimsby's most famous feature. – based on the Torre del Mangia campanile in Siena (and therefore very similar to the Joseph Chamberlain Clock Tower of Birmingham University) it is 309 feet high and unused since 1892 when the docks acquired an entirely new hydraulic system, again from the design of William Armstrong. It is one of the much smaller 1892 accumulators that is shown on the map

Whilst at Grimsby Docks the authors comment that the station was unusual in not having chimney pots but, being an Italianate villa design, the architects would never have used pots! This leads us nicely onto the architecture of the line which is especially interesting but not much considered by the authors. Architect John Taylor surely deserves a mention for the Great Northern's essentially Tudor design at Lincoln Central, the usually parsimonious GN realising that the great medieval cathedral city was deserving of something better than its usual austere sensibility. Indeed, the GN proceeded to give Lincoln almost its only Tudor building!

The firm of Weightman and Hadfield from Sheffield designed almost everything else along the line giving the smaller intermediate stations such as Great Coates, Langworth and Moortown, neat Tudor cottages and Market Rasen a very fine classical station with an overall roof - demolished in 1941 according to Brian Ward's excellent website history of the station which the authors appear to have been unaware of. They also produced the astonishing Jacobean design at Brocklesby and the much less exuberant Grimsby Town although, again, Weightmans gave this an overall roof, later replaced in June and July 1978 by a more utilitarian design. As an aside I wonder why they did not give Grimsby something more splendid, as the magnificent St James church (now the Minster) is just across the road. Money perhaps?

The complete rebuilding of the junction station at Barnetby, following quadrupling, goes unremarked although the photographs show the MSLR twin pavilion station building and its gaunt red brick replacement of 1915. Clearly three platforms become four and new signal boxes abound. The caption to photo 90 contains a description of the boarded-up but listed Garden Street signal box although the photo shows the box is clearly still in use. The following photo shows the box as previously described but calls it Pasture Street! Photo 17 from 1979 notes the Boston line at Sincil Junction (actually Sincil Bank) but the line out to Washingborough Junction had closed by 1963 and in 1979 only the stub remained as carriage sidings. Photo 95 is not in the docks but shows the J50 by the side of the Central Markets goods shed beneath Newmarket Street footbridge.

Several of the photographs show good views of locomotives and trains which get no mention at all: Cleethorpes has a GCR 9B/9E/9H 0-6-0 on excursion work; two "Pom pom" 9Js and a 5A appear at Grimsby Docks; Great Coates has a 9Q on a fish train (not on an express passenger); Grimsby Town has a B1 and another "Pom pom" at Habrough. And why does the station at New Clee not get a note as the destination of the many football excursions that served Blundell Park, home of the legendary Grimsby Town FC? Unforgiveable!

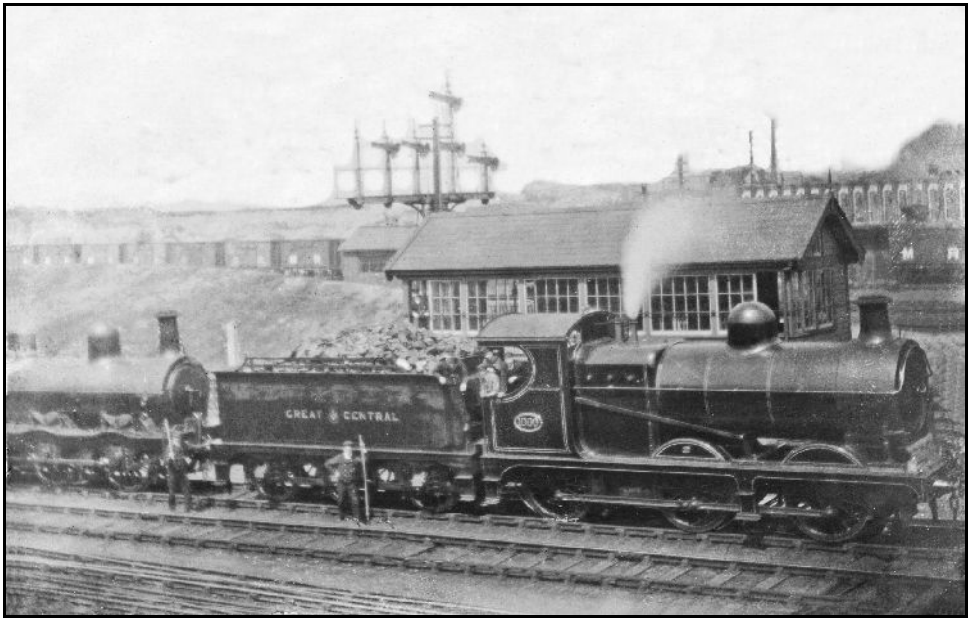
There is a great deal more that could be clarified, added or even made more accurate. So overall a reasonable production but it could have been much better if more attention was given to detail, which is what most railway histories are judged upon. It gives one the unfortunate impression of a book rushed helter-skelter into production.

J.Richard Morton

A bit more on the "Derbyshire Lines"
by J. Richard Morton

Most readers should now be familiar with Ken Grainger's excellent trilogy on the "Derbyshire Lines" of the MS&LR. They might be surprised that anything more remains to be recorded after Ken's thorough and detailed portrayal of the lines. However, what follows are four views of a small section of the "Chesterfield Loop" around Grassmoor which add a little to Ken's work (pp21-27 of *Part Two A: South from Chesterfield Central*).

We begin at 'Grassmoor Sidings & Bonds Main' signal box with a postcard franked in August 1908. There are at least seven staff (four on the footplate, two shunters and one signalman) posing for the photographer who had managed to erect his equipment right at the top of the cutting side. The Robinson class 9J (LNER J11) 0-6-0 no.1000 is in spotless condition. It went into traffic in April 1902 and withdrawal as BR no.64307 came in July 1955. Between 1907 and 1909 this locomotive was allocated to Annesley and Staveley so circa 1907 would be a reasonable assumption for the date the picture was taken. The other engine is a class 6AI (LNER J8) 0-6-0, the class of 12 engines being built at Gorton between 1887 and 1888. These were designed by Thomas Parker and were a development (I=Improved) of the Sacré 6A class. Known as "Staveley Bashers", the J8s were withdrawn by the LNER between 1926 and 1930.



Grassmoor Sidings & Bond's Main signal box. *photo: John Alsop collection*

The signal box, originally known simply as 'Grassmoor Colliery', began life with the line and colliery branch in 1893 and had just 20 levers. With the opening of the colliery at Bond's Main and its associated sidings plus the opening of the Calow and Bond's Main Joint Railway (owned by the GC, the Midland and the LD&EC railways) and the Midland's Bond's Main branch, it needed more than 20 levers and thus it was that the replacement box seen here opened on 12th May 1901. It also had a new name, 'Grassmoor Sidings & Bonds Main', which was bestowed upon it some time between 1897 and 1901 and more accurately reflected its extended responsibilities. There are several features in the picture, most noticeable being the array of Midland Railway coke wagons in the colliery sidings and the five post bracket signal. This controlled entry onto the C&BMJR (two

right hand posts) and the MR Bond's Main branch (two left hand posts and the unused post), all operated from Bond's Main North Junction signal box. The starter and distant on the taller post were for the actual branch line.

In the foreground are the connections onto the GC's Grassmoor South Colliery branch (opened 3/7/93) and, in the right background, are some of the 36 Koppers coke ovens erected at Bond's Main in 1903. The colliery itself was sunk by the Staveley Coal and Iron Co. between 1897 and 1898 and named after George Bond (1840-1896), a director of the company and the indefatigable confidant of Charles Markham (1823-1888), one of Staveley's most brilliant chairmen.

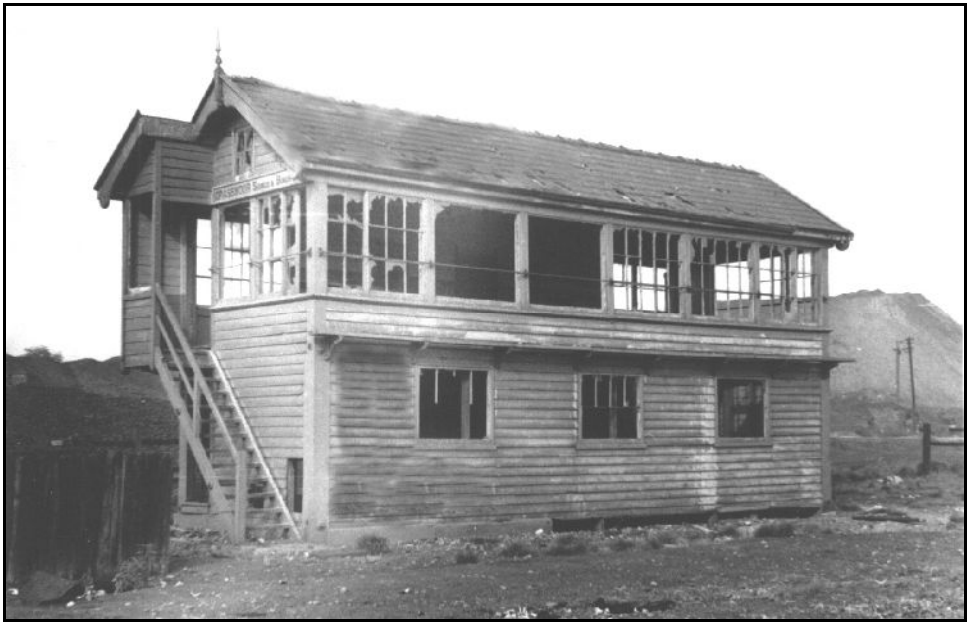
From a One-Inch OS map showing the railways at Grassmoor in 1906. The Chesterfield loop line, shown as a double track railway, comes in from Chesterfield at top and exits towards Heath Jn on the right. All the colliery lines are shown as single mineral lines. Grassmoor Colliery, to the south of Grassmoor station, already had a connection to the Midland main line (coming in from the left) by a branch from Grassmoor Jn. A connection from the GC was put in just south of Grassmoor Station and it completed a loop by rejoining the GC by an east facing junction just east of the Hassocky Lane bridge (no.39). This was the site of the original 'Grassmoor Colliery' signal box.

When the Bond's Main colliery (labelled just 'Colly' on the map) was opened, a short connection (not shown on the map) was put in from the GC just east of the signal box which then became 'Grassmoor Sidings & Bonds Main' signal box. The Midland achieved a connection to Bond's Main by a branch off their Grassmoor Colliery branch which passed under the GC just south of Grassmoor Station. A further branch off this branch went north to Calow Junction on the LD&ECR as the Calow and Bond's Main Joint Railway [Mid & GC] which closed in 1909.

The colliery line leaving the map at the bottom accessed several more collieries including Williamthorpe and Pilsley. The network of Midland Railway colliery branches in this area was extensive. The main road across the map is the Chesterfield to Mansfield road which later became the A617. The small settlement of Grassmoor itself is bottom left, some distance from the station that used its name.

Bond's Main was sold to the Clay Cross Co. in 1924 and ceased winding coal on 3rd June 1949 when most of the workforce transferred to Arkwright colliery, though 40 men remained on salvage operations until final closure in 1953. Incidentally Grassmoor colliery was begun in the far distant 1846, the first shaft coming in 1861 with further sinkings between 1875 and 1878. This was a huge undertaking with associated coke ovens, these ceasing operation in July 1960. In 1950 the pit itself was absorbed into the Williamthorpe colliery complex when the five shafts were recorded as closed, though production and coal raising continued until approximately 1967. The site was used as a National Coal Board training centre for the Derbyshire coalfield from 1957 until well into the 1980s.

In contrast to the Edwardian postcard view the next photo shows 'Grassmoor Sidings & Bonds Main' signal box after its closure in 1963. This was a GCR type 5 box which had 66 levers. The photo from spring 1964 shows the interior stripped with scarcely a pane of glass unbroken, track lifted and the box awaiting final removal – often these wooden shells were burnt to the ground. Notice that the opening for the signal wires and point rodding at the steps end of the box has been partly blocked; an indication of the reduction in operating levers after the Bond's Main colliery closed and the final closure of the Midland's branch from Grassmoor Junction (31/7/55).



'Grassmoor Sidings & Bonds Main' signal box in a derelict state in 1964 but still with nameboard.
photo: D.C.Ray

This section of the "Chesterfield Loop" saw its last scheduled passenger trains in the freezing cold of March 1963 although the very last passenger train was the well known special hauled by *Flying Scotsman* on 15th June 1963 *(see photo p84).*

Next comes another post closure view from spring 1964. This is Hassocky Lane bridge (no.39 on the line register) looking in the up direction towards Bond's Main with the colliery waste tip prominent in the background. This is a wrought iron girder structure on brick piers with additional integral abutment bracing to counter the common mining subsidence of the area. The track here was lifted by BR gangs from September 1963 onwards, Staveley GC shed providing crews and engines for this melancholy task.

The final photo shows the remnant of the down side station building at Grassmoor which had closed to passengers over twenty years before the photograph on 28th October 1940 was taken. This was retained because it contained toilet facilities for the permanent way and yard staff, the impressive wooden vent indicating where these facilities could be found. By the spring of 1964 all trackwork had gone, including the GC's north colliery branch to Grassmoor (opened 2/11/92 using contractor's engines) which left the running lines just to the left and behind the photographer.

Grassmoor station in 1964. *photo: D.C.Ray*

The survival of some of the station buildings arose because of a dispute between the signalmen of Grassmoor Station signal box and the coalmen and traffic staff in the goods yard and sidings plus the local lengthmen of the permanent way gang. The signalmen objected to the other staff using "their" toilet facilities, the inhabitants of the signal box being especially house proud and keeping "their" box in spotless condition. Even locomen coming to sign the train register were required to stand on the landing outside the box door!

Virtually all of the above was swept away with the building of the Hasland bypass dual carriageway, which opened from the M1 to Winsick in 1974 and through to Horn's Bridge, Chesterfield, in 1978.

I am especially indebted to John Alsop for providing the Edwardian view of Grassmoor which comes from his extensive collection. Also to M.A.King for the photographs taken in 1964 which come from his, also, extensive collection. Finally, thanks to Bill Taylor for his help with all things LD&EC, to David G. Edwards for information on coking plants and to Dave Clarke and Kim Godson from the Coal Authority archives and record section in Mansfield.

Hassocky Lane bridge in 1964. *photo: D.C.Ray*

Robinson's Elegant Atlantics

by David Jackson

From 'Railway World', May 1987, and submitted by Garth Smith.

Few who have written on the subject, or discussed the matter, fail to mention the handsome and graceful appearance of the Great Central Railway locomotives built to the designs of J.G.Robinson. Over the years a splendid parade of express passenger locomotives emerged, perhaps none more evocative than the Great Central Atlantics. They cut a special dash and as C.Hamilton Ellis has remarked,'they were considered by many to be the most beautiful locomotives of their time.'

The cream of the Atlantics were undoubtedly the four examples built in 1905/06 as three-cylinder compounds using the Smith system of compounding. Robinson himself was delighted with his decision to introduce compounding to the GCR for the first time. Writing to C.Rous-Marten he said,'My object has been to take advantage of the latest ideas and experience, and at the same time not go to the length of building an engine which must for all time remain a compound, even though not successful, or be sent for scrap. I am in the unique position of having an engine that can be readily converted into an ordinary Atlantic if I find compounding does not realise the expectations, and on the other hand, if the experiment succeeds - and I see no reason why it should not - I can at a minimum cost convert our existing Atlantics into three-cylinder balanced compounds.' Later, in 1908, he was again in communication with Rous-Marten on the same subject. 'Our compound engines . . . are doing exceedingly good work, the consumption of coal averaging from 2 to 2½lb per mile less than the non-compound Atlantic type. Being a three-cylinder engine, the balancing is of course superior to the two-cylinder engine and I have no regret for having built these compounds. In fact, if we were requiring more express locomotives I would be rather inclined to continue the type.'

Of course, with 27 simple Atlantics and the four compounds this proved ample for the GCR's express passenger requirements. Among other things, Robinson's involvement with superheating and the need for larger and more powerful engines in due course would ensure there would be no more Atlantics, simple or compound.

J.G.Robinson's name always appeared over all Gorton designs during his tenure there but he was by no means a one-man band. William Thorneley, Chief Draughtsman and Works Manager, was a major influence in determining the final product. The flowing lines and symmetry seen in all the Gorton engines of Robinson's early period on the GCR would seem to be a combination of both engineers' ideas on what a steam locomotive should look like. Certainly, Robinson's engines produced when he was the Locomotive Superintendent on the Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway in Ireland seldom displayed the same sure touch of external refinement. The famous Robinson chimney, it maybe remarked, had a certain Inchicore influence, as R.N.Clements has demonstrated, but in addition there were distinct signs of contemporary Midland practice. Midland, and especially S.W.Johnson's, impact on Robinson's career and designs is worth additional and brief comment.

Johnson's advice was sought and he recommended Robinson's appointment to the Great Central in 1900. As for compounding, the Smith system became an established success on the Midland and its application to the Great Central 4-4-2s, when there were several alternatives available, does rather hint at there being some friendly collaboration between Derby and Gorton. Further, the man responsible for the detailed design of the Midland Compounds was J.W.Smith, the son of the late J.M.Smith of the North Eastern Railway (and a friend of Johnson) who had perfected the principle in the first place. It was none other than J.W.Smith who moved to Gorton as Works Manager following the premature retirement of Thorneley in 1906. Interestingly enough, Smith's successor at Derby, J.A.Anderson, was one of the applicants for the post of Locomotive Draughtsman when William Thorneley departed. In the event, Anderson declined the opportunity but

one might wonder, with Anderson's well-known conviction of the virtues of compounding, at what the future course of GCR locomotive policy might have been.

The first two of the GCR's new compounds, nos.258/59, were completed on 2 December 1905 and 24 February 1906 respectively. Both spent the first few weeks running in workshop grey, undergoing test running and indicator trials, although no.258 was seen well away from Gorton's precincts on at least two occasions. First at Grimsby and then when the engine travelled to Marylebone for the inspection of the GCR directors.

No.258 was also the first to be regaled in the full and elaborate GCR express passenger livery. When its partner eventually received the same treatment it also had the honour of carrying the name *King Edward VII.* No.258 had to wait until June 1909 before the name *The Rt Hon Viscount Cross CGB GCIS* was bestowed. In fact, two additional compounds, nos.364/65, which were built in December 1906 were both named before this. No.364 became *Lady Henderson* by March 1907 and no.365 was named *Sir William Pollitt* by October the same year.

The first compound Atlantic: GCR class 8D 4-4-2 no.258 'The Rt. Hon Viscount Cross GCB GGSI'.
photo: F.Moore's Railway Photographs

The significance of using the name of the reigning monarch is easily understood and the engine is known to have been identified as such by November 1906. Lady Henderson in real life was the wife of the GCR Chairman, Sir Alexander Henderson. Sir William Pollitt, the former GCR General Manager who had piloted the Great Central into the 20th century was the gentleman who had brought Robinson to the GCR. Soon afterwards, he moved to the Board and Sam Fay took his place. The naming of no.365 was the official celebration of Pollitt's Jubilee with the Company. Viscount Cross, distinguished lawyer and statesman, was the senior member among the GCR directors. On the subject of names it will be noted that, apart from the single example of one of Robinson's earlier 4-4-0s named after the GCR Chairman, the compounds were the first GCR locomotives to carry names since Sacré's day.

Nameplates, although a late addition, formed an integral part of a most distinctive livery. They were carried in a curve on the rear splashers and complimented the large, oval brass numberplates on the cabsides. For the main body, a rich and deep Brunswick

green was applied. Crimson lake was chosen for the outside frames and main frames above platform level. Inside of the main frames was painted vermilion. The outside of the main frames and the bogie were ivory black. Lining-out was completed in black, red and white. The boiler bands were black and white only. For the smokebox and chimney there was a shiny Japan finish. Numbers on the buffer beam were in gold leaf.

What might be described as the Company's trademark, the celebrated coat of arms, proper, was to be found between the GREAT and CENTRAL on the tender sides. In addition, the coat of arms was placed on the leading splashers; both examples being the same size. The compounds were peculiar among the GCR 4-4-2s in having the GCR monogram on the rear splashers; the simple Atlantics carried the coat of arms on all splashers. No 258 *Viscount Cross CGB GCIS* ran for some time with no monogram and, when operating in workshop grey, displayed the simple Atlantic scheme of a coat of arms to each splasher.

All the external brass fittings, for example, the flat brass beading surrounding the splashers and encasing the cab windows, were kept highly polished. This treatment was also extended to the axlebox lids, cylinder bands and steel fitments on and around the smokebox door. One can but ponder who dreamt up this visual feast and we can only guess at the time required to apply the many coats of paint and varnish, complete and maintain everything in a brilliant condition, but if the intention was to advertise the GCR then we may at least suppose it worked.

Speed, punctuality and comfort were what the GCR offered for its prime express services from Manchester to London and, as the largest and most important shed on the system, Gorton had the first call on the newest and best GCR locomotives. The four compounds were thus allocated and naturally enough to regular drivers. no.258 went to Bill Chapman, no.259 to Enoch Bell (and later Tom Davies), no.364 was Willoughby Lee's own and no.365, Jack Johnson's (and eventually Jim Rangeley's).

Bill Chapman remained with no. 258 until 1920 when he took the then new 4-6-0 no.1165 *Valour.* Enoch Bell managed to fall off his engine while oiling around in February 1909. His accident, regrettably if appropriately enough, a compound fracture of one of his shin bones, put him in Manchester Royal Infirmary for several weeks. Willoughby Lee kept no. 364 until, like Bill Chapman, he moved on to one of the 'Lord Faringdon' 4-6-0s, no.1166 *Earl Haig.* Jim Rangeley succeeded Jack Johnson some time after coming to Gorton from Oxford where he had been posted with his own simple Atlantic, no.267.

The first two compounds were put to work on the best GCR expresses and operated alongside the non-compounds to assess the difference in oil and coal consumption. It may be supposed that sufficient impact was made as what were intended to be two ordinary 4-4-2s built at Gorton materialised as compounds, nos.364/65. In their turn, the first two representatives headed the 7.45am and 11.25am Manchester to London expresses. After arriving in Marylebone the footplatemen took their engines to Neasden shed for the night and went into lodgings. The following day they came back to Manchester with the 3.25pm 'Sheffield Special', which boasted the fastest schedule out of London, and the 6.20pm to Manchester.

Unlike the simple Atlantics, which tended to roam far and wide and away from the GCR, the compounds usually stayed within the home network and were regular performers on the fastest and most tightly timed expresses over the London Extension. This was no doubt due to the route knowledge and proclivity of each driver. However, when it came to royal train working, the compounds were always to the fore. For example, when the Prince of Wales travelled from Chester to Stockport to open the new Town Hall there on 7 July 1907 it was no.259 *King Edward VII* and Driver Enoch Bell and Fireman Jack Howard, later of 'North Country Continental' fame[7], who were in charge. No.364 *Lady Henderson* and Driver Willoughby Lee were responsible for the working of the royal train from Grimsby Docks to Immingham when King George V and Queen Mary formally opened the new Dock at Immingham on 22 July 1912.

GCR class 8E 'Atlantic' no.364 'Lady Henderson' with the Royal Train at Immingham Dock on the Opening Day 22nd July 1912. photo: Immingham Museum

Sporting events such as the Crystal Palace FA Cup finals, Grand Nationals at Aintree and the opening of the horse racing flat season at Lincoln every March brought out the compounds on special workings. A rather different special was put on for the Manchester Home Trades Association, the grocers and businessmen of the 'Cottonopolis', on 23 June 1910. No 258 *Viscount Cross* and Bill Chapman took a seven-coach train, including a vestibuled dining car, from Manchester to New Holland via Doncaster. Here the party joined one of the Great Central paddle steamers, *Cleethorpes,* for a cruise on the Humber. They disembarked in Grimsby and afterwards rejoined their train which came back to Manchester via Gainsborough and Worksop. Two years later, the same combination enjoyed a day out to Stratford-on-Avon by way of the London Extension and Woodford and Hinton.

Enoch Bell and no.259 *King Edward VII* featured in a more spectacular event on 30 January 1911. The Halle Orchestra, travelling from Manchester to London in a 14 - coach special, was whisked the 206 miles at an average speed of 51mph. Considering the difficult nature of the road over Woodhead and the numerous slacks in force between Sheffield and Nottingham, this was a most noteworthy performance. Neasden driver, Tommy Ogden, brought the musicians back to Manchester with simple Atlantic no.358.

The long association between the compounds and Gorton shed came to a close when they were transferred to Leicester. The last to be built were actually the first to go: Nos.364/65 departed in September 1920. They were followed a year later when no.259 left in March 1921 and no.258, a month later. Although it marked the end of an era, the reallocation opened what was to be another grand chapter. For over a decade, compounds shared the limelight with Leicester's top-link workings. Alas, this brief account, and the limitations of space, mean it is a story to be told on another occasion.

A busy moment at Thoresby Colliery Junction

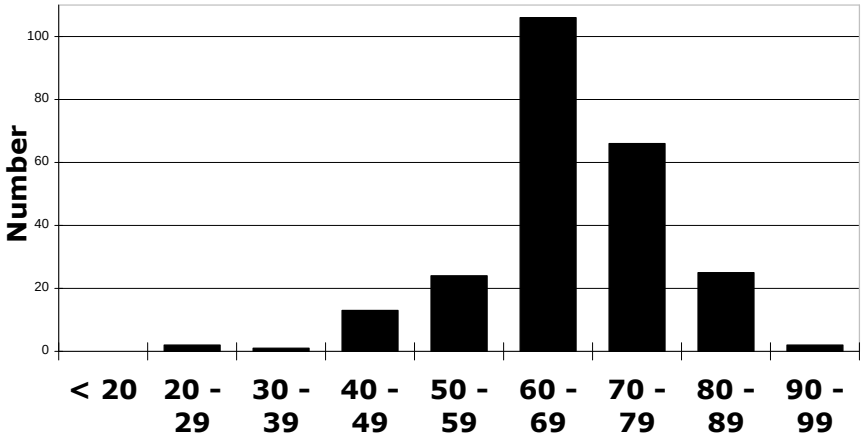
above: 66719 'Metro-Land' with 4M91 12:37 West Burton to Thoresby as it arrives at Thoresby Colliery Jn on 23 April 2014. This is a GBRf train of gypsum that has recently begun to be recessed at Thoresby Colliery Jn until 04:00 when it continues to Hotchley Hill. It is the only non-coal freight train that runs on the former LD&ECR line. The colliery is due to close in 2015.

below: GBRf 66744 waits to leave with a train of coal as 66719 arrives. *photos: Chris Booth*

Class 20s on the SYJnt line

A pair of class 20s made a rare visit to the South Yorkshire Joint line on 30 March 2014 with 6Z20 Maltby-Chaddeston engineers' train of ballast. Above: BR blue liveried 20142 leads the train past Maltby Colliery South signal box. Below: Carrying LT red livery 20189 brings up the rear as the train approaches Brancliffe East Junction. The vehicle next to the loco is a Rail Vac - a machine from Sweden that hoovers up ballast from the track. *photos: Chris Booth*

A look at our age profile
by the Editor



The age cohort bar chart shown above has been compiled by Eric Latusek, our Membership Secretary. It clearly shows that the 60-69 range (of which I am one) is the largest in the Society's membership. As time passes this age distribution will move to the right and eventually disappear. An influx of younger members is just not going to happen. It will be a case of "the last one to leave please turn off the lights!" This has already happened to some railway societies (see the reference to The Railway Club on p14). It's no good beating ourselves up about it - we just need to face reality and decide what is the best way we can serve the existing membership. As our membership has remained fairly steady (despite departed members) we should conclude that we are doing something right.

Today's society is seeing a decline in membership of clubs and societies in favour of on-line social media. We see it in the lives of our own children and grandchildren. Like most readers of *Forward* I belong to several clubs and societies that cover a range of interests, not just railways. If you look at the age profile of those groups you will see the same pattern. Just a few days ago I was reading the e-newsletter from the NMRA (a society for those with an interest in modelling North American railroads) and found the item by Charlie Getz (the President) quite interesting. I thought it worthwhile reproducing it for all to read. Note that 'Millenials' means those born since 2000 and 'Boomers' are those born in the post war baby boom of the late 40s and early 50s!

> We hear a lot about the demise of model railroading and/or the end of the NMRA in the chat rooms. Pundits have been predicting the end of our world for many years. Heck, in the 1950s, the rise of plastic kits was seen as dooming craftsman kits and the entire hobby. Editorials were written on the subject. Somehow, we survived and indeed, our golden age in terms of numbers was not achieved until the 1970-80s.
>
> Today, we face a more serious challenge - the aging of the hobby. I believe the average age of an NMRA member is 63. For Life Members, 67. This is touted as proof of our demise. I even used to joke about that, plotting the age progression on a chart (it is not linear, meaning it does not increase 1 year for 1 year) to establish the end of model railroading on January 15, 2037. A fictitious date.

Well, some hobbies *have* disappeared. In the 1940s, tethered gasoline powered miniature race cars were so popular, pre-RMC "Model Craftsman" magazine dedicated a section to them. Gone. But not really. Morphed into RC cars and boats.

Studies show all hobbies are aging. It is more a function of changing times and technologies. The Millennials have been studied as the first true digital generation and supposedly, our future. Well, guess what? We have a stiff climb ahead. Millennials as a group do not embrace delayed gratification activities. Golf is aging. Too many rules, too hard to master. The PGA is worried.

Other studies show that Millennials do not join groups so Rotary, Elks and Chambers of Commerce are also aging. The image we have of the self-absorbed, non-social, always texting Millennial is overly-broad but has a grain of truth. For this generation never knew analog or the very technology we take for granted. Raised in a digital age, they embrace an era of rapid change, instant gratification and independent sources of information. To them, "cloud" has a whole different meaning and the Internet holds all truths.

I am not belittling this generation; far from it. They are our grandkids and help me master my new iPad Air and Kindle. Nicer folks you will never meet. But into building analog kits or scratchbuilding? The delayed gratification of a layout? Joining the NMRA to attend meetings? A tough challenge.

My answer is not to give up but also not to work fruitlessly against the tide. Each generation rebels against the excesses of the previous. I am hopeful the post-Millenials will actually reach out to do what their parents abhorred. Until then, I see a more fruitful albeit temporary hope in reaching out to Boomers with the time and money to adopt a hobby. While they will not extend our ultimate age limit, they may buy us time for that post-Millennial generation to find our hobby and maybe find us as well.

Pollyanna? No. I see that generation's eyes light up with Thomas and Brio and Lego. Come to Cleveland and the NMRA National Convention. Come to the National Train Show and watch the reaction to the Lego exhibit or Thomas. Let's go after that generation while they are formative and not compete with Apple, Google, Facebook and Twitter.

Young visitors to the Gainsborough Model Railway. *photo: Bob Gellatly*

The life and times of Mexborough Shed
By Ron Fareham

By the year 1850 Mexborough had progressed in startling fashion from a village of some 500 souls to a small town of about 5,000. The factor making this possible was (largely) the arrival of the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Canal in 1829. It put Mexborough in direct communication with Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster, Goole and the sea, and industries were quickly established. A second form of transport arrived in 1849 with the South Yorkshire Railway, connecting the Great Northern at Doncaster with the Midland at Swinton. These were to become major trunk routes from south to north and a great deal of traffic was secured for the SYR.

Two boat yards had been established on the canal and two substantial glass works built but the railway did not take all the canal traffic and much of it in fact - gas works, brick kilns, glass makers and potteries - continued to use the canal for many years. Railways in the Mexborough area were intended to carry coal, though not a single colliery existed in Mexborough - and never did! There were many, however, on the immediate outskirts - large pits such as Manvers, Wath Main, Barnburgh, Denaby, Cadeby, Kilnhurst, Swinton Common, Elsecar, Cortonwood, Aldwarke, Roundwood, Lidgett, Wombwell, Mitchells Main and Darfield, all within five miles. The centre of the South Yorkshire coal trade was really at Wath, three miles to the west, where eventually a very large marshalling yard, served by Mexborough, was established.

The South Yorkshire Railway began operations on 10 November 1849, with a branch to the Elsecar Collieries opened on 2 March 1850; by then the main line to Barnsley was under construction, together with the Worsborough branch. 0-6-0s and 0-4-2s served at first and were 'stabled' in the old literal railway meaning - that is, fed, watered and looked after - in the South Yorkshire Railway's first Mexborough engine shed, a single road structure at the north side of the line. It had doors at each end and a 'preparation pit' throughout its length; on the south side was another road, in the open with a disposal pit at the east end. Each of the roads would hold about six engines, fuelled by men shovelling the coke directly out of the wagons on to the low tenders of that time. This shed was in use for the first few years only but the site was known to generations of railwaymen afterwards, as 'black line cutting'.

The main line to Barnsley was finished in 1851 and with its attendant branches (Elsecar 1850, Worsborough 1852 and the Chapeltown branch to the Midland in 1854) it tapped fourteen collieries. The nine engines (four of those were second-hand) and the little shed were fast becoming inadequate for the task in hand. With more collieries being sunk, the SYR decided to order more 0-6-0s; there was also a further 0-4-2 from a cancelled Russian State Railways order, which was presumably a bargain. Wagons were proving a problem too. At first the SYR did not have any of its own, using those of other companies, mainly the Great Northern, but a hundred were ordered in 1851 and a further 250 in 1854. This fleet had expanded by early 1856 to 672. The number of engines also grew, to sixteen by 1856.

It was a time of great expansion and the company soon acquired a larger plot of land on the south side of the line, in the vee of the junction up to the Midland Railway at Swinton. The signal box was named Mexborough Junction, later becoming Mexborough No.1. It was on this site that a larger two road engine shed with two road repair shop was built in 1854-55. Indeed, two locomotives were actually constructed in this shop some years later; Nos.20 and 22, they became Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway Nos.171 and 173, doing yeoman service until the turn of the century. The new premises butted directly on to White Lee Road, which was then at ground level (see the 1870 plan and the O.S. extract for developments). By 1864, the last year of independent operation, South Yorkshire locomotive stock had grown to twenty-eight.

The South Yorkshire Railway was leased to the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway in 1864 and the engines numbered in the MS&L series but though they got

MS&L style number plates, the letters SYR were embossed upon them. This was altered to MS&L in 1874 when the latter took over the SYR lock, stock and barrel and its identity disappeared.

Having built the two steam engines, Nos.20 and 22, the modest collection of buildings was rather grandly known as 'Mexborough Plant'. In 1875, plans were made to widen the three running lines at this point to five; the line and the Swinton branch were to be bridged and White Lee Road raised so that the crossings could be replaced by bridges, avoiding endless inconvenience thereby. It meant demolishing all the buildings - the two new lines (they would be the main lines) are shown in dotted form on the shed plan of 1870. As can be seen, the new up main line was to take the line of the No. 1 road of the second engine shed. Before this could be done, it was clearly necessary to build yet a third running shed, to replace the one to be demolished.

When the building of this third, much larger building commenced is somewhat obscure, though a South Yorkshire Railway Board minute of 17 August 1872 records: 'The MS&L Railway [has] asked the SY Railway to construct an engine shed and siding accommodation at Mexborough'. The question was adjourned until the next meeting for the production of plans and estimates. A fortnight later an estimate of £47,186 was 'carried.' Nothing further appears in the SY minute books regarding this third Mexborough shed before the disappearance of the SYR into the MS&L maw is recorded at an extraordinary general meeting of the Board and shareholders on 30 July 1873. Its sale to the larger company was again 'carried'; this received the necessary parliamentary approval in July 1874 and the new shed opened in the same year. Its erection is thus 'credited' to the SYR. After this, part of the triangular site of the earlier (second) shed and works was left vacant until wagon builders and repairers Burnett & Co put up their premises about 1890. The siding at the south side of Burnett's works was known as the 'old plant siding' up until the 1970s - nearly a hundred years after its demise. Nos.20 and 22 lived on!

The men engaged at the old premises must have been truly looking forward to July 1874 and the opening of the new Mexborough shed. It lay half a mile to the east, adjacent to the new station and for the time was very large, with a long, two road wagon repair shop, three road engine repair shop and fifteen shed roads. There was standing room for over ninety of the small engines of 1874.

Map of railways in Wath, Swinton and Mexborough [from Booth & Chapman]

The new shed, as we have seen, was situated in the heart of the burgeoning South Yorkshire coalfield, becoming one of the richest in the country at the time. Not surprisingly, it supplied the great part of the railway traffic of the area. In 1874, the

capacity of the shed was much greater than the number of engines stationed there but the planners were far-sighted; further expansion of the coalfield was seen as inevitable. More collieries were sunk, the lines to London and Banbury opened at the turn of the century and by 1910 there were 230 engines stationed at Mexborough. At weekends the place was chock-a-block with locomotives, with some pushed out into the surrounding goods sidings.

During the shed's lifetime, 1874-1965, it had five owners; SYR, MS&LR, GCR, LNER and BR and over that long time (the best part of a century) its main role in life never changed - shifting very large tonnages of coal. There was always some general goods traffic arising in the area such as glass, iron and steel, sand and so on but this was minuscule compared to coal. In later years there was always a considerable amount of ordinary merchandise freight flowing through Mexborough from and to all points of the LNER compass. It has to be appreciated here that, from 1879 onwards, Mexborough stood on the very border of the 'North Eastern'; first the railway of that name, then the NE Area of the LNER and later the NE Region of BR. The junction was Mexborough West and beyond that point lay the S&K (Swinton & Knottingley) joint line leading to York and the north. The amount of traffic to and from the 'North Eastern' was always substantial and during the two world wars - especially the second - it was truly enormous.

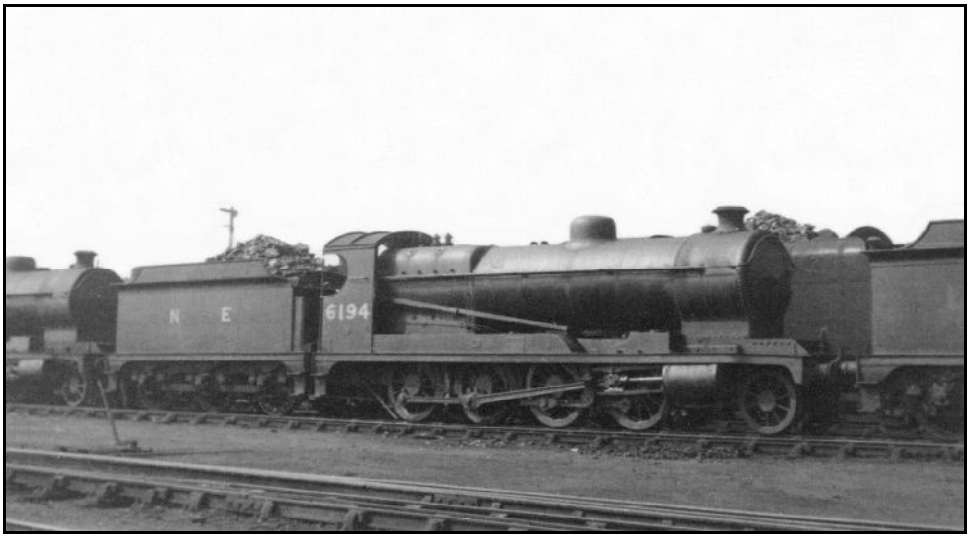
The 1874 shed had five roof bays covering three roads each, with pitched slate roofs and two large circular openings set into each of the bay gables. The purpose of these was to help keep the interior of the shed clear of smoke though the structure was 'blind backed' (open at one end only) and chance wafts of breeze were the best hope of getting smoke out. The only opening at the rear of the building was a passage leading to the offices and other rooms. The front of the shed faced north-west and the prevailing wind was usually from the west; at the weekend when engines were making plenty of smoke after being lit up from cold, the smoke pouring from the east end of the passageway, propelled by the west wind, was an extraordinary sight. There were also three long sidings outside the shed on the north side; these were at one time part of another shed, for the repairing of wagons. On the GCR, carriage and wagon work came under the overall management of the Locomotive Shed Superintendent (later Shed Master) and at Mexborough it was part of the same premises. The wagon repairers were moved out after the First World War to the Wath and Rotherham Road yards and the Mexborough wagon shop demolished. This released the three long roads for engine stabling. Inevitably they retained the name associated with wagon repairs - the 'Cripple Sidings'. This development was obviously part of forward policy because at the time, 1919-24, some forty-odd small J10 and J12 0-6-0s were being sent away in exchange for a large number of O4 2-8-0s, from the War Department surplus fleet. There were three more long sidings, at the south side of the shed, for storing loaded and empty coal wagons. In the days when 200 and more locos were allocated, there was never enough room on the shed roads proper to accommodate them all; many had to stand over the weekend in the three coal sidings, while others were put in the 'New Junction' freight yard next door. The complement in 1922 (LNER class designation) was thus:

O4/O5 2-8-0	58
O5 2-8-0	6
D8 4-4-0	3
D9 4-4-0	3
J10 0-6-0	15
J11 0-6-0	16
J13 0-6-0	6
N4 0-6-2T	13
N5 0-6-2T	40
Q4 0-8-0	41
Total	201

On a warm still Sunday evening in the summer, after all the engines had been lit up for departure on the Monday morning, a pall of smoke hung over the shed. As a child and youth, I lived only half a mile away and witnessed this event every weekend. Mother always dusted heavily on a Monday morning.

In the ninety-odd years of its existence Mexborough was organised on traditional lines and these arrangements remained in force until the end. Engines entering the shed were signalled in from Mexborough No.3 box straight on to one of the two ash pit lines. These were of the simplest sort, a brick lined trench between the rails -Mexborough (until the very end that is - see the ill-fated coaler scheme, later) never had any of the modern aids to ash and clinker removal sometimes found at 'more important' sheds.

On these pit lines the engines were 'disposed'. Fires were either cleaned or dropped; smokeboxes were opened and all the char removed with the firing shovel and the ashpans raked clean of ashes using a seven foot iron rake. There were a number of 'firedroppers' employed at the shed for this purpose, but it was a labouring, not a footplate grade and they were on piecework. When their 'stint' (a mere twenty engines!) was completed for the day, they went home and any remaining engines were disposed of by footplate staff. These were not duties for weaklings and the heavy nature of the work was one of the reasons why the starting age for firing duties was eighteen years. The tool for cleaning and dropping a locomotive fire was a nine foot clinker shovel, made of wrought iron and weighing about half a hundredweight. The fire, ash and lumps of metallic clinker in the firebox were drawn back through the firedoor and thrown through the 'doorway' gap between the engine cab and the tender, onto the ground. The manoeuvring of a nine foot iron clinker shovel in the confines of a locomotive cab can best be left to the imagination. Some engines were easier than others; those with a high tender front and any tank engines -with their enclosed cabs - were obviously the most awkward, though 'awkward' hardly begins to do the task justice.



LNER class O4/1 2-8-0 no.6194 at Mexborough shed on 14th April 1946. *photo: H.K.Boulter*

Disposal duties also involved the driver examining the engine for faults, spotting repairs on wearing parts such as brake blocks and so on. He had to go underneath the engine to check items such as springs, large and small ends of the connecting rods (if there were inside cylinders) cotters and wedgebolts. Meanwhile the fireman, after cleaning the fire, would be filling the sandboxes from special spouted buckets. When full of dry sand, these could weigh anything up to eighty pounds each, and had to be lifted up on to the

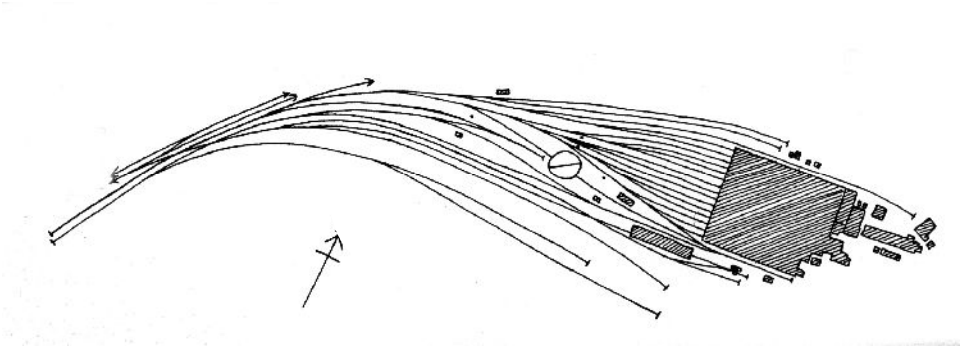
engine framing and the contents poured into the sandboxes. In winter, when rail conditions were bad, an engine could use anything up to ten buckets of sand a day.

If the firedropper had gone home, or was on leave or (more likely in later days) there simply wasn't one, a fireman lumbered with disposal was looking at a day's work of six engines or so. After such exertions (it involved much more per engine - sanding and so on) he went home tired to his bones, with a soaking shirt. There were no shower baths at Mexborough and in 1940 there was just one small wash hand basin, with cold water, in the enginemen's room! A few more sinks were provided after the war, 1947, and some hot water.

An aid to fire cleaning, on the later Gresley engines, was the drop grate: the front portion of the grate was hinged at its rear so it could be tipped forward using a screwed shaft which extended backwards into the cab. When in the tipped position, the fire and clinker could be pushed forward into the ashpit by means of the long clinker shovel, instead of being lifted out through the fire door. This did away with most of the heavy lifting work and also speeded up the process of disposal.

A later arrangement, copied from the American Army 2-8-0 class S160 which arrived in Britain in the middle of the Second World War, was the 'Hulson Rocker Firebar and Hopper Ashpan' combination. With this apparatus the firegrate sections were tipped vertically, one half of the grate at a time, so that the fire and clinker fell straight through the now wide open grate, through the open hopper ashpan and into the ashpit. This proved a very beneficial development for footplate and disposal staff. The same US engines were also fitted with the self-cleaning smokebox. This meant that, except for the sandboxes, the time for disposal was reduced from an hour to the few minutes necessary to open the ashpan and operate the rocker bar levers. Nevertheless, by the early 1940s, there was still only one engine at Mexborough fitted with a drop grate, K3 No.3818. There were none at all fitted with rocker bars, though by 1947 there were five B1 4-6-0s with drop grates, Nos.1164-1168.

The smokebox was normally emptied of fine ash by lifting it out with the firing shovel. One or two attempts were made over the years to ease this task and a few GC engines, mostly passenger types, were fitted with Robinson's smokebox ash ejector. Riddles and Thompson self-cleaning smokeboxes followed, though neither was 100% successful and they both inhibited steaming to some extent. The best arrangement was Robinson's smokebox ash hopper fitted to the class O4 2-8-0. This was a deep hopper on the smokebox floor, with a heavy cast iron bottom door operated by a treadle behind the left-hand pony truck wheel. In this case the ash was raked into the hopper and down into the ash pit.



Mexborough shed plan 1956 [from Paul Bolger]

The ash pit roads at Mexborough were separate and some distance from the shed roads proper and from eight in the morning the 'ash fillers' (yet another labouring grade)

began to shovel all the ash and clinker out of the pit on to the ground above. Wagons would then be placed on the pit line and the ash fillers would throw the ash up a second time, into the wagons. This double handling involved a five foot throw out of the pit, followed by a seven foot throw from ground level into the wagon. During this process the ashes were blown all over the place - it was a stupifyingly awful job by any measure!

Engines usually took water on the ash pits but for some reason, at Mexborough watering only took place when the engines were ready to leave the shed. There were columns on each of the pits, but they were seldom used. The two main water cranes, between roads 7, 8 and 9 were the ones in constant use. These bore the name of the maker on the base, under many layers of paint in cast iron letters 'BARKERS FOUNDRY, MEXBOROUGH', a firm no one could remember. There are records of a Barkers Pottery, so did it serve a dual purpose I wonder?

The next operation was coaling; at most sheds this was done first, but at Mexborough it followed disposal. From 1874 to 1961 the task was done from the coal stage, either from the traditional shelter built on it or, more usually, from the curious 'wagon tip' provided on the stage itself, some yards beyond the shelter. The coal shelter was of conventional design, single sided with a pitched slate roof and there were two tipping decks for four wheeled tubs filled and pushed by hand in time-honoured fashion. This was disagreeable compared to the 'wagon tip' and most engines were coaled using the latter arrangement. The 'wagon tip' was quicker and less men were needed; it was a special, possibly unique and certainly much quicker Mexborough arrangement, whereby a measure of mechanisation was imparted to an otherwise unmechanised, handworked operation. Remarkably, a wagon turntable was installed on the end of the coal stage, beyond the shelter and the steam breakdown crane was propelled up the stage and through the shelter, there to stand and up-end coal wagons - an extraordinary sight. These had to be end door wagons, and were turned through 90 degrees on the little table so that they emptied directly onto the loco tenders. If this arrangement was ever approved 'higher up' than Mexborough itself, history does not record. The breakdown crane, in steam, with a driver, had the virtue of being almost always 'on tap'. The drawback with this (unique?) 'wagon tip' was that, when the breakdown crane was needed for its proper purpose, the work had to cease. All engines had then to be coaled at the stage by hand shovelling, and extra labour drafted to the task - usually engine cleaners with the promise of a few extra bob.

By 1960 the old stage was in poor shape and something drastic had to be done, for it was well past repair. I suppose the management were hoping that it would last out steam traction; dieselisation after all was very much on the horizon in the Sheffield District but some spending was inevitable, and urgent. The Authorities decided, at long last, that Mexborough Loco was to have a coaling plant and one was therefore built and commissioned in 1961. This was fairly astonishing given that diesel locomotives had already begun to arrive at Mexborough in small numbers and the life of the coaling plant was destined to be short - easily the briefest ever. There were many ironic (to put it politely) remarks among the footplate staff about this; one story going the rounds was that the contract to knock the plant down was let while it was still being built!

In the days of the coal stage, a number of drivers were required to move engines and set them under the stage, or 'wagon tip', to be coaled. After that engines were brought on to the 'ladder' road and left there. Two other drivers, with firemen, then placed the engines in the shed roads either for immediate further work or for washing out, repairs, or an 'X day'. The latter was an LMS idea and became a BR standard procedure in the early 1950s. The 'X' stood for examination and the examining fitter went over the engine with a 'fine tooth comb', booking all the repairs he could find. These were supposed to be put right in the 24 hours allowed. The basis of the scheme was that any items not of a serious nature could be deferred until the 'X day'. Brake adjustment, injectors and sand gear were, of course, done as necessary and were never deferred. The scheme worked reasonably well though not perhaps as good as on the company of its origin,

where it had been honed over many years.

The problem of marshalling the engines in the shed for next morning departures had, as at all single ended sheds, to be done in reverse order, the last engine out had to be the first one in, and so on. This demanded a fair degree of skill on the part of the driver in charge of shed shunting on each shift so as to avoid constant remarshalling.

The policy adopted in the case of the twenty or so colliery pilots (Robinson 2-8-0s) was to use the two long cripple sidings at the north side of the shed. These held about a dozen engines each; during the evening, each was filled with 2-8-0s, one road for 'engine first' departures, the other for 'tender first'. When each road was full they were booked out in the order in which they stood. This was called 'shunting engines on paper'. It was very successful and cut out a lot of work. All the tenders had to be filled by the shed staff before being placed in the 'cripple sidings' as no water column was available on these roads before departure.

Mexborough water was very poor in quality, and was notorious for causing priming - the carrying-over of water with the steam when working hard. The well was sited at the back of the shed, hard by the River Don, a once-noble stream by then regarded as little better than an open sewer. In fact it was worse than a sewer, for added to the offensive organic matter was the variously noxious chemical and mineral outpourings of every industrial undertaking upstream. The river passed through the heavy industrial parts of Rotherham and Sheffield and the damage was well and truly done by the time it passed the shed at Mexborough. In the early years of the last century it was decided that a water-softening plant should be built, and a substantial lime/soda plant was installed both at the shed and Wath Yard before the First World War.

LNER class U1 2-8-8-2 no.2395 at the S&DR Centenary celebration parade at Shildon on 2nd July 1925. *photo: Photomatic*

The biggest headache for the shed staff came on Sundays. Most of the allocated engines, and many from other sheds, were on the premises and much remarshalling and tank filling became necessary. Unfortunately 95% of the fires were dropped and the

engines were 'dead' with no steam. In this case, one of the 2-8-0s was steamed up and used as a pilot. Mexborough shed was also the home of the LNER Beyer Garratt locomotive; it was the most powerful in the country and was used for banking (pushing) heavy coal and freight trains up the very steep portion of the route to the west - the 2½ miles of the Wentworth incline near Barnsley. It was stationed at Mexborough for the greater part of its working life. It was never liked by the footplate staff, for it was really two engines rather than one, so far as the fireman's work was concerned. The same held true for the fitters of course. It was scrapped in 1955 with many a dry eye.

In 1961, a large proportion of the Mexborough footplate staff transferred to the new 'Mixed Traction Depot' which had been established at the erstwhile Wath Electric Shed, together with a new building in the middle of Wath yard called the 'service shed'. This was a clumsy arrangement with a lot of locomotives moving between the two establishments and much walking for the loco crews, for the places were half a mile apart. Neither shed was ideal and some of the equipment was badly sited. For instance, the fuel pumps at the service shed were inside the building and this meant that any two 'multiple' diesel locomotives (that is, coupled together and controlled by one driver) requiring fuel had to be uncoupled and then fuelled individually, and later recoupled. This involved the parting and recoupling of control air pipes, vacuum brake pipes, air brake pipes and finally electric jumper cables. The job could sometimes take the best part of an hour, when ten minutes would have sufficed if the layout had been properly designed. I suppose at this early stage of dieselisation that there were few, if any, among the design staff with any experience of what was involved in shunting and coupling of diesel locomotives in the confines of a depot. The steam equivalent of placing fuel pumps inside a shed would be placing a coal stage at the bottom of a shed road - imagine it!

In 1964, steam traction disappeared from the area and the remaining staff were transferred to Wath. The Shed Master and his clerical staff hung on for a few more months into the next year until their accommodation was ready. They then followed the rest of the men to Wath. So ended ninety-one years of work at what was latterly called Mexborough Motive Power Depot. At the time of writing, 1999, Wath Yard and Depot, and the four track main line to Barnsley have all long been lifted - nothing is left! This has been brought about by many factors, in the main of course, the closure of so many of the South Yorkshire pits - accelerated by the miners' strike - and also the radical transformation of the coal trade in the wake of North Sea gas. It was, as we have seen so many times over the years, the sad end of an era.

Routes Worked By Mexborough Men

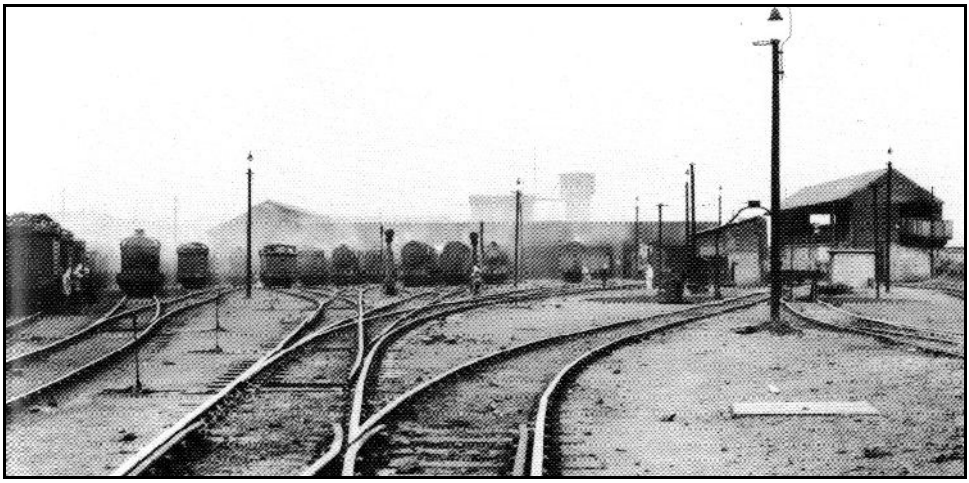
In 1880, when the coal traffic to Manchester was expanding, the Worsborough branch had been made a through route avoiding Barnsley (it had previously been a dead end branch to Moor End Colliery). Further and longer routes were added to the Mexborough shed knowledge roster, destinations such as Northwich in Cheshire and a number of places in and beyond Manchester. The then twelve hour day enabled train crews to work to these places without the necessity of lodging overnight before returning. In 1886 there was no lodging work at Mexborough. In fact, the only lodging work on the MS&L at that time was an Ardwick (Manchester) turn from New Holland shed, fourteen turns at Gorton and two Hull passenger turns at Brunswick shed in Liverpool.

You might have thought that, with the immense coal traffic to the Manchester area, lodging work on that route would have been substantial. The main reason for not working through to Manchester was that the coal was tripped to Barnsley Junction (Penistone) with Gorton men working similarly from the Manchester end - this was the origin of the 'Barnsley Junction Turn Back' jobs at Gorton. In 1886, Mexborough had eleven trains a day to Barnsley Junction; Barnsley shed also had eleven such turns, and Sheffield two. Another way of helping traffic along on the Manchester route was that trains could take bigger loads on the long downhill stretches beyond Dunford. Traffic was therefore staged up to the summit at Dunford to allow trains to make up to bigger loads

from that point. The safety of such heavier loads was assured by the dropping of wagon brakes on leaving Dunford.

Three Mexborough-Barnsley Junction jobs involved three trips from the Wath area to Barnsley Junction in 1886, each turn averaging sixteen hours a day. Come the ten hour day in 1900, these sort of shifts could not be contemplated so the workings then went through to the Manchester area and the crews lodged at Gorton 'barracks'. There was at the time no special link for lodging work at Mexborough. It was spread throughout the roster and was compulsory. When the 'New Line' was opened to Annesley and then beyond to both London and Banbury, traffic for the southern companies, for London, the Great Western and the LNWR, transferred on to the new Great Central line. Coal traffic for the Great Northern proper and also for the Great Eastern continued to go via Hexthorpe Yard, Doncaster.

Mexborough shed was one of the main beneficiaries of the extra traffic generated by the 'New Line' - it was still called that in the 1950s. Coal trains were originally worked through to London by Mexborough men (173 miles), lodging in private digs at Neasden. This did not last long because of the excessive overtime involved and the coal train working was eventually cut back to Woodford (104 miles) with the crews lodging there. In 1919, again because of a reduction in working hours, this time to eight per day, the coal train workings were cut back to Annesley (43 miles), again with a lodge.



A general view of Mexborough shed with the coaling stage on the right and the water softener in the distance beyond the shed building. *photo: W.Potter*

With the coming of Sam Fay as the GCR General Manager in January 1902, traffic to the GW via Banbury increased substantially. Mexborough men started to work down 'the branch' to Banbury with trains of general merchandise, then light engine back to Woodford to lodge. This route developed even further in 1904; a special train began to run from the Great Northern yard at Ardsley (the collecting point for traffic from the West Riding) conveying van loads of woollen cloth for the West Country and also for export via Southampton; these specials were called 'Tailors Trains'. A Mexborough crew then worked through to Oxford - initially with a conductor from Banbury - lodging at Oxford. This work was performed by a small link of ten men but some of the drivers were only in their late twenties, because of the sharply increased promotion caused by the extra traffic. Each driver had a brand new class 9H (later LNER class J10) allotted and some were so proud of having their 'own engine' at such a young age, that they arranged for a photographer to take a picture. One in this period was George Fred Sadler, who was only twenty-seven. His engine was 9H No.120, one of fifteen at

Mexborough at the time, all new. Sadler's fireman was another George Fred, the nineteen years-old George Fred Lambert. The pair were fearless and went anywhere and everywhere. Sadler was a driver of some prominence in his middle and later years and was the first man to sign the road to Oxford. He worked troop and ambulance trains throughout the 1914-18 War with class 8F (LNER B4) locomotive No.1098, with fireman Tommy Walker, and later to London with the heavy traffic to the 1924 Wembley Exhibition, with fireman Jack Bloomfield. The sphere of operations at Mexborough did not then alter a great deal until after the grouping in 1923, when running commenced over the lines of the erstwhile North Eastern Railway to York, Hull and the resorts of the Yorkshire coast.

The first great change in traction came in 1951, when instructors were sought for the new electrics on the Manchester-Sheffield-Wath scheme. Six Mexborough drivers went down to Liverpool Street and after a few weeks came back to train the 54 drivers needed to work the electrically hauled traffic to the west. Most of this group went to the new electric depot at Wath while others stayed at Mexborough to staff the 'Dual Link' for spare electric work and cover for holidays and sickness at Wath.

The next upheaval came in 1960 when dieselisation commenced. In this period 1960-1964 all the remaining footplate staff were trained in diesel practice and gradually all went to the Wath depot. Mexborough shed closed officially in 1965 when, as described above, the Shed Master and his administration staff finally left to join the rest of the men in their new accommodation at Wath.

Links

Rosters at a large depot such as Mexborough tended to be somewhat fluid over time, making it difficult to form an historical picture. The reason for this is the changing commercial and industrial trends year to year. The link structure at Mexborough had some parts which did not change radically over the years however, and as an illustration I have selected the main roster for 1940 - the figure in brackets is the number of crews:

Link 1 (14): colliery pilots ('old men')
Link 2 (14): colliery pilots ('old men')
Link 3 (10): Hull and York
Link 4 (10): York
Link 5 (24): main line and local trips
Link 6 (24): main line and local trips
Link 7 (24): main line and local trips
Link 8 (16): main line and local trips
Link 9 (30): Gorton, Immingham, Annesley (lodge)
Link 10(10): Woodford, Gorton, York (lodge)
Link 11 (10): passenger to Hull, Sheffield, etc.
Link 12 (3): Top Yard Pilot ('medical men')
Link 13 (3): Junction Pilot ('medical men')
Link 14 (2): Shed Pilot ('medical men')
Link 15 (5): Shed ('medical men')
Link 16 (1): Local Trips ('medical men')

Outstations rostered from Mexborough were:

Wath Yard Pilots (12 crews): Mexborough and Wath Yard

Rotherham Road Pilot (3 crews): Rotherham Road Yard

Aldham Pilot (4 crews): banking work

The grand total on the Mexborough footplate staff establishment was 528; 219 crews and 90 cleaners.

Footnote

The position of Shed Superintendent ('Shed Master' under BR) at Mexborough was one of some considerable importance in MS&L and GC days, when the shed was second in rank only to Gorton. In those days it was the headquarters of the South Yorkshire District in charge of the smaller sheds at Barnsley, Wakefield, Barnsley Junction and Keadby. It had fifteen guv'nors in its ninety or so years, as follows:- J. Bell, J. Sharpe, J. Horsley, A. Preston, C. Hugill, G. White, G. Morris, A. Fish, W. Stuart, A. Clear, R. Vereker, H. Beastall, K. Pitts, R. Jones, W. Rusling. The most renowned were Preston and Hugill who together served thirty-three years at Mexborough, Preston 1887-1901, and Hugill 1901-1920.

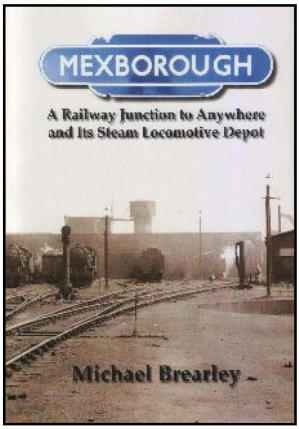
Algernon Preston was a professional engineer and in 1886 was Chief Draughtsman and Manager of Gorton Works at the time of Thomas Parker's arrival as Locomotive Superintendent (later CME). There was obviously some friction between the two men, as Preston was sent to manage the South Yorkshire District and was not best pleased about it. He departed in 1901 to take charge at Trafford Park, Manchester, and was succeeded by Charles Hugill.

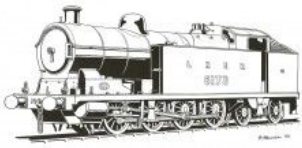
Hugill arrived at Mexborough with considerable experience in locomotive running matters. He was born in Sheffield in 1855 and commenced work with the Yorkshire Engine Co. at Meadow Hall (Sheffield) in 1874 as an apprentice. Four years later he became a fitter at Neepsend shed and after two years was sent to Gorton Works and became a leading fitter there in 1882, and later foreman fitter. He was obviously a man marked out for promotion and in 1891 took charge of the small shed at Barnsley. Two years later he graduated to the recently opened shed at Staveley. With the opening of the New Line to London in 1899, Hugill was sent to be the first shed Superintendent at Woodford. Two years later he came to Mexborough, to stay until retirement in 1920.

Hugill was a typical martinet of the Victorian era; he ruled Mexborough with a rod of iron but by common consent was a fair-minded man. He had a booming voice and could be heard shouting up the shed roads 'Now then, Jackson, what are you on with?' and similar, redolent with threat. At this people would either discreetly disappear, or quickly get on with what they were supposed to be doing. He was a strong supporter of the St John Ambulance movement and his team won the GCR Ambulance Shield in 1909. He lived at Doncaster and travelled to Mexborough on the train - which of course had one of his engines on it - and woe betide the driver if there was anything amiss. He was, by common agreement, the best boss Mexborough shed ever had, and his reign coincided with its busiest times.

Editor's note: An anthology of articles and personal memories about Mexborough shed can be found in *Mexborough* by Michael Brearley (self published 2008, ISBN 978 1904 706250).

Copies can be obtained from the author at £14.99 (free P&P). Send a cheque to Michael Brearley, 2 Swinton Hall, Fitzwilliam Street, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 8RE.





Above: LNER class S1/3 0-8-4T no.2799 at Mexborough. Beyer, Peacock & Co built four of these locos in 1907-8 to a Robinson design for hump shunting in the Wath yard. They had three cylinders with divided drive giving a smooth torque at low speed. Locomen called them "Wath Daisies". With heavy trains in bad weather conditions it was necessary to use two locos together. The LNER decided that the solution would be to provide boosters to the trailing truck. Three boosters were made but only one was fitted to an existing loco - no.6171. It was decided to fit the other two sets of boosters to new locos nos.2798/9, built in 1932 at Gorton. The booster fitted locos were classified S1/3. The reason for the new build was that they were to be used at Whitemoor yard as well as at Wath. All the boosters were removed in 1943. No.2799 suvived until Jan.1957 as 69905, after which the class became extinct. *photo: Photomatic*

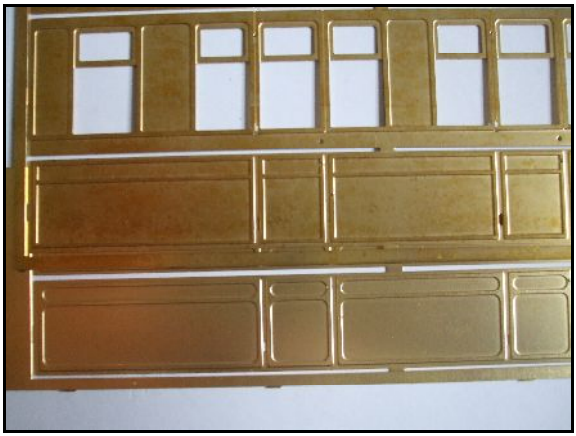
Below: BR class S1/1 0-8-4T no.69902 alongside B1 4-6-0 no.61120 (with 36A Doncaster shedplate) at Mexborough shed on 19 April 1952. No.69902 was a GC engine and was never fitted with a booster. *photo: unknown*

Modellers' Corner
by Tony West

It's certainly been a spectacular start to 2014 for 4mm modellers with the release of Bachmann's GC liveried class 9J 'Pom-Pom'. Particular thanks are due to John Quick (as always) for his input which has ensured an historically correct model albeit a limited edition. Several have appeared on ebay and seem to be selling for sums far in excess of the original price! Let's just hope that this sort of demand prompts Bachmann to issue further GC liveried versions in the future.

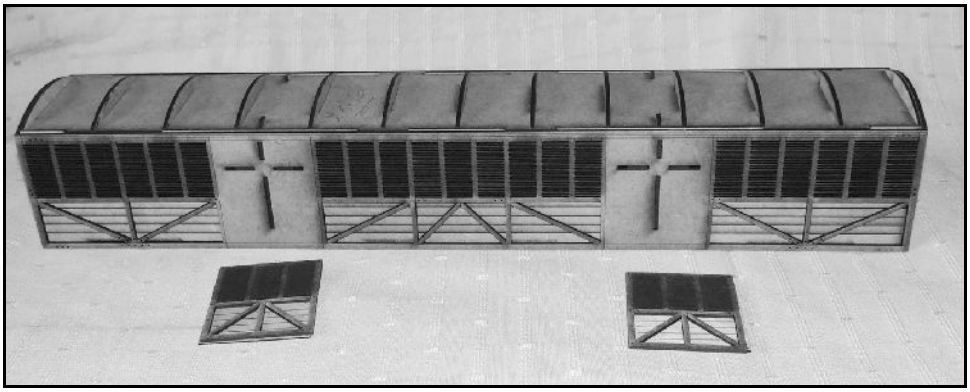
Transfers from HMRS: - It would seem that accurate costings are still being sort, and as soon as I know anything I will let you know.

Some news for 7mm modellers: - Worsley Works have been working on producing alternative lower bodysides for their Parker stock coaches for those who wish to build them as post 1903-5 when they had the lower beading altered to look more like the then current Robinson stock with radiused corners. The photo illustrates the all-first etches.



Bodyside etchings for the 7mm all-first Parker carriages from Worsley Works.

Gauge 1 practitioners will be pleased to know that Andy Mould (Woodbury Models) is to produce a kit for the bogie fish vans in 10mm scale. This kit seems to mirror the 7mm version being developed by Quainton Road models in that the body is formed from laser cut MDF with etched detailing, certainly seems to be the way ahead for small volume models.



The 10mm kit for the GC bogie fish van from Westbury Models.

During an idle moment whilst flicking through an old *Model Railway Constructor* (May 1951), I came across something in the small ads which caught my eye - an advert for a GCR modellers club, the author being Phil Hinchcliffe. Now Phil was an accomplished 7mm GC modeller and was a member of the HMRS and the GCRS. Does anyone have any recollections of this fledgling group?

G.C.R. Club.

Mr. A. P. Hinchcliffe, 144, Sandringham Road, Intake, Doncaster, has suggested that modellers of Great Central Railway prototypes should unite and form a small club for the purpose of exchanging information, drawings and photographs, etc.

It is proposed to prepare a register of the information available among the members and any modellers of G.C.R. stock who are interested in the scheme are invited to contact Mr. Hinchcliffe.

contact details

Worsley Works: A Doherty, 19 Douglas Road, Worsley M28 2SR
e-mail: enquiries@worsleyworks.co.uk
website: www.worsleyworks.co.uk

Woodbury Models: Andy Mould, 120 Woodbury Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 9AQ.
e-mail: andy.mould@btinternet.com
website: www.woodburymodels.co.uk

This photo has been submitted by Graeme King and shows a class D10 4-4-0 in 4mm made from a 'Judith Edge' kit. The kits are available from Mike Edge who can be contacted at edgemd@aol.com.

A rare cast iron trespass sign

This photo from John Law's collection shows a triple joint trespass sign in situ at Hellaby on a 6 mile section of line shared between the GC & Midland joint line between Thrybergh and Anston Jnct and the H&B and GC joint line between Aire Jnct and Laughton East Jnct (near Dinnington).

At the northern end of the triple joint is Braithwell (or Northern) Jnct and at the southern end of the triple joint is Laughton West (or Southern) Jnct.

The section north of Thurcroft Colliery closed in 1967 when severed by the M18 motorway and when the colliery closed in 1992 the remaining section closed. Do any of these triple joint signs still exist?

Model railway exhibition diary

Some events that may interest our readers

Sat 7th & Sun 8th June: Wingfield Railway Group at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1AH. www.wingfieldrailwaygroup.co.uk

Fri 20th & Sat 21st & Sun 22nd June: Soar Valley MRC exhibition at the Great Central Railway (all four stations), Loughborough LE12 8AG. http://gcrailway.co.uk/modelevent

Sat 2nd & Sun 3rd August: Ruddington MRS at the Great Central Railway (Nottingham), Mere Way, Ruddington NG11 6JS.

Sat 16th & Sun 17th August: Midland Railex at the Midland Railway, Butterley Station, Ripley DE5 3QZ. www.rmweb.co.uk/midlandrailex

Sat 6th Sept: Romiley Methodists Railway Modellers at Romiley Methodist Church, Hill Street, Romiley, Stockport SK6 3AH. http://rmrm.urwick.co.uk

Sat 6th & Sun 7th Sept: Soar Valley MRC at University of Loughborough Netball Centre, Epinal Way, Loughborough LE11 3TU. www.svmrc.co.uk

Sat 20th Sept: Oxford & District MRC at United Reformed Church, Collinwood Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 8HH. www.oxfordmrc.org.uk

Sat 27th & Sun 28th Sept: Scalefour Society at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttman Road, Aylesbury HP21 9PP. www.scalefour.org/scaleforum

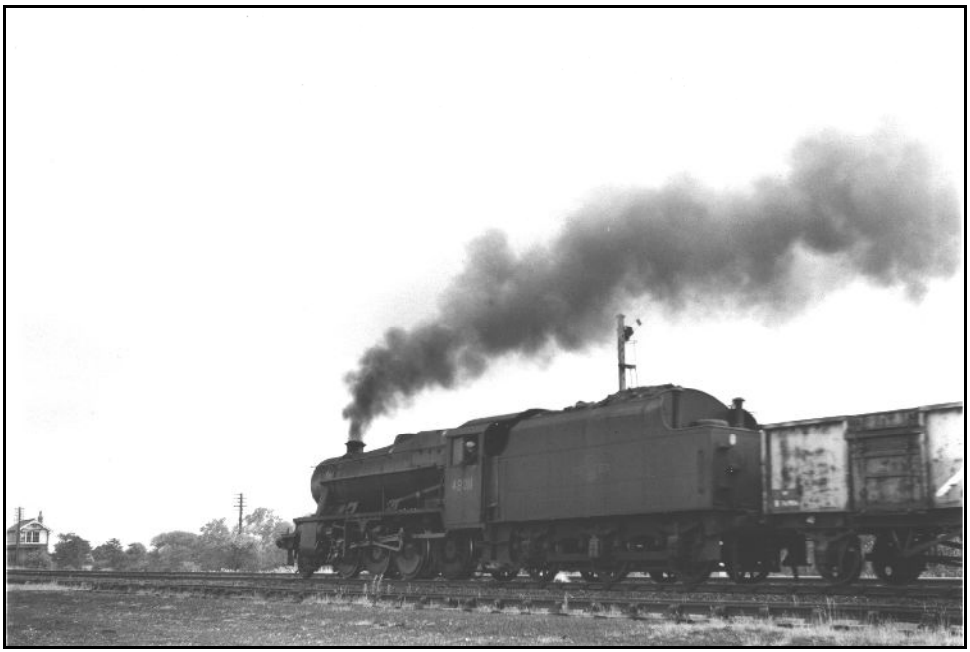
The Gainsborough Model Railway, at Florence Terrace, Gainsborough DN21 1BE, is open to the public (1.30pm-6.00pm) on Sat 14th and Sun 15th June, Sun 13th July, Sat 23rd and Sun 24th August, and Monday 25th August (from 10.30am).

Visit www.gainsboroughmodelrailway.co.uk for more information.

The much displayed 00 layout "Deepcar" will be at the GCR Model Event on 20th-22nd June. The layout was built by a group of members of the Nottingham (Bulwell) Model Railway Society. The scratchbuilt overhead wires are live as well as the rails (the out-of-sight fiddle yard doesn't have wires!). The Stocksbridge Steelworks exchange sidings and the line to the slag tip are included. The station at Deepcar is modelled as it was from 1965 to 1981.

The real Swithland Gala - photos by Mike Kinder

Above: BR class 9F 2-10-0 no.92074 (an Annesley loco) with an up Runner in April 1965.
Below: BR class 8F 2-8-0 no.48011 (a Woodford loco) with an up Runner in May 1965.



More photos by Mike Kinder can be found in his book *Rabbits & Runners* (HMRS 2010).

Readers' forum

from Alan Munday, Stalybridge, Cheshire

Forward 179 p28: 'A walk down Gorton Lane'

There was a great deal of nostalgia for me in 'A walk down Gorton Lane'. As a child I attended St James church and the school, both on Gorton Lane.

photo C

The Station Hotel in photo C was always known as "The Railway". There is a photo of the hotel dating from 1906 in E.M.Johnson's latest book, *Woodhead Part Four*. Gorton Silver Band used to practice there on a Sunday morning on the upper floor. It was known as the North Eastern Band probably because the works were LNER. By going down the lane to the left of the hotel I could view the railway activity through the railings. There were five tracks, of which there are still four today but only as far as where the crossover used to be where it now reduces to two. I remember watching the track bed under Cornwall Street bridge being lowered for the electrification.

photo F

The abutment of the footbridge in photo F, which led to the "Birdcage" is in a photo on p72 of *Manchester Engine Sheds: Steam Memories on Shed No.65* by J.Hooper (Book Law Publications). As can be seen in that photo, beyond the bridge was a slight upward slope, I think it was concrete, then a set of wooden steps with a balustrade of two steel rails going up the centre. We used to slide down these. Then at roof level it flattened out the pitches of the roofs on either side. About 100 yds. further on it then inclined for a similar distance down to street level (Wellington Street).

On Wellington Street there was a double yard gate on the left which was always closed when I was there. Further on still, to the right, was a similar gate, but usually open. A little further on again, on the left, were the gates to the shed, through which could be viewed the nearby turntable.

The slope on the footway was used by children for their "bogies" usually made of old pram axles and wheels on which old planks of wood were mounted by virtue of bent nails around the rear axle, the front axle held by a central bolt and steered by a length of rope. To the east of the slope was a yard where I always looked out for the little petrol engined tractors pulling trucks of components. They were also used to turn wagons on a turntable. On the west side, as the article 'Memories of the Garrratt' reminded me, I saw 69999 in the scrap line along with the 'Directors'. The mesh of the Birdcage was, I think, diamond shaped, of about 3/16 in. metal.

The abutment in photo F is surmounted by the extension which was placed there for raising the bridge for electrification (just visible on the photo at the centre through the growth above the white stain). This raising caused me a problem as a child, because as usual in such cases the parapets on the bridge were raised as well, so I could no longer see the line. Instead I had to stand where the Birdcage began as in the photo I mentioned in *Manchester Engine Sheds*.

If I looked south I could see into the yard of Peacocks where new locos left for the docks by rail. (The works tram steam loco is now at Crich.) Often overseas Garratts went by road out of the Gorton Lane gate on slow moving, articulated low loaders with solid rubber tyres.

photo G

Photo G is taken very close to 2 Sheffield Street (hidden under the G on the map) where I lived as a child. Strictly where we lived in Sheffield Street was in Openshaw even though our postal address was "Gorton, Manchester 18" - the brook at the south end of the street was the Gorton/Openshaw boundary (see the dotted/full line marked "CS" on map). It was a canal overflow which we used to dam up to produce a large lake.

The photo on the top of p51 of *Woodhead Part Three* by E.M.Johnson, shows Railway Street on the right and Gorton Works on the left in 1966. Looking across the tracks as a child I would see J94s shunting the yard at the works. The headshunt went under Cornwall Street as far as the canal aquaduct. A footpath ran along the north side of the tracks beyond Cornwall Street and at one point there was a wooden hoist over the footpath and over the retaining wall. My Uncle Tom Greenwood, a Gorton driver, told me that it had once been used to hoist up oily rags for cleaning at the canal depot. The hoist was disused in my time. Today the place of the hoist is marked by lighter coloured coping stones on the retaining wall.

Above the arrow from "G" on the map is "SP" – signal post, which was on the goods lines. Light engines, usually in pairs, let off steam here day and night as they waited to move off, sometimes to cross over to the main lines just before Gorton and Openshaw station (now just Gorton) to turn right at the junction beyond the station to gain the Fallowfield Line. Further noise came from "The Tank" and "Peacocks". I wonder if Tank Lane Farm below the "D" of "WARD" on the map is evidence that once there was a Tank Lane on the site of Gorton Works and this gave rise to the name.

Thank you for bringing back all those memories.

from Mike Mountford, Bramcote, Nottingham (mikeymountford@yahoo.co,uk)

Query: Barnstone Lime Sidings Signal Box, East Leake

I am a working volunteer in the Buildings & Structures team at GCR (Nottingham). Very few of the early buildings survive, however there are the single-storey remains of a signal box at the Lime Sidings south of Barnstone (aka East Leake) Tunnel (see attached photo).

We know that this box was located 2 miles 1,518 yards from the Loughborough North box, and 1 mile 1,041 yards from the box at East Leake, but that's about it!

Any information, or even better a photograph, would be very much appreciated. For instance, was it always single-storey, or did it at some time support a further floor with a lever frame? The brickwork is in a very poor state in certain areas and so an outer brick skin, mirroring what was already there, has been constructed.

The aim is to make the structure weatherproof and secure so that it can be used as a store for materials.

from John Bennett, Guildford, Surrey

Forward 178 p25: 'Robinson's Locomotives on the GCR' by John Quick.

Having recently obtained a copy of John Quick's book *Robinson's Locomotive Liveries on the Great Central Railway* I would like to add my congratulations to the author on such a thoroughly researched work with the splendid selection of appealing photographs to illustrate his text.

May I mention one historic fact which my help to limit the time range in which photographs were taken if the actual date is not known. It has been the practice of many railways to place a ring on the arm of a signal if it applies to other than the main running lines. On the MS&LR and the GCR such rings were placed on signal arms where these related to trains entering, proceeding along, or leaving goods loops etc. An example at Leicester Central appears in the photograph on page 71 of John's book.

An item in the Midland Railway Notices of signalling alterations on that railway and others over which Midland trains would run stated that commencing on 17th August 1914 all rings on GC signal arms would be removed and from research this appears to have been the case.

I trust that this information may be of some help.

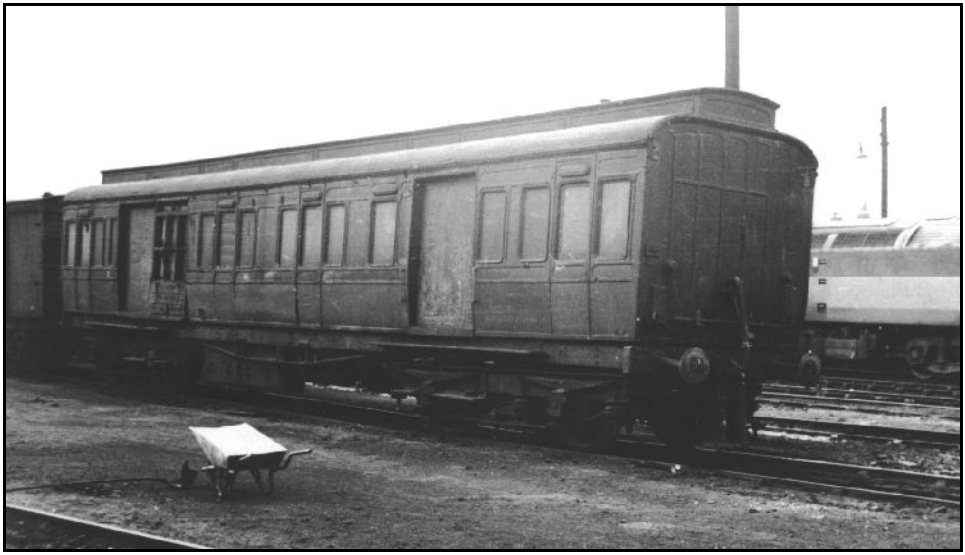
from Dave Cousins, Swinton, Manchester

Query: GC coaching stock

I enclose a couple of photographs of rolling stock which I took some years ago and have only just rediscovered. My captions are lacking in detail as I am not much of a coach guru! Can anyone help me with more information?

above: Vehicle no.045452 (BH 1905) belonging to the Dock Engineer Hull at Alexandra Dock on 25th Jan 1969.

below: Vehicle no.DE320142 at Leeds Holbeck on 20th May 1966.



from Mike Eggenton, Worksop, Notts

Forward 179 p43: 'Mallard' at Killamarsh

Mallard was towed from Doncaster down the GC by B1 4-6-0 no.61121. The weather was wet, misty, and polluted with industrial smoke. Sheffield and Rotherham had not then emerged into the smokeless areas they are today. I was at that time a good friend of Keith Pirt. Most railway enthusiasts will have come across his photographs in journals, magazines and the ubiquitous ABCs of Ian Allan. We decided that we would get a shot of the train passing through Rotherham Central and then sprint up to the bottom of Tinsley bank where the B1 was to take water.

Tinsley bank then bore no resemblance to the area it is now. Hadfields were the predominate steel and engineering works running by the side of the GC line that ran to Doncaster and the GC branch to Barnsley (but then only running to Smithy Wood coking plant). All around you was industry and a continuous procession of goods trains. At the bottom of the bank a signal box and an engine crew mess room were located, almost under Plumpers Bridge. It was a dark miserable hole to be hanging around waiting to bank a goods train. In the loop siding was usually a Darnall J11, J39 or O4 on standby for banking duties, which were not infrequent, up the 1 in 80 bank through Broughton Lane.

The B1 with *Mallard*, two barrier wagons and a guards van in tow, ran through Tinsley station and up to the water column and stopped. The train was there for at least 20 minutes so we had ample opportunity to take photographs. About four other people turned up to take pictures at Tinsley and I think only two other photographers were at Rotherham Central - a far cry from today's scrum whenever a steam special is passing through. The B1 whistled, and off they travelled down the GC and to the Transport Museum at Clapham, a redundant bus depot in London.

We all thought that was it - we would have to travel to London to look at our railway heritage, but with the NRM now at York, history has proved otherwise.

Editor's note: We still haven't got a date for this movement - this had been omitted from Mike's notes!

The 'Mallard' entourage sets off from Rotherham Central. *photo: Mike Eggenton*

from George Huxley, Church Enstone, Oxfordshire

Forward 179 p32: 'Steam over Woodhead - Part One

In his fine book *Steam over Woodhead Part One*, E.M.Johnson includes some recollections of Gorton by Frank Rushton. Among the places and persons recalled were the "Lighthouse Lawyers" who met in the former shed yard signal box at Gorton known as "The Lighthouse". Here many subjects were discussed including locomotive driving and union business. Rushton remarks, "There was a comradeship amongst these men and those before them that I don't think will ever exist again" (p32).

Two of the "lawyers" were Tommy Walker and T.H.(Tommy) Adams. Since both were members of Manchester City Council, they had regular night turns - during the day they undertook their council duties. Adams became a locomotive inspector and in 1946-7 was Lord Mayor of Manchester.

In his autobiographical *I Tried to Run a Railway*, G.F.Fiennes mentions an encounter with T.H.Adams at Marylebone in June 1943 (pp32-33). Fiennes accepted an invitation to 'come and ride' and at Woodford Adams said, "Let's see what she can do". Fiennes continues: 'Now the GC maximum speed in wartime was 60mph and pretty rough on a coal train even at 40mph. It was no place to take a train up to 90mph. And some of the approaches to the island platforms such as Quorn looked, at that speed, as if they had been laid at right angles!' Fiennes admitted he was scared and records that the locomotive was a new class A2 on trials.

Some questions arise. What kind of A2 Pacific made this high speed run? The first of the Thompson Pacifics, rebuilt from a Gresley P2 2-8-2 no.505 *Thane of Fife*, emerged on 16th January 1943 and, like the other rebuilds, was later designated A2/2. They gained a reputation for 'nosing' and were troublesome to maintain. Did Fiennes ride on the footplate of a new A2/2 in 1943? He would not have been the only one frightened by the experience. It is said that the Chief Draughtsman was also terrified by riding on a Thompson Pacific, so rough was the riding experience (*Thompson and Peppercorn: Locomotive Engineers* by Col.H.C.B.Rogers, p78).

Is any more known about the railway career of Adams? It is clear that like many GC locomotive men he liked fast running. With his political and driving skills he was manifestly a person who stood out from the crowd. Railwaymen of such calibre should not be forgotten.

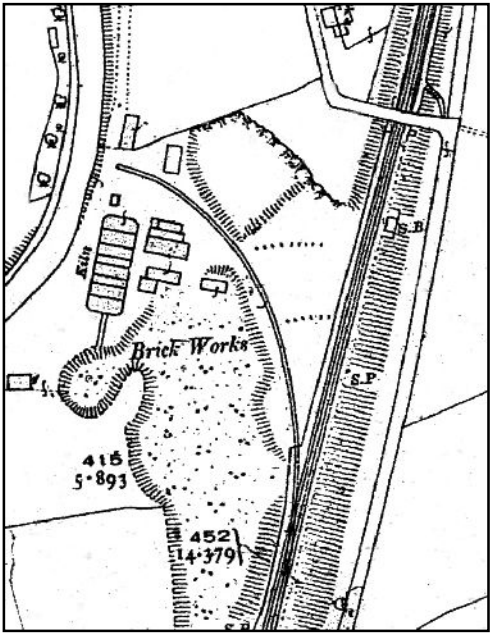
I would like to thank Mr Eddie Johnson for helpful discussion.

BR class A2/2 4-6-2 no.60505 'Thane of Fife' at York shed on 26th May 1958. photo: Ben Brooksbank

from Ron Gee, Sidcup, Kent

Query: Killamarsh brickyard

The enclosed OS map, dated 1930, shows a branch to a brickworks just south of Upperthorpe & Killamarsh station on the LD&ECR. I have never read anything about this branch in books or magazines. It would be interesting to know how the branch was worked and how steep it was as the LD&EC was much higher than the Chesterfield Canal alongside which the brickworks was located.



and finally...

This spoof advert for the Hornby 'Rail Replacement Bus Set' has being doing the rounds on the Internet. In case you have not seen it (or you may not be on the Internet) I have reproduced it below. The creator of this bit of imaginative artwork is Tim Dunn. He twitters and you can find his twitterings at https://twitter.com/MrTimDunn.

In case you cannot read the small print the contents are listed as -

- track under repair
- two ancient buses
- breakdown crane
- harassed staff
- abusive crowd
- tannoy
- windswept bus stops
- invalid seat reservations
- mobile phone with flat battery

NO FUN FOR LITERALLY HOURS

I sympathise with anyone who has had to take a replacement bus service. It is no laughing matter for those affected.

A fine shot of preserved 'Flying Scotsman', carrying LNER livery and number 4472, standing in the up platform at a closed Chesterfield Central. The station had already lost its passenger service (5th March 1963) when the RPS railtour called on 15th June 1963 on the outward leg of its Sheffield Victoria - Marylebone round trip. It was scheduled for a three minute stop at 09:23 during which time owner Alan Pegler and driver Peter Reynolds were presented to the Mayor of Chesterfield, Alderman J. Anderson. The Mayor then whistled the train off - the last passenger train at Chesterfield Central. The line closed completely on 11 Sept.1967. *photo: Mike Eggenton*

Rear cover caption

GCR class 23 0-6-0 no.219 stands alongside Manchester Central station on 8th Nov.1902. Originally built to a Sacré design for the MS&L the class 23 included those with 5'3" wheels (74 locos in 5 batches) and 5'0" wheels (24 locos in 2 batches). They were built from 1859 to 1867. No.219 had 5'3" wheels and was built by Sharp Stewart & Co. in Dec.1866. It was rebuilt in 1901, was given the duplicate number 219B in 1904 and was withdrawn in 1906. It seems to be one of the more commonly photographed of the class, probably because it was often to be seen at Manchester Central.

In the background is the newly constructed Great Northern Railway goods warehouse on Deansgate which was opened in 1899. It is now a listed building and is occupied by leisure and retail outlets. Manchester Central station was closed on 3rd May 1969. Also a listed building, it spent some time as a car park before becoming the G-MEX Centre in 1986. Ironically its name reverted to Manchester Central in 2007.

photo: Ken Nunn collection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