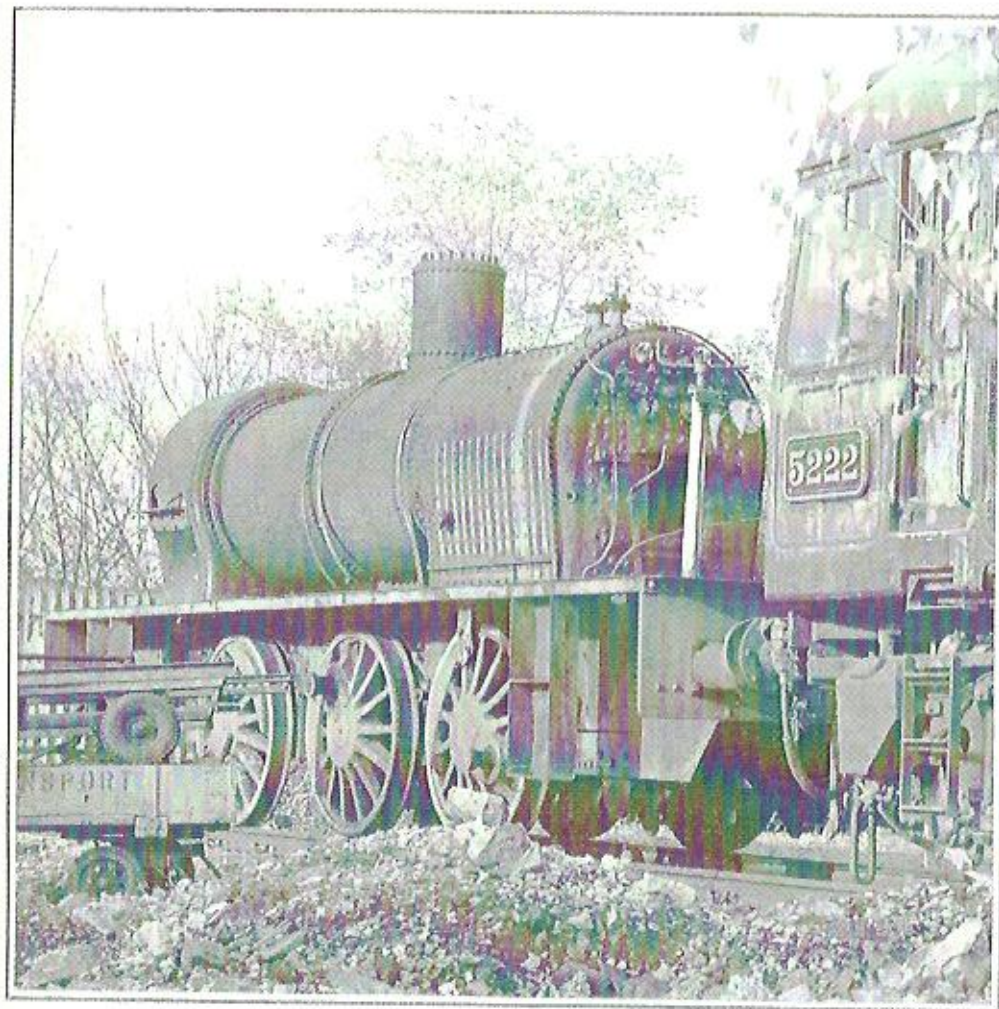




ON SHED

The Magazine of the 8E Association



'ROBERT' PROJECT UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AT EGM

Issue 41

Winter 1995

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COVER PICTURES

FRONT: 'Robert' (Hudswell Clarke no.1752, built 1943) photographed at Crewe Heritage Centre with Pete Waterman's Class 25 for company at the far end of the site. (AJC November 1995)

BACK: The 'Big Shop' (Crewe Works Erecting Shop) operational by 1927, replacing the original erecting shops nos 1-8. 910 ft long, 194 ft wide and 35 ft to the eaves with 3 bays, each bay being 642 ft by 63 ft with two pit roads and a central plain road. This painting of the erecting shop, circa 1962, is by Heritage Centre artist Harry Watson (who featured in the last edition of 'On Shed'). It was painted in 1994, and can be seen with many more of the artist's works at Crewe H.C.

INSIDE BACK: 'City of Truro' - Rugby Central 1959 (photo from 8E member Dave Braden)

CONTENTS

2. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS & WARRINGTON REPORT.
3. CHARLES DICKENS - a local hero
- 4 - 5. PAY CHECKS PT. 2 - and pay day at Newton Heath
6. CITY OF NOTTINGHAM, MEMORIES & COINCIDENCES
7. LEN CLARKE REMEMBERS A WEEK WITH '33 SQUADRON'
- 8 - 9. ISLE OF MAN '95
10. LETTER (of complaint!)
11. THE 'HUNSLET' 0-6-0 AUSTERITY
- 12 - 13. PHOTO SPREAD - 'ROBERT' photographed at CHC
- 14 - 16. ADDICTED TO BALA. Bob 'Shell' confesses all.
17. ARCHIVE PHOTO - Northwich shed
18. CREWE WORKS 1939 - 45 (book review)
19. STEAMING ECCENTRICS (book review)
- 20 - 21. TEA BREAK - puzzle pages
22. UPDATE - do you want to buy a nameplate?
23. NOTICE BOARD - CLC & Llangollen meetings
24. NORTHWICH MEETINGS

EDITORIAL

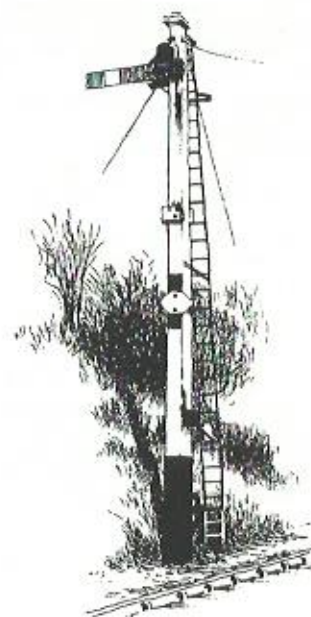
Christmas Greetings

Welcome to another edition of the 8E magazine. The usual pages are included - meeting details, events for our region to keep you up to date, puzzles, a letter and plenty of comments, features and reviews.

The main talking point at the moment is our involvement in restoring an 0-6-0 locomotive (Robert) at Crewe. Whilst our social evenings remain very successful we have not been offering other railway activities and this has resulted in a lower than usual membership. I hope we can again offer the full range - tours, events, visits and hands on activities - in the near future to attract all kinds of enthusiasts, in particular some youthful ones to replace us vintage types!

I hope you find this issue interesting and useful. As always, I welcome any suggestions for improvements in the future.

Paul.



View from the chair

1995 has seen mainline steam on a downward spiral due to many reasons - the long hot summer, rising charges, engine failures, bad marketing, unpaid bills, privatisation - all very worrying for the future. It's time for everybody to take stock, get together round the table, thrash it out and start afresh.

The future of the railway, never mind steam, is finely balanced and the last thing we need is bickering and bad feeling. There is a future for mainline steam but it needs everybody working together, or BR and Railtrack will stop it altogether. That's enough of the negative!

The 8E has had an excellent season of shows and speakers, and we hope to maintain the standard with the 1996 fixtures (see details in this issue).

Your committee and I have felt for some time that we needed a 'hands on' project. The opportunity to restore 0-6-0 ex-NCB Austerity 'Robert' to full working order seems to be just the fillip we need. The loco currently resides at The Railway Age, Crewe. An approach to the trustees was made and unanimously approved. Our own membership gave their approval at the EGM (21.11.95) convened especially to discuss the project. After some lively debate, the vote was unanimous in favour of taking on the restoration.

There is no doubt that it will be a long and arduous task but the rewards, I assure you, will be there for those who get involved. I am sure that we will also pick up new members along the way.

The station clock project is still awaiting Railtrack's engineers to dismantle it and transport it to the 'Lion & Railway', where the landlord has kindly loaned his garage. It seems that there will soon be plenty for the 8E to get steamed up about.

Alan

Warrington

There is little to report from my own particular perspective, with most items which have a publicity / PR involvement being covered in reports from other committee members elsewhere in this issue.

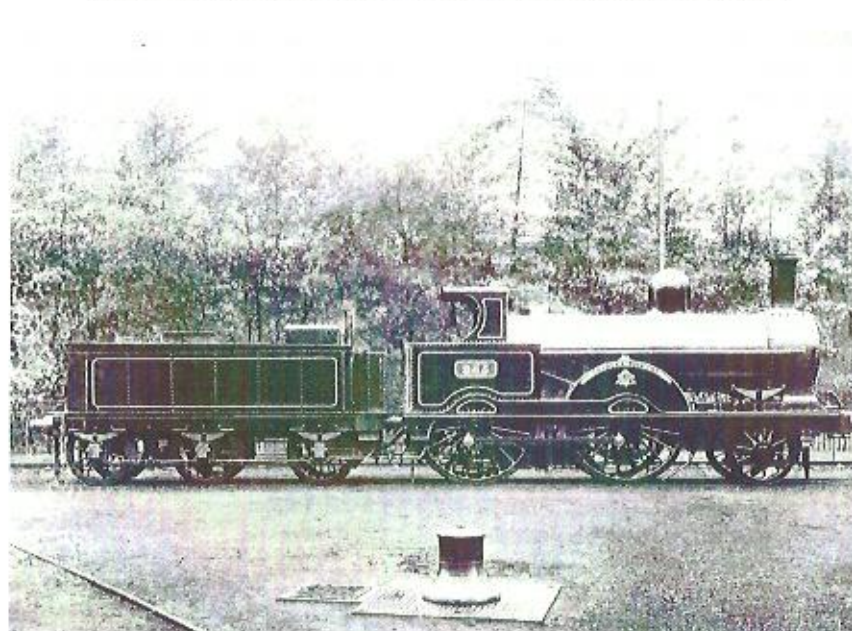
A brief note about our sub-group meetings in Warrington is perhaps appropriate at this juncture however. Our little band of devoted members and friends continue to gather at ST. HILDA'S CLUBROOM, SLATER STREET, LATCHFORD (off the A50 Knutsford Road) on the last Friday of alternate months to be entertained by a broad range of transport related topics as viewed through the media of slides or video. We have enjoyed some excellent offerings during 1995 and warm thanks are due to all those, mostly from within our own ranks, who continue to spend time and effort in putting together shows for the benefit of fellow members. Both Geoff Smith and Gordon Monks deserve special commendation in this respect for very well presented offerings this year.

Our next event will be on FRIDAY, 27th JANUARY when another video evening is likely, following which comes our joint meeting with the GW Society on 24th MARCH for which I hope to invite a 'top name' speaker as this joint fixture falls due to be held at our venue in 1996. All the usual extra facilities which make 8E meetings so enjoyable (refreshments, sales, publicity hand-outs, raffle etc.) are provided to make the evening complete, so once again may I urge you all to come along and have a night out with the Warrington contingent if you possibly can.

Alan Ashurst
Publicity Officer

A DICKENS OF A PRECEDENT

Chris Simon tells the story of a local hero. A 'Jumbo' with over 2 million miles of service.



The Puzzle Page of the last edition of 'On Shed' (Summer 95, Issue 40) contained a picture of Charles Dickens, the locomotive, as it is sculpted into the facade of the Municipal Buildings in Crewe.

The picture above was taken over a century earlier, on 12th September 1891, and shows the famous L&NWR Precedent engine at Crewe works after completing one million miles in less than ten years.

It covered 367 miles a day from its Longsight base, working the 8:15 am Manchester to Euston, returning with the four o'clock. The journey took about four and a quarter hours, giving the two regular drivers a working day of over twelve hours - drivers were rostered on alternate days.

No doubt the engine's consistent performance was seen as a reason for immortalising it in the stone of civic pride. It went on to complete two million miles by the summer of 1902. The locomotive was broken up in November 1912 when the record card read 2,345,107 miles.

A few technical notes gleaned from Edward Talbot's 'LNWR Miscellany', containing a similar photograph (clearly taken on the same day but with footplatemen visible), tell us that it was in a renewed or Improved Precedent form; the class also being known as 'Jumbos'. No coal rails were fitted to tenders until 1895 and side rods were painted black until fluted rods came in at about the same time.

CS

RAILWAY PAY CHECKS - part two

How the system worked at Crewe Works - more questions raised....

In the last issue I asked for clarification of a number of problems including the reason for the differing shapes, sizes, details etc. for pay checks, even within the same depots. So far there have been no answers, but from two separate sources I have details of how the pay system operated in LMS / BR (LMR) depots.

The first insight is provided by Charles Taylor in his book 'Life in a Loco Works' (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), describing the system at Crewe Works.

"Wages were paid a week in arrears on Fridays at 5.25 pm, when we lined up at the office or other pay station in numerical order, shouted out our number, handed in last week's clock card, which now had the amount entered on the front, and received a small cylindrical tin. The tin had our clock number stamped on the lid and when emptied was thrown into a large basket ready for the following week.

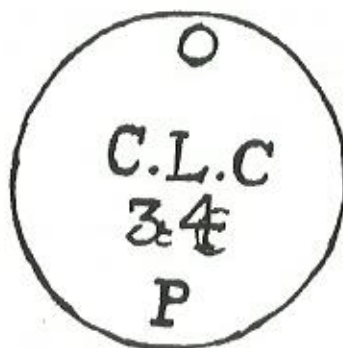
Clock cards were introduced in the mid-thirties but before then the check system was used with each man having a check number, which he shouted out as he passed the time office to obtain his steel check. This was about the size of an old two shilling piece and he kept it until knocking-off time.

The checks were drilled with a small hole so that when not in use they hung on a wooden board studded with hooks, making it easy to see who was missing after 7.55 am. On Friday the checks were brass and had to be presented in return for the wages tin."

This is the first explanation I have seen which mentions **two** types of check - steel & brass - each with a different function. I have never heard of steel checks before. Brass, pewter, copper, aluminium and white metal can all be collected, with brass being the most common, but steel? I think the system described must have been peculiar to a large works, as opposed to a depot or shed.

Similarly, the replacement of the pay check by the clock card in the mid-thirties must have been confined to certain employees or works. I know that pay checks were issued well into BR days even at Crewe, as evidenced by the two LMR checks which illustrated my previous article.

As with most areas of research, when more details come to light yet more questions are raised. If any reader is in a position to assist an amateur researcher please get in touch.



Illustrated above is a Cheshire Lines brass pay check. The pay number 34 has been stamped over an earlier number, probably 48. There is no indication of the depot - I think that the 'P' signifies Permanent Way.

... and Stan Wilson recalls pay day at Newton Heath

After reading the last issue's pay check article, the 8E Association's good friend from Oldham was kind enough to send me the following explanation of a Newton Heath pay day. I am sure that Stan would be happy for me to reproduce his note in full.

"Regarding the paychecks, I can only describe those we had at Newton Heath. These were made of brass about the size of an old halfcrown. On each one a number was stamped. The paychecks were slotted into trays and kept in the time office from where the men obtained them on Fridays. Each paycheck had a corresponding wage tin about 2½ inches in diameter and about 3 inches deep. The pay tins were kept in the pay hut inserted tightly into circular insets drilled in trays.

Pay day at Newton Heath was something akin to a social event, beginning between 8 and 9 o'clock every Friday morning when four burly labourers would trundle a handcart to Dean Lane station. Pushing the cart up the platform slope, they would await the arrival of a local passenger train bearing the money, load the cart, then hurry back to the shed and deposit it in the pay hut where three clerks would be waiting for them. (Imagine this occurring in today's climate?) If my memory serves me well, it took the clerks until noon to fill the tins with each locoman's pay for the week - over a thousand - when, the job completed, they opened shop.

Drivers and firemen signing off duty between eleven and twelve would hang about in the tackhouse until the great hour arrived, whilst those who left for home earlier would take half their sleep, then return to the shed for their pay.

Going first to the time office, one would shout out his number and be handed his

paycheck. Then, crossing the twenty yards to the pay hut, he would join the queue and, when he arrived at the window where the wages were being paid, slap his paycheck down. Here the clerk would select the corresponding pay tin and hand it over with the notes and change crammed inside along with a payslip.

Here and there small groups of locomen would gather as they worked out their ordinary time, time and a quarter, time and a half and time and three quarters. When they were satisfied they had been paid correctly, they would post their empty tin through a flap in the pay hut wall where it would land in a waste paper basket to be collected at the end of the day and be replaced in the tray ready for the following week.

With the men renewing acquaintances, paying their union dues and subscribing a few coppers to various charity collectors, this would continue until five o'clock when the area around the pay hut would finally become deserted and the shed would resume its usual ambiance with drivers and firemen arriving and departing in twos and threes until the following Friday."

I am greatly indebted to Stan for taking the trouble to pass on such valuable memories.



A Northwich check from BR days.



46251 'City of Nottingham' taking water at Carlisle, on the southbound Mid-Day Scot. Booked to stop at Warrington Bank Quay and Crewe before reaching Euston soon after nine o'clock. The passing of the Mid-Day Scot was the overture to a long summer evening's spotting at Crewe which built up to a climax with The Shamrock, The Emerald Isle Express, the Merseyside Express at nine o'clock (probably an Edge Hill 'Princess Royal') and, as a finale, the Ulster Express. This official BR photograph has a gritty realism, without glamour, which evokes memories of the 1950's.

DEDICATION

Is life full of coincidences or does the mind collate the facts to give the results you want?

At the age of eight or ten I was an avid listener to Children's Hour (on steam radio). One of the regular contributors, speaking about classical music and the orchestra, was (Sir) Charles Groves. Years later Sir Charles conducted his last concert on the site of my early home, which by then was redeveloped as a sports and leisure complex. It is that sort of coincidence which I question: perhaps the

mind relates these facts - it is, after all, only relevant to me.

Another name I remember from the Children's Hour programs from the late forties was Herbert Smith, whether as a producer or in some other role, I cannot tell. To my surprise, his name appeared as a dedication in Stan Wilson's book of tales from the footplate 'Steaming Eccentrics' (which is reviewed in this issue). It appeared on the same page as the acknowledgement to my friends in the 8E Association.

Now that is a pleasant coincidence. Another name on that page is that of famous journalist, broadcaster and 'Geordie', Brian Redhead. Brian was editor of the Manchester Evening News when Stan's stories had been printed. He was my travelling companion on countless mornings; as a Radio Four presenter he informed, educated, stimulated and amused me. It is a privilege for the 8E Association to be acknowledged in a work dedicated to such men.

C.S.

IN THE AIR ON THE GROUND AROUND TEESIDE

Reading my newspaper the other night my thoughts were interrupted by the sound of carriage door slamming and the whistle of a locomotive on the television. Bustling along at a tremendous rate of knots was a standard tank on a local - the film was speeded up to create the effect. A squeak of brakes, and the loco had transmogrified into an old 0-6-0. I must say I was surprised - how do they do that?

Alighting at the station were John Steed and Emma Peel. The Avengers had arrived, in black & white, from 1965. Searching through the debris of a derelict airfield for clues, Steed retrieves a plaque and blows off the dust to reveal the legend '33 SQUADRON'. 33 Squadron? My old squadron, for one whole week!

I was based for the final year of National Service at RAF Leeming near Northallerton. It was a very useful posting for me, not long married and living in Billingham, a mere 35 miles away.

6am start, pushbike to Thornaby 6 miles. G5 or D20 all stations Middlesbrough via Ripon and Harrogate to Leeds City. From Northallerton bike 5 miles to RAF Leeming (if you told young people that today they wouldn't believe you) and I still had to set about defending the country after that!

A familiar site in the skies over Teeside in that period in the mid-fifties were the Black Diamonds, 111 Sqn. Fighter Command. Based at Middleton St. George, now Teeside Airport, the Diamonds were the aerobatic display team, flying Hunters, the role eventually taken over by the Red Arrows.

The advent of the V Bomber force - Victors, Vulcans and Valiants, and the need for their dispersal at a time of heightened tension, required the runways at Middleton St. George to be lengthened.

111 Squadron being a front line fighter unit transferred lock, stock and barrel to Leeming, their ground crews taking over our billets. We erks of a maintenance unit

were shuttled daily by coach to and from the RAF regiment depot at Catterick.

On a Sunday night in the winter of 57/58 I would take the train from Billingham, V3 to Thornaby, A8 to Darlington for Catterick. Darlington, being the hub of a number of outlying Army camps and RAF stations, would be crowded with personnel. HM fighting men were on the move! Military Police (Redcaps) and RAF police were thick on the ground, ensuring that hardly a sound emanated from that great throng.

In the train of 6-8 carriages (K1,B1) for Catterick and Richmond, the Redcaps - extremely smart, mean and looking for trouble - would patrol the corridors as we sat silently transported, hoping that our short back & sides were just that. If you told young people that today!

During its stay at Leeming, 111 Squadron was disbanded and in its place 33 Squadron was reformed. The latter boasting a long and distinguished history, having been formed at the birth of the RAF at the end of W.W.I. Between the wars it was based around the Empire at many exotic locations. The unit disbanded in 1948.

For 33 Squadron rebirth a number of aircraft types previously flown by the squadron arrived at Leeming, some now flown by the Royal Navy. I helped assemble from crates a Hawker Hart, a biplane fighter of the thirties, before patching its fabric wings and fuselage.

My posting ended when my last job was to update the honours board, the history of the squadron, to hang in the officers' mess. A wonderful record of the men and machines of 33 Squadron who kept the piece between, and fought in two, World Wars.

But for the whistle of a steam engine and the repeat of an old TV programme I might never have remembered my time with 33 Squadron.

Len Clarke

ISLE OF MAN '95

Bob Greenhalgh reports on a rare weekend away from 'Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid'.

Having been over to the Isle of Man twice before, I couldn't make up my mind whether to visit again this year. My commitment to Bala Lake Railway takes up 99% of my free time and in the end I decided that a long weekend would be of benefit all round.

My son Matt was to sit his GCEs in June so again it would be a good way for him to relax after the pressure of exams. Having scanned the adverts and checked the holiday and exam dates, the last weekend in June was chosen.

The next step was to contact Everyman Holidays in the IOM, tell them what I wanted and leave it to them. An hour or so later they had a provisional holiday for me. Leave Liverpool 9.00 pm Friday night by Seacat, 3 nights B&B in a guest house in the centre of Douglas, returning to Liverpool 5.30 pm by Seacat. The price, £208 for us both with 3 day all-transport rover ticket and insurance, I snapped it up.

The weekend coincided with the steam rally at Nobles Park which was a bonus. Also, Caledonia was to be running on Snaefell. Who could ask for more?

Through our involvement at Bala, Matt and I had met and become good friends with several members of the Groudle Glen Railway. We were looking forward to visiting them at Groudle, as we had done on our last visit.

We left Liverpool in glorious sunshine, right on time on the Friday evening. The seacat wasn't crowded and the sea was very calm. As we sped on our way at 43 mph the sunset was a sight to behold. It was the start of a weekend full of incident and happiness.

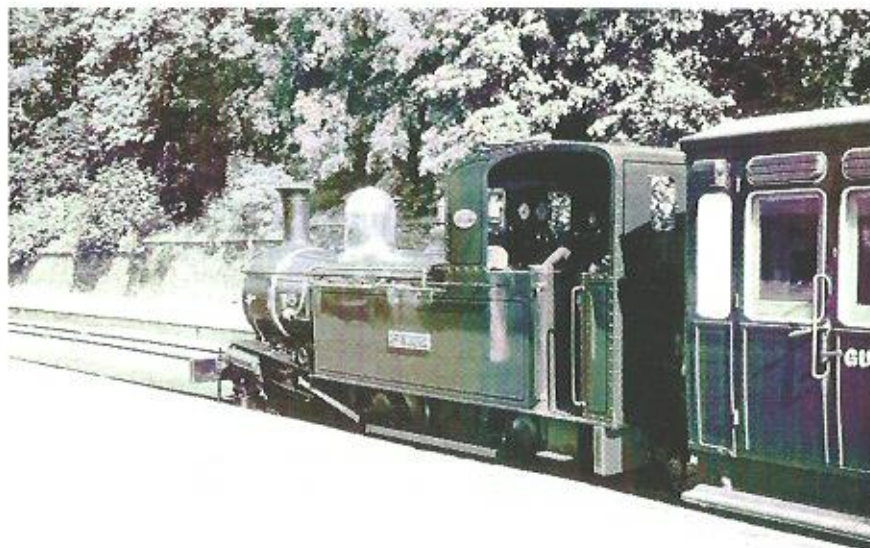
We arrived at Douglas ten minutes early at 11:20 pm. The horseshoe bay, all lit up on a dark summer's night, was a most beautiful sight. Here we had a minibus transfer to our guest house and it was now that the incidents started.

As we sat on the bus a car next to us started to load its passengers when the front passenger door fell off! The driver calmly walked round the car, put the passenger in the front seat, put the door back on and set off with the passenger holding the door closed! No-one bothered, though our bus was awash with amazed laughter.

On Saturday Matt and I made our plans over an excellent breakfast. We would take the first train from Douglas to Port Erin and then decide our next step over dinner. Some plan!

We got to Douglas station in time to inspect our loco, G.H.Wood, which was in immaculate condition. We stopped at port Soderick after the climb from Douglas and were away again after a minute or two. Not for long. We had barely gone half a mile when we stopped. Two minutes later we reversed to Port Soderick. Whilst stopped, Matt was busy viewing the loco cab when the Ross Pop valves lifted. Matt is estimated to have jumped at least three feet into the air, much to the delight of the loco crew.

The reason for our reversal was a tree which had come down overnight and blocked the line. Within ten minutes a landrover arrived with a chainsaw gang who set about removing the tree. Twenty five minutes after first arriving at Port Soderick we left again for Port Erin and got there without further incident.



"Our loco was in immaculate condition." (B/Peacock 2-4-0T G.H.Wood)

On Saturday evening we were booked on a special trip up Snaefell. This was superb. We had an excellent commentary on the way up giving a detailed insight into Laxey - the mine, wheel and of course the mountain railway. Add to this the sunset as seen from Snaefell summit and it becomes clear why we were enjoying ourselves so much.

After a leisurely breakfast on Sunday we had a walk and horse tram ride along the front, courtesy of Walter a tram horse. The weather all this time had been uninterrupted sunshine, and as we now know it was the beginning of an excellent summer.

The Groudle Glen runs mainly on Sundays and Wednesdays during the summer. We arranged to arrive at the start of the day's timetable. We got there to find that due to the large demand for the trains they had started 45 minutes early! We were treated with great warmth by our friends and ushered to the loco for a cab ride to Sea-lion rocks and back.

Having enjoyed our ride it was then time for the customary tea and chat before we again rode the length of the line, this time as paying passengers. On the way back we noticed that a small bank fire had started and on arrival at Groudle the fire service were called. Having said our farewells we got the tram back to Douglas. Half a mile from the end we went 'wrong line' due to a tram derailment outside the tram sheds. Convenient for the breakdown crew at least!

On Monday we went shopping in Douglas in search of hand brushes for our Bala locos and of course we got some of the famous Manx kippers to take home. The afternoon was spent at Nobles Park engine rally and then it was time to catch the Seacat back home.

As I sat in the Seacat, pint in hand watching from the window as Douglas was left behind, I felt the urge to return next year. Now it just so happens that

Bob Greenhalgh

Sir,

Taking a nostalgic look through past issues of your excellent magazine I am prompted to write and ask "Whatever happened to the great GWR railway writers who once graced your fine publication?"

Topics such as the GWR v LMS and LNER were regularly discussed, along with the suspect railway leanings of the committee and other members. There have always been doubts about some members when they view certain LMS locomotives during the monthly meetings.

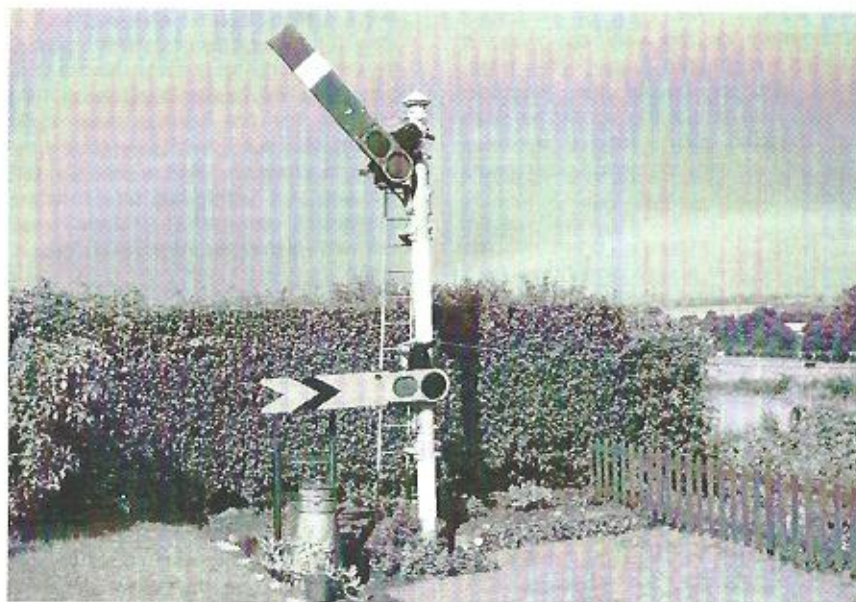
The introduction of railway privatisation is to include help for these people. The GWR is about to introduce new rehabilitation programs to convert railway enthusiasts from the outdated LMS and LNER. 8E members should await further details in the press, but typical conversion programs are:

- The pointing of the sea walls at Dawlish
- The installation of lights inside Box Tunnel to allow passengers to view this masterpiece of civil engineering as they travel by train.
- The rebuilding of Swindon Works to manufacture a new high tech. fleet of GWR locos.

For LMS and LNER supporters, now is the time to switch to the new GWR. Their program includes a new engine for the year 2000 to replace the ageing HST fleet. Let's hope that the great railway writers return to the 8E in the near future.

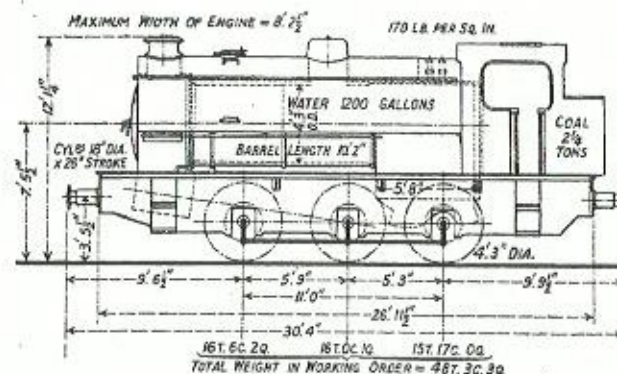
G. J. KING

Especially to please Mr King (?) we have included a GWR page - inside back cover.



A timeless scene at 'Bradley Junction'. See Colin Worrall to arrange a guided tour!

The 'Hunslet' 0-6-0 Austerity Tank Locomotive



The 'Hunslet' 0-6-0 Saddle Tank Locomotive was adopted in 1942 by the Minister of Supply, as the most suitable type of locomotive for varied duties after a thorough survey of available types, at the time of the country's most urgent need for locomotive power.

The Hunslet Engine Co. Ltd. made their greatest effort to meet this need. Instructions were received late in August of that year to modify the design of their standard type of locomotive to a specification that would meet the requirements of military working conditions, with the minimum use of materials in short supply. The capacity of the coal bunker and the water tank were increased, the wheel size considerably increased, and other modifications carried out while at the same time production plans were laid to obtain an output far higher than ever before.

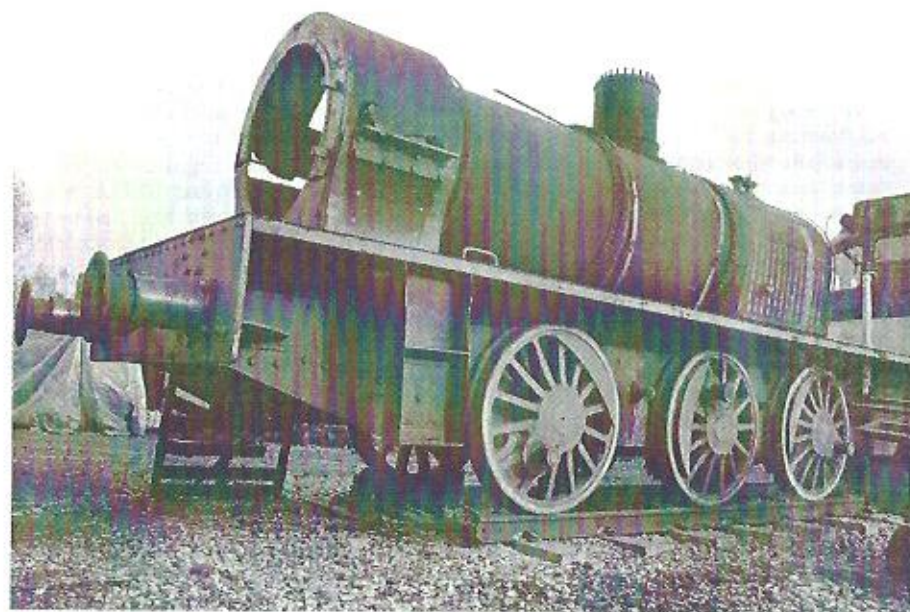
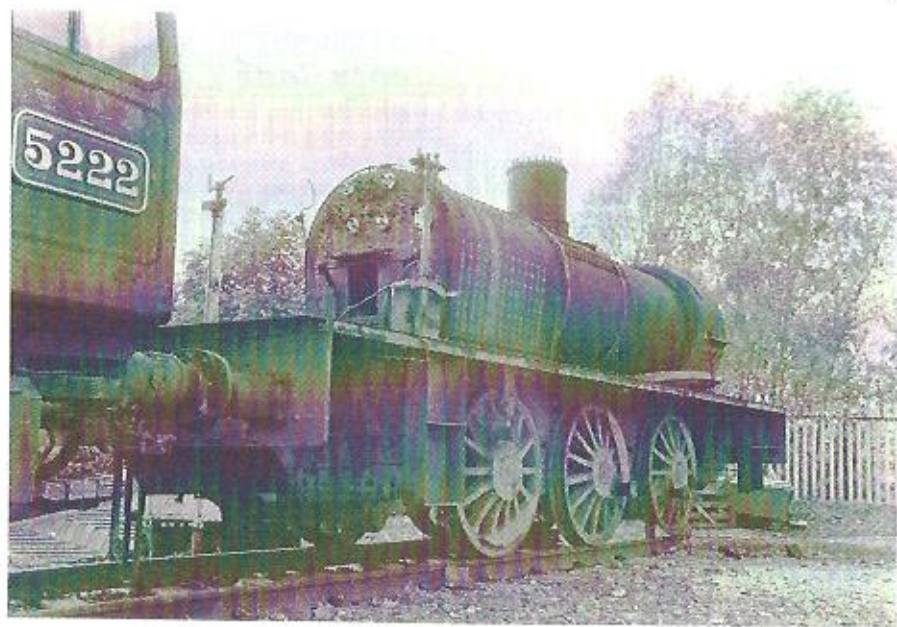
So effective was this that the first locomotive was completed, tested and placed in service by the 1st of January, 1943, in spite of the necessity to complete existing contracts that this company has

already in hand for anti-tank guns. Furthermore, this was achieved with a higher proportion of dilute labour.

The 'Hunslet' 0-6-0 Austerity Tank Locomotives continued to roll out of the works until national and military requirements had been completely filled, in the late summer of 1945.

The Hunslet Engine Co. Ltd. also acted as the parent firm over a large group and supplied fully detailed working drawings to five other locomotive builders - Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn, Bagnall, Hudswell Clarke, Vulcan Foundry and Andrew Barclay - and was responsible for the bulk buying and allocating of all materials in short supply, with the result that the group's combined efforts more than doubled the total number of these locomotives delivered for the use of the War Department.

centre page photographs:
Four studies of 'Robert' at Crewe Heritage Centre, photographed in November 1995.
(AJC)



FROM HELSBY TO BALA VIA THE 8E

I had spent many happy hours at Crewe helping on the sales stand and on the steam specials to Holyhead, but I found the main line a bit too much. It was in May 1991 that I took my son Matthew to a scout camp at Bala. It was a special canoe weekend and I was to pick him up at 4 o'clock in the Sunday afternoon.

I decided to leave home early and spend a few hours on the Bala Lake Railway. Little did I know what it would lead to! I left home armed with my camera and a spare film ready for a day riding on the train and taking a few photos. I always like to ride on the trains that I photograph as I feel it important to put something into the railway - not just take the photos and leave.

Over lunch, I read the editorial of the house magazine. They were crying out for volunteers. On my trip down the line I chatted to the guard about the railway and volunteering. I explained that I was a single parent with a 12 yr old son. 'Fine, you'll both be welcome', I was told.

After getting home I talked to Matt about volunteering. He wasn't over keen, but my parents said that they would look after him if I wanted a day at Bala. I wrote to the magazine editor explaining my circumstances and my volunteering stints with the 8E. The letter came back asking me to contact the General Manager and arrange a date. This I did. It was to be in 3 weeks time after the gala weekend. The dye was cast!

Matt and I attended the gala, camping at Bala and getting rather wet in the near non-stop rain. We still enjoyed our weekend and the railway seemed a friendly place.

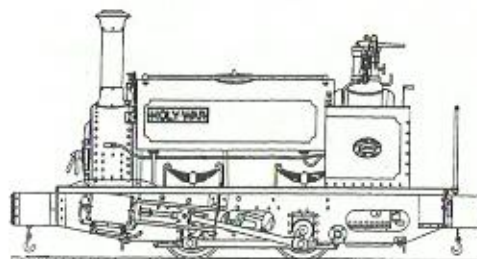
My first day as a volunteer (Tues 9th July, 91) duly arrived and I was somewhat surprised to find myself as the

day's fireman! The steam loco was Holy War, an 0-4-0 Hunslet saddle tank (built 1902) from the Dinorwic slate quarry in Llanberis. My driver and instructor was David Jones, a very gentle person and an excellent teacher. I did 4 return trips from Llanuwchllyn to Bala and learnt a lot. I was dusty black and thirsty but what a wonderful day it had been - a dream come true. I was asked when I was coming back but because of other commitments this couldn't be until 6th August. I was well and truly hooked.

In David Jones I couldn't have asked for a better teacher. He has steam deep in his blood as his father, grandfather and uncle were all lifelong employees of the Talylyn railway. David's gentle manner and easy teaching style made those footplate days very enjoyable, and I was always most eager to learn from my mistakes. In 1991 I spent 7 days as fireman and 3 days at the working weekends on general maintenance - I was learning all the time.

To avoid confusion with Bob Davies, our regular guard, I was christened Bob 'Shell'. There were two reasons for this. Firstly they couldn't say Greenhalgh, and secondly my overalls had 'SHELL' across the back in large letters! Matt had by this time decided that he wanted to volunteer so he came with me for the working weekends. Because of his age he wasn't allowed on the footplate, so he helped with the many other jobs that needed doing.

In 1992 I spent 27 days on assorted maintenance jobs and 23 days as fireman. The tasks of general maintenance cover everything - ash clearing, lineside growth clearing, fencing, trackwork, painting - in fact you name it and Matt and I have probably had a go at it.



'HOLY WAR' Hunslet No.779 of 1902

Matt was getting a good grounding and was seen as a useful young volunteer. On the footplate I was getting better, and still learning. One of the things that I learnt very quickly was how to adjust my firing according to the differing driving styles of each driver. I also learnt not to get over confident as you can soon come down to earth with a bump!

My progress must have been satisfactory as during my second 'season' I was allowed to run the loco round the loop at each end and towards the end of the season take the train from Bala to Llanuwchllyn. Whilst this was a great thrill I didn't want to jump the gun as I still felt I had a lot to learn. In October, 92 the engineer David Black paid me a great compliment by telling me that if I kept up my progress I would be likely to be passed out as a driver by the end of the following year.

It was about this time that the introduction of Santa trains was first considered. Without hesitation I offered to handle all the bookings. A small team was formed which in 8 weeks organised the operation of one weekend of Santa trains. We were fortunate to have a team leader who was an experienced 'Santa man' from the Embay railway. He set the high standard of operation which we still have today. In that first year we carried almost 300 people and made £150 profit. The Santa trains are now very much a part of the

Bala calendar. 1992 ended with David Black leaving Bala for Ffestiniog and Roger Hine taking over as Chief Engineer.

After the usual winter maintenance the 1993 season started as usual at Easter and once again we were short of volunteers. David Jones had left as the paid driver for a job at Towyn, following in his family's tradition. For the first few days of that season I found myself firing and driving alternately to several regular drivers.

On Monday 12th April I was fireman and having had to stop for a blow up due to clinker I was passed out to drive at the end of the day with the comment "You're a bit rough but you're all we've got!" I was also only allowed to drive with an experienced fireman. Looking back I was rough, but I learnt so much that year. In 1993 I spent 45 days on the footplate - 56 trips as fireman and 130 as driver. Each trip is 9 miles so I did a total of 1674 miles that year. Not bad on a 4½ mile line! I also spent a total of 41 days doing other jobs. Again it was a case of doing whatever was asked, and once again I was very involved with the Santa trains.

I decided that 1994 would be a little less hectic - I would try and do a bit less. I should be so lucky! Apart from a week in the Isle of Man I was always at Bala. Along with several others I spent many winter days turning the volunteers accommodation from a total mess into something very clean, tidy and habitable. This project is still ongoing and I am proud of what has been achieved.

It was in this year that the publicity officer retired and I was seconded into the position. I had very little idea of how to do the job, but again I have learnt and am still learning.



"Father and son on the footplate together" - Hunslet 0-4-0 'Maid Marian' (ex-Dinorwic quarry) at Llanuwchllyn

By the end of the year I had spent 12 days as fireman, 29 days as driver and 42 days on other jobs, so much for having a quiet year! I did get a bit of rest due to a bad back strain (done at work) which saw me on sick leave for 8 weeks in October / November. This enforced rest enabled me to get the Santas organised!

1995 started with me going very easy as my back was, and still is, very delicate. No trackwork for me so I started on the volunteers kitchen again with several others. I didn't know whether I would be able to fire or drive, but so far I have managed. In fact my score as I write is 5 days firing and 30 days driving with 52 days other work. With each day at Bala, no matter what job I do, I try to learn from the day and this I stress to all those following me - especially Matt.

I feel it important to keep learning otherwise you run the risk of becoming complacent and a danger to both yourself and those around you.

The start of this year saw my son Matt celebrate his 16th birthday and so, after 4 years of odd jobs, he was allowed to start training as a fireman. Much to his credit he is well thought of by the drivers who he has fired for, and the proudest moment for me was a Saturday in May when we were, father and son, on the footplate together - a day I shall always treasure in my memories. Like me, he thoroughly enjoys Bala and has spent ten days as fireman in his first season on the footplate.

If any of you are in Wales, do call in at Bala. Narrow gauge is a lot of fun and very enjoyable. It may not have the glamour of a Duchess or a Streak but it has a big heart and a warmth not found on standard gauge. Try it, you might like it. Be careful though - it can become addictive!

Bob 'Shell' Greenalgh



Many thanks to Dave Dyson for his photo of class 04/7 no 63603 on Northwich shed in 1962.

LIFE IN A LOCO WORKS Charles Taylor

First-hand experiences of a Crewe engineering apprentice in wartime

In his childhood when living at No.67 Flag Lane, adjacent to Flag Lane bridge, Charles Taylor had a wonderful bedroom view of Crewe Works yard. He recalls

"the panorama of Chain Shop, Stone Yard, Brass Finishing Shop, Wheel Shop and the Melting Furnaces. Nearer still was the main line to Chester and my grandfather would check the clock as the 'Irish Mail' went by every day, headed by a Cloughton or a Royal Scot in full cry. The lights in the yard meant that I never needed a candle and I went to sleep to the lullaby of shunting, and woke to the sound of the distant signal on the other side of Flag Lane dropping back on."

His grandfather, father and uncles had all worked 'inside', as did most of his neighbours, so for the young Charles Taylor a railway career must have been inevitable.

Starting in 1939, aged 16, the author covers the period of his apprenticeship at Crewe Works during the war years, where more than 7000 men and women were employed.

This is a book which would appeal to all with an interest in steam locomotive engineering or students of industrial history. Much of the content is of necessity technical (how else could the multifarious jobs of an engineering apprentice be described) yet it is presented in a very readable style with plenty of anecdotes and observations.

Those of us who have no knowledge of the days before the NHS was introduced may be interested in the following gem where the author describes how the sick

pay system was operated by the Friendly Societies.

The rules governing sick pay were very strict - the patient was not allowed to do anything heavy such as gardening, travel more than three miles away from home, or be out of doors after 6 pm in winter and 9 pm in summer. The Friendly Societies all had sick visitors to call on those off sick with good wishes, and at the same time ensure that the rules were being obeyed.

One sick visitor gained fame (or notoriety) by breezing into a particular bedroom with the remark that, "These stairs are a bit awkward to get a coffin down"

This book is an invaluable record of the methods and practices of Crewe works during the war, following the author through the many different shops as he gained the necessary skills and experience. It is well illustrated with archive photographs (many from the NRM and ABB, Crewe). The 5 maps cover the entire site, although a better overall picture would surely have been presented with one large fold out map - perhaps this was impractical. Highly recommended, even if you only borrow it from the library.

Oxford Publishing Co. (1995) £16.99
184pp 52 b/w photos.

Footnote

Charles Taylor is currently Locomotive Advisor to the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust.

STEAMING ECCENTRICS

by Stan Wilson (224 pages, £15.99)
(Silver Link Publishing, 1995)

The author of this quite remarkable collection of short stories served the LMS and later BR(M) as a fireman during the days when promotions to driver were few and far between. As a result he met and worked with a great many interesting and varied characters while wielding a shovel before, during and after the second World War.

He has chosen to tell us in his book about the more eccentric and colourful men who were employed at the north Manchester shed with him. These stories are not only highly amusing but will also be of considerable interest to all steam enthusiasts, reflecting as they do an important period of transport history.

What is presented here is not a glamorised picture of the steam era but a quite moving account of what footplate life was really like when steam was king.

There are in all 28 stories. Some are hilarious, some genuinely moving, but all highly memorable for the unique way in which Stan has painted a word picture of the steam age.

You will learn of the deadly rivalry of Black Jack Robinson, Roly Poly Farrel, the crafty and devious Timothy 'time and a bit', the acquisitive Sammy the Maggie and many other entertaining and eccentric characters.

All these people are brought to life through Stan's skilful penmanship. Do beware however - reading this book in a public place could prove to be embarrassing - you will certainly find yourself laughing out aloud.

Should you be asked what you would like for Christmas, look no further. This is an ideal gift for railway enthusiasts of all ages.

Ian Haselgrove

STAN WILSON No.1 IN OLDHAM

As the press clipping from the Oldham Weekend shows, for at least one week in his home town Stan Wilson outsold Jane Austen! And all that without the aid of a TV drama series!

Occasionally, we are aware that our troubles have been brought on by

For example... have a problem with excessive drinking and realise they have a

... out, the is what who h became restru who h child is the you discover genetical disease t them los quality i We have trying t trouble success!

S

But our difficulty there apt

TOP BOOKS...

OLDHAM'S best-selling books (educational books omitted) in the week to October 31, supplied by Hammicks bookshop:

1. *Steaming Eccentrics* (Transport)
2. *Pride and Prejudice* (classic fiction)
3. *Della Smith's Winter Collection* (cookery)
4. *Tinker's Girl* (general fiction)
5. *Writing Home* (biography)
6. *Encyclopaedia of Essential Oils* (health)
7. *Glass Lake* (fiction)
8. *Jane Eyre* (biography)
9. *From birth to five years* (childcare)
10. *Oldham and its People* (local history)

TEA BREAK

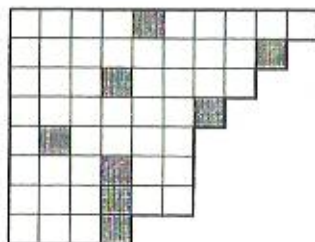


Harry Watson's *opus magnum* illustrated on the back cover may not contain a mouse, but there are some cats - how many?
Also - what was the score? (the questions can only be answered by viewing the original work at the Heritage Centre.)

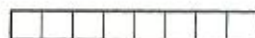
THE GREAT LITTLE TRAINS OF WALES

How well do you know them?

FFESTINIOG HARBOUR
BALA PASSING POINT
W & LLR VIADUCT
TALYLLYN FALLS
WELSH HIGHLAND FARM
LLANBERIS LAKE
V. OF R. BRIDGE
BRECON TERMINUS



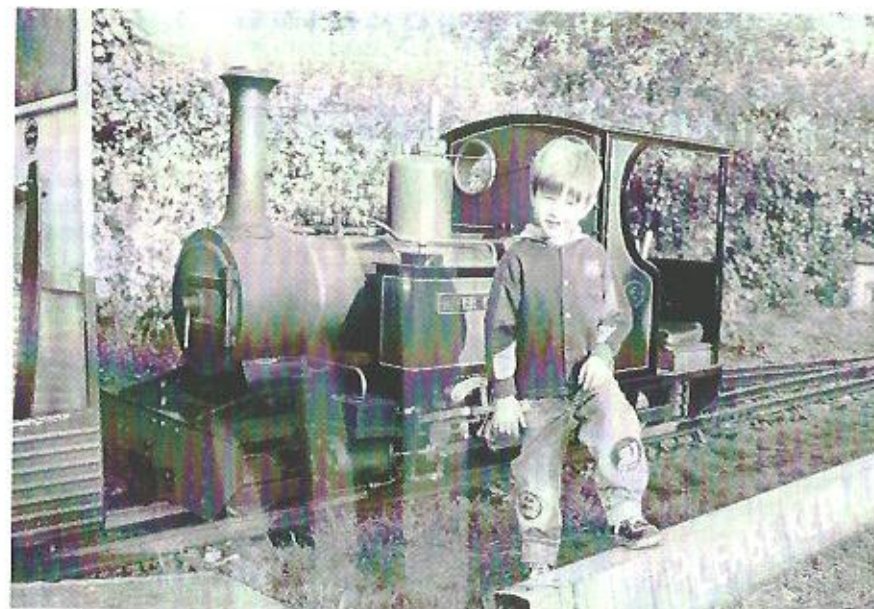
Fill in the answers then rearrange the letters in the shaded squares to reveal a station name from one of the railways.



They don't build them like this anymore! Vintage L.N.W. but where?
(photo : Colin Worrall)



One day this box will operate again. Do you know the location?



This young railway enthusiast is Jack Carr - a future 8E member no doubt. Do you know the loco and the railway?
(PHOTO PUZZLE ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 22)

WINTER ISSUE UPDATE

A miscellany of items which haven't been covered elsewhere



UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Shortly after the last issue was published, we were introduced by Ian Haselgrove to a low cost printing service at Manchester University which promised similar quality output. I asked them to provide a sample magazine cover and a 4 page selection from issue 40, using the original proofs. This proved very satisfactory and it was decided to entrust them with this issue. So we now put them to the real test with an issue which contains 16 photographs. I hope they prove as good as they seemed last summer!

THE 'WORLD CUP'

I entered 'On Shed' Issue 40 for the 'Railway World Cup' (the national railway society magazine competition). The results are published in January and an honourable mention would be a boost for our humble effort - apparently we sank without trace in our only previous encounter some years ago!

A SIGNAL FAILURE

No one managed to win the prize which was on offer for the society magazine puzzle in the last issue (page 20). The missing word was **SEMAPHORE**, but I needed the name of the railway who produce a magazine of that name - it is the **AVON VALLEY** railway. Since I still need to get rid of the 'prize', lets see how well you know your 'Great Little Trains of Wales'. (See page 20 of this issue.)

PICTURE PUZZLE ANSWERS

- ♦ The L&Y bridge (page 20) can be found at Whitchurch station.
- ♦ The signal box (top of page 21) is at Leekbrook Junction - where the Cheddleton based North Staffs Railway will eventually be operating.
- ♦ Jack Carr (bottom of page 21) was on a visit to Rudyard Lake miniature railway (it's well worth a visit) and the loco is 'River Churnet'.

No. 7 APPEAL

With the 'Robert' project gaining the approval of the Association at the recent EGM, it seems likely that we will soon be asking for volunteers to get dirty at Crewe. Meanwhile, do we have a researcher who can come up with a biography of NCB No.7 for the summer issue of this magazine? Photographs would also be useful. Any contribution would be much appreciated.

CLOCK UPDATE

On the eve of going to press I spoke to our Railtrack contact. He told me that the architect considers our suggestion for protecting the clock's two faces with perspex would be impractical (the structure would be too heavy). To break the deadlock I suggested that we (8E) reconsider all the vandal-proofing possibilities and offer any workable suggestions to Railtrack. If you have any ideas please discuss them with any committee member. If we can't agree on a solution the project will die.

Alan Carr

NAMEPLATE FOR SALE 'BUTLERS HALL' nameplate (& number). Slightly accident damaged from 1961 Rugby derailment. Offers to Chris Chitty 01457 762533

WANTED railway books or videos in good condition for use as raffle prizes.

Notice Board

'CHESHIRE LINES' MEETINGS 1996.

JAN 3 RD	"SOUTH AMERICAN STEAM IN ACTION"	GEOFF MONKS
FEB 7 TH	"CLC HISTORY / 8E ASSOC. ACTIVITIES"	ALAN ASHURST
MARCH 6 TH	"6000 MILES IN PAKISTAN & INDIA - 1995"	JOHN OWEN
APRIL 3 RD	"30 YEARS ON - BR STEAM IN THE 1960S"	PETER FITTON
MAY 1 ST	"UK STEAM IN THE 1960S"	HUGH BALLANTYNE
JUNE 5 TH	AGM & "MEMBERS SLIDE EVENING"	

Meetings held at 7:30 pm in the Railway Hotel, Wellington Road North, Stockport

LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY TRUST CHESTER BRANCH MEETINGS

JAN 4 TH	"UK RAIL MISCELLANY"	DOUG BIRMINGHAM
FEB 1 ST	"PRE-1968 UK STEAM"	COLIN WHITE
MARCH 7 TH	"COLOUR RAIL IN PERSON"	RON WHITE
APRIL 4 TH	"TRAINS SERVICES ON THE NORTH WALES COAST - 1930S & 50S"	BILL REAR

All meetings held at the 'Town Crier', City Road, Chester commencing 8:00 pm

**NON-MEMBERS WELCOME
AT BOTH VENUES**

1996 Fixtures NORTHWICH MEETINGS

Tues Jan 9th

COLIN WHITFIELD

Smoke Gets in my Lens - Sometimes

A wide ranging look at railways, starting with the last days of BR steam. The show will include British & foreign - not all of which will be steam, as indicated in the title.

Tues Feb 13th

IAN SMITH

British Industrial Steam

Ian is the widely respected chairman of the Middleton Railway and very active within ARPS (with special responsibility for the smaller societies, of which the BE is one). His slide shows are entertaining and enlightening. Arrive in good time to get a seat!

Tues March 12th

NICK PATCHING

Signalling Made Simple (illustrated talk)

The assistant traffic manager from the Llangollen Railway discusses a facet of the railway which many of us know little about - illustrated with slides.

Tues April 9th

STAN WILSON

Steaming Eccentrics (Part II)

Ex-Newton Heath fireman, and friend of the BE, Stan Wilson returns with more of the reminiscences which entertained us 2 years ago. Highly recommended. (Stan will be delighted to sign your copy of 'Steaming Eccentrics'.)

Tues May 14th

PETER JOHNSON

A Gricer's Guide to the FFestiniog

Peter is a respected narrow gauge author, photographer and 'Steam Railway' correspondent on n.g. matters. He is also editor of the Ffestiniog magazine, so there could be no better guide to this most spectacular line.

Tues June 11th

speaker not yet confirmed

Venue: 'The Lion & Railway' (opposite Northwich Station)
7:45 pm start. Non-members most welcome

