

THE CIRCULAR

Bradford Railway Circle

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Editorial

Well, I hope all you members have been out and about this fine summer, travelling here and there, researching this & that, and snapping lots of nice railway pictures – because I need some more material from you, to keep *The Circular* going. I have just two articles in reserve – only two, at the moment!

Meanwhile, thanks to those who have provided material for this issue – a variety of interesting material; and the book reviews as well reveal several surprises and fascinating facts. So we have another 24-page issue, which is just as good news as the good attendances at recent meetings.

Two outdoor events are planned for this summer/autumn – a Middleton Railway visit, steam trip and shed tour on 20th August, and a trip in the Worth Valley Fish & Chip special on 23rd September. If you haven't received details by email, and are interested, please contact a committee member, or see details on the Circle website (Home page, under "News"). Both events are suitable for both members and partners/wives, so we hope to see many of you on both trips, for two great get-togethers!

Netherlands & Belgium 2022 (Pt. 2) Peter Holden

[continued from last issue]

Wednesday 15th June - Before breakfast I left our hotel early and caught the 06:23 Brussels service only as far as the first stop, Ans, a distance of 3.73 miles, uphill all the way! It was indeed banked. I positioned myself at the rear and watched the assisting loco drop back prior to Ans Station. I am informed that this operation is used for driver training purposes. I am pretty sure this is the only time I have been on a service train that was banked. Then a quick cross-platform change sees me catch the 06:37 back down to Liège in good time for breakfast at 07:00!

Today's itinerary was to travel across most of the western border with France, making our way to De Panne for the Coast Tram.

The 08:24 Liège to Mons is our first train. Mons Station is in the process of having an upgrade. As ever in Belgium, things take forever. Mind you they don't appear to cancel projects, thus wasting millions in the process, as some countries like to do!!

From Mons we continue on the 10:46 Mons to Tournai, the 11:53 Tournai to Kortrijk, the 12:55 Kortrijk to Lichtervelde, and the 13:32 Lichtervelde to De Panne.

Here we leave the main line railway behind and continue our journey by boarding the Coast Tram. Our hopes of catching one of the new CAF trams were upheld as we leave De Panne on tram 6114 heading to Oostende. The tram driver had to make several emergency stops along the way as both pedestrians and cyclists appeared to be wanting to make 15th June their last day! As with most "new" transport they have chosen to replace comfy seats with hard seats! But it has to be said the new trams are much faster and on a hot day like this one the air-con was working very well indeed. On arrival into Oostende, we make our way to Café Botteltje. Sadly, it is closed on Wednesdays! So instead, we enjoy an early meal in Brasserie Mersea. Yet again, a wonderful salad for me!



1915 at Knokke, 15/6/22

We now continue our run on the Coast Tram from Oostende to Knokke. Having nearly an hour to wait on arrival in Knokke, a visit to Bar-Celona, a Spanish themed bar would you believe, just over the road, was our next move.

It was still quite warm as we depart Knokke on the 19:06 changing at Gent St. Pieters onto our last train of the day the 20:24 Gent to Liège.

Thursday 16th June

Today we are to move on to our last hotel of the trip, the NH Collection, Antwerpen Centraal, for 5 nights. We would also be joined for the last 5 days by friend Chris. It has to be said that our hotel in Liège was very good in quality and was also very reasonably priced compared to our other two hotels on this trip.

The 08:24 Liège to Hasselt via Liers is our first train of the day. Changing at Hasselt onto the 11:07 Hasselt to Mol, and then the 11:58 Mol to Antwerpen Centraal.

Having left our cases at the hotel we made use of our 3-day tram and bus pass to make our way to Café Kulminator to await Chris's arrival. Would you believe his Eurostar was also late into Brussels.

Allegedly the Kulminator is the best bar in the World for beer. I decided to once more use up some of my alcohol allocation here.

The high temperatures continued, so I called it a day and went back to chill out in my air-conditioned hotel room.

Friday 17th June - Visit to Gent. A reasonably leisurely start and indeed a very leisurely day sees us catching the 09:06 Antwerpen Centraal to Gent St. Pieters, here changing onto a DMU Eeklo service as far as Evergem. A short walk finds the northern terminus of the Gent No.1 tram route. Again, making use of our 3 day pass we ride a few trams before making our way to another favourite bar in Gent, Het Waterhuis. As the name suggests it is situated next to a canal, and furthermore the number 1 and 4 tram routes cross the canal bridge just outside!

We were joined by Belgian friend Jan for a few hours, this a bit of a surprise as he had said it was far too hot to leave the house! It was indeed getting very hot as the afternoon began. So much so that I decided to make my way back to Antwerp.

Leaving Chris and Andy to continue their visit to Gent, myself and Jan caught the 13:51 Gent to Antwerp.

Jan talked me into having a drink and a bite to eat at Beer Central near Antwerpen Centraal, as it was air-conditioned inside. Well, the one drink turned into a meal and 4 drinks (!) before I said farewell to Jan and made my way back to the hotel around 17:00.

This was the few days in Europe when they had predicted temperatures around 41° in Belgium and reaching 46° in parts of central France!

Following a few hours cooling down I ventured back out - but to be honest it was no cooler in the early evening.

We had our plan for Sunday but needed to formalise an itinerary for the following day, Saturday. The options were to visit Brussels and specifically the Brussels Tram Museum, or to stay in Antwerp and have a run around the tram system and visit the

Antwerp Tram Museum. As Saturday was to be the hottest day we decided to stay in Antwerp.

Saturday 18th June.

Following breakfast, single day tram/bus passes were obtained from Antwerp station. We enjoyed a run around Antwerp by tram, making our way to the Antwerpen Berchem Station area around 12:00, this being very near the tram museum. A quick visit to a local bar was made, before arriving at the museum for opening time at 13:00. On arrival a tram that had been hired for the day was making its way from the museum to have a run around the local network.

Without doubt this proved to be a great decision, the Vlaams Tram – en Autobus Museum is fantastic! Unlike many others I have visited over the years, where they have far too much stock crammed into a very small area, this converted old tram shed was massive, and all exhibits were positioned with plenty of space around them, making photography very easy, especially with us being the first to enter, and also with the fantastic light conditions made by the glass roof.

However, the downside with this being the hottest day and the glass roof, I was wet through with sweat pouring off me. Perhaps not the ideal thing to do following a heart attack, but there was no way I was going to pass on these perfect conditions. The museum also had other forms of public transport on display. One of the volunteers was most helpful and informative, he told us that they were thinking of running vintage tram trips during 2023 on opening days. Now that is a great excuse for a return visit.



181, Antwerp Tram Museum, 18/6/22



1000, Antwerp Tram Museum, 18/6/22

On leaving the museum, I decided that a return to my air-conditioned room was now required. My memory is rubbish, but the only time I recall such temperatures was during a midsummer visit made to The Valley of the Kings!

On my way back to the hotel, I passed a shop side thermometer in the shade which proudly announced 43°!!!

Once more, following a few hours to cool down I ventured back out to Beer Central for a bite to eat and a drink before calling it a day.

Sunday 19th June - More Trams!

Continuing the tram theme, I had said that I was to visit the ASVi Musée du Tram situated at Thuin. A very laid-back affair to say the least! Andy and I left Antwerp early on the 08:09 train to Charleroi Sud. Of interest this service was diverted along a Mechelen Station avoiding line which is normally freight only. The 10:14 service gave us plenty of time to traverse the whole of the branch line to its terminus at Erquelinnes, then doubling back to Thuin. Chris had a lie in and started out 2 hours later.

Once again, we pretty much had the museum to ourselves for a while. Today was much cooler than the previous two had been. Chris has mastered a reasonable amount of the French language, so on his arrival we sent him to find out when they were to commence running the trams, hopefully on all the 3 routes from the museum. Prior to leaving England I had communicated with the museum requesting information as to

when the best chance of having a run on all 3 lines was. I was assured that if we turned up on Sunday 19th they would do their best, but could not guarantee anything. Luckily, they did their best!

It turned out that they had suffered theft of the copper conductor wire on a part of the line out to Lobbes, so there were firstly to run a diesel tram along the non-electrified line to Biesmes-sous-Thuin. This may well have been my first run on a diesel tram. It was indeed most interesting as Tram AR86 made its way out into the countryside. On our return we then had a run down the short branch to alongside the Sambre River, what you may call the town. Apparently, they struggle to operate this short section, as the locals tend to leave their cars parked on the track, this despite plenty of notices about no parking on Sundays!

On our return to the museum, it appeared the stolen cable had now been reinstated and we could now have a run on an electric tram No. 9974, out past Lobbes to a terminus seemingly with no relevance, just where they have decided to run to! Leaving Andy and Chris in a bar, I decided to join the 16:31 train for the outward run from Thuin to Erquelinnes, returning at 17:05, this giving a good connection onto the 18:05 Charleroi to Antwerp.



ASVi Museum Thuin, 19/6/22

Monday 20th June

A reasonably early start to our last full day of travel around Belgium. We were in fact to revisit some of the lines already travelled on during the visit, with one or two new lines.



ASVi Museum Thuin, 19/6/22

Departing Antwerp Centraal on the 08:06 Loco hauled service as far as Brugges, here changing onto the 09:58 Brugges to Liège, the 12:16 Liège to Marloie, the 13:28 Marloie to Libramont, the 14:09 Libramont to Namur where we had a break, again visiting a few bars in the town.

I decided to leave Chris and Andy in Namur and make my way back via Brussels Midi, catching the 17:17 Namur to Brussels Midi. This was to try altering my Eurostar booking to an earlier service – the reason being there was industrial action taking place in England on the day of our return. Eurostar had said that where possible they would allow changes of journey at no extra cost. After a long wait at the ticket office, they did indeed allow me to change from a later service onto the second service of the day from Brussels to St. Pancras, apparently the first and last services were booked up! I made my way back to Antwerp on the 19:19 Brussels to Antwerp finishing off my day in Beer Central.

Tuesday 21st June.

Following a leisurely breakfast, I caught the 09:54 Antwerp to Brussels Midi intercity train hauled by electric loco 2723. Following a prompt efficient check in at Eurostar I departed for St. Pancras on the 12:56, formed of Siemens sets 4015 & 4016 - this service was reasonably quiet. A slightly late arrival into St. Pancras followed by a prompt walk across to Kings Cross, where I noted both that very many trains were cancelled and also there were not too many people travelling. I caught the Hull Trains 14:15 service as far as Grantham, then the 16:13 Grantham to Leeds, both Hitachi

trains sadly. My last train of the trip was the 17:12 Leeds to Bradford Forster Square. There were indeed many trains not running, but I did manage to return home OK. I covered 3,736 miles by train during the holiday. I have now covered all the passenger lines in both Belgium and the Netherlands. Thanks to Andy and Chris for their company. Lastly, I managed to consume the same amount of alcohol in fifteen days, that I would normally have got through in one or two days!

Book Reviews

Thompson - His Life and Locomotives, by Tim Hillier-Graves (review by Jim Bennett)

This hardback book is published by Pen and Sword books Ltd (Transport). It comprises an Introduction and Prologue: Accident of Time, nine chapters, references and sources and a comprehensive four-page index.

Chapter 1 Birthright Edward Thompson, his parents' fourth child, was born on the 25th June 1881 at their lodgings at Marlborough College. His father was assistant Master and a house Master. ET attended Marlborough College until he was eight when he became a boarder for six years at St David's Prep School, Reigate, Surrey. His family were obviously fairly affluent. His father, who had attended Worcester College at Oxford and read Classics, wanted his son to go to university. ET therefore attended Marlborough College for a further four years where he was streamed into the engineering class. He attended the Natural History Society and was a keen photographer. Being from a moneyed family he then attended Pembroke College, Cambridge to study Mechanical Sciences, but unfortunately he spent too much time playing sports, and he came out with a class 3 B.A. degree in June 1902. ET was signed up as a premium pupil at Beyer Peacock & Co in Manchester, loco manufacturers. In 1904 he applied and was recruited by the Midland Railway as an Improver at Derby Works.

Chapter 2 A Growing Influence In his first year at Derby ET met Cecil Paget who had gained a reputation as a designer and innovator as well as being Works Manager; Paget did design and pay for his own locomotive to be built at the Works. In 1905 ET left Derby to become a supervisor at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Woolwich Arsenal, in fact to supervise the narrow-gauge railway system. Realising his prospects were limited he moved onto the very profitable North Eastern Railway at Hull where Wilson Worsdell was Chief Mechanical Engineer and Vincent Raven was his deputy. ET was welcomed into the house of Raven and became a close friend of their eldest son Norman and then went on to marry their eldest daughter. For the first three years he was assistant to the superintendent in charge of Dairycoates Shed, Hull. He

concentrated on the operational path and became involved with attending railway accidents, his photography being put to good use. In 1909 he was transferred to Gateshead as assistant to the Running Shed Superintendent.

In 1912 he was recruited by Gresley to become the Carriage and Wagon Superintendent with the Great Northern Railway. In 1913 he married Raven's second daughter, and one of Gresley's daughters was a bridesmaid. Thompson became involved with the modernisation of a fleet of dining cars. He also favoured metal-bodied carriages, but this was not pursued until after the war.

Chapter 3 The Bleakest War In December ET went to France as a Major with the Royal Engineers and became a Lieutenant-Colonel. He was mentioned twice in dispatches and when demobbed in 1919 was awarded the CBE. ET became involved with Cecil Paget again whom he had met at Derby. Cecil Paget played a leading role in developing the 1000 miles of light railway network in France.

Chapter 4 A Difficult Peace ET returned to Doncaster in 1919, but was then transferred back to the NER in 1920 to be primarily involved with the refurbishing of worn out rolling stock at Doncaster and then the reorganisation of the carriage works in York for the NER. In 1923 H. N. Gresley was appointed as Chief Mechanical Engineer of the LNER. This was an amalgamation of the NER, GNR, Great Central Railway, Great Eastern and Great North of Scotland and finally the Hull and Barnsley Railways. In 1923 Gresley appointed ET as the company's North Eastern Area Carriage and Wagon Works Manager in Darlington.

Chapter 5 Waiting in the Wings In 1927 ET was transferred to Stratford Works as Assistant Mechanical Engineer LNER; the CME was C.W.L. Glaze. ET also developed odd changes at work, from his experiences in WW1 - which meant he became a strange nuisance - what they now term PTSD. When Glaze retired, ET became the CME. Modification work to locomotives had just recommenced at Stratford - including the D5 4-4-0s, the D16 4-4-0s, the J17 0-6-0s, and the J20s, and the B12s (this class in particular was of interest to ET). In 1929 he rejoined the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and The Royal Geographical Society.

In 1933 ET was promoted again to become the Mechanical Engineer, North Eastern Area. This covered the works at York, Gateshead, Darlington and Shildon. Locomotives being built when he took over included the classes J39, D49 and B17. The next project was the construction of 159 of the 184 V2s. Thomas Cruddas became the Works Manager at Darlington and it was he that encouraged ET to appreciate welding as an alternative to forging.

In 1937 the hundredth Pacific was named *Sir Nigel Gresley*, ET being present at the naming at Marylebone. In early 1938 Robert Thom, the existing Mechanical Engineer at Doncaster retired. Just prior to this, ET's wife became ill and her mother, Lady Raven, died on 2nd August 1938. ET was appointed Mechanical Engineer at Doncaster to replace Robert Thom. Just as ET was preparing a house in Doncaster for the start of the new job his wife died (on 25.5.38).

Chapter 6 A Troubled Time In the circumstances ET was given a period of leave and Robert Thom agreed to return to Doncaster in the interim. By early 1939 industries were being mobilised and placed on a war footing, and the Railway Executive Committee was re-formed. At one time it was proposed that the glamorous express engines produced by Stanier and Gresley be decommissioned, but this was not pursued. ET was tenacious and uncompromising and a highly skilled production engineer, with an understanding of military matters plus a tough negotiator with the unions. But all changed on 5.4.41 when Gresley died, and ET was formally appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer on 28.4.41.

Chapter 7 To Be The Leader It was decided that ET should remain at Doncaster; fortunately the LNER London HQ was moved to Welwyn, as shortly after this move the London HQ was severely bombed. The war generally precluded the building of new locomotives except if it was more of the same class to be built, this rule was not steadfast. ET responded to say that the worsening condition of locos with three-cylinder conjugated valve gear were causing increased costs in maintaining them. Divisional Managers kept raising the issue of the poor availability and performance of the Gresley engines. The whole subject became treated by some observers as if ET was trying to eradicate Gresley's work, or was ET responding to the continuing complaints? Mr Stanier was engaged to give his advice on conjugated valve gear and the availability of the P2 class. He delegated to Mr Cox the task to prepare a report. Comparing the three-cylinder locos of the LNER and the LMS Mr Cox said there was a spate of hot inside big ends, ten times as many in the inside position compared with the outside position, and overall six times as many as with the big ends failing on LMS engines. Mr Cox reported to Stanier on 8.6.42. His three recommendations were (1) discontinue the 2 to 1 valve gear, (2) fit an independent inside valve gear and (3) excessive big end trouble is due to the design - use higher grade metal. Concerning the P2s, the trouble with the conjugated gear plus tyre wear and performance were all contributory factors leading to poor availability. Between September and October 1942 three locos were under repair in Doncaster Works. Eventually permission was given in 1943 to rebuild a P2 as a Pacific. After rebuilding there were favourable reports for the rebuilt loco and permission was given to rebuild the other five P2s.

Chapter 8 Design Ambitions The crippling workload keeping the fleet of locos and rolling stock running and the production of armaments meant that the development of new loco designs was difficult to pursue. ET progressed during the war the rebuilding of O4 2-8-0s, the building of new 8Fs at Darlington and Doncaster, the conversion of Q4 0-8-0 tender engines to 0-8-0 tank engines, the J11 0-6-0s, and the Gresley D49 4-4-0s. By 1942 ET had the design of the B1s approved. A prototype was built and entered traffic on 12.12.42. ET was keenly involved, it incorporated welding instead of steel castings and maximum use of prefabricated techniques. Detailed information is given about the changes to the P2, and work on all six didn't finish until December 1944. With the P2 rebuilt as class A, then A2 and later A2/2, ET decided to develop

the Pacific class further. He got permission to take the last four V2s in the V2 programme and built them as Pacifics - designated A2/1. The four locos were 3696 (60507), 3697 (60508), 3698 (60509) and 3699 (60510).

ET made changes to repairing locos on shed in the war with the invention of the light tunnel. Repair of locos in the works was speeded up from 30 days to 16 days, also a gantry structure was used to speed up work on boilers, and A4s had their valve travel adjusted to help them starting with heavy wartime loads. ET then set about modifying the A1s (now designated A10s). In 1944 some were over 20 years old including 4470 *Great Northern*. This low-pressure A1 was rarely used on the heaviest jobs. It entered the workshops at Doncaster on 1.5.45 and emerged in its new guise on 25.9.45, its tractive effort went from 29835 lbs to 37437 lbs, and wing deflectors were replaced with plate to prevent draught.

Various other projects took place including the production of hospital trains hauled by B12 locos, the design and building of an armoured coach for Eisenhower to use in France, the strengthening of carriages with steel, experiments on existing classes namely the K3, K4, B16 and B17 and one new class the L1 (built 1945). By the time ET retired, the prototype L1 was deemed a success and another 99 were built between 1948 and 1950. Two further projects were the development of a diesel shunter and the production of the new class A2/3. Fifteen A2/3 were built, the first of which was no. 500. It was completed in May 1945 and entered traffic on 24.5.45 as the 2000th loco to be built at Doncaster works and just in time for ET's retirement in June 1945. It was named *Edward Thompson* in his honour on 30.6.45. The fifteen A2/3s were no. 500 (60500), and nos 511 to 524 (60511 to 60524).

Chapter 9 Quietly Slipping Away At the end of the war ET bought a house in Bexhill-on-Sea, Kent. He continued his friendship with Stanier - both were advocates of a testing station which was fully opened in 1948. The formal opening was attended by Stanier, ET, Bulleid and Peppercorn. ET planned his funeral to be a Church of England service, but with no friends and relatives present. He died on 14.7.54 when on holiday with friends in North Wales.

I enjoyed this excellent book, it is well written, very detailed and full of technical information. ET had the benefit of a public-school education, a degree from Cambridge and from being a premium pupil at Beyer Peacock. He was inspired by Cecil Paget who he first met at Derby Works. The book has an ongoing concern about whether ET intended to denigrate the work of Gresley, I don't think he did. I remember well listening to Dougy Butterfield after a Circle meeting, when he said basically ET made a complete xxxx of 1470 *Great Northern*, a loco built to a Gresley design in 1922. At the time I didn't comment because as a train spotter I had only ever known A1/1 (60113) and A2/2s (60501 to 60506) in BR days and didn't know that the A1/1 existed as Gresley A1 no 4470 and that the A2/2s were P2s. Nor did I know that ET stopped the building of four V2s for them to be built as A2/1s (60507 to 60511). Personally, I think that Thompson was right to rebuild 4470. Although pleasing to the eye as 4470 it became a more powerful loco as 60113. I also agree

with the rebuilding of the P2s, which had a poor mechanical record. The crank axle on 2005 failed on 18.6.39, the crank axle failed on 2004 on 21.5.42 and the crank axle failed on 2003 on 29.7.44. ET had a meteoric career and as a production engineer was a major asset during WW2. He will be remembered for his class A2/2 which replaced the P2 (60501 to 60506), the class A2/3 Pacifics (60500, 60511 to 60524) and the class A2/1 (60507 to 60510) and the class L1 - the first was 9000 (67701) and L2 tank engines and the B1 4-6-0s (8301 Springbok which became 61000)

Most of the high-quality photographs I have never seen before. There are 263 black and white and 30 colour pictures as well as 23 charts.

Thompson - His Life and Locomotives, by Tim Hillier-Graves, published by Pen & Sword 2021; 283 pages, hardback; ISBN 978 1 52673 116 6; Price £35

“Midland Railway & LMS 4-4-0 Locomotives”, by David Maidment (review by Graham Norton)

This publication is, as the title suggests, a study of the 4-4-0 locomotives of the Midland Railway and the LMS. Being born into the age of the diesel, my own steam “expertise” (or lack of) is primarily defined by my exposure to the last remaining fragments of the steam age and the preservation scene from 1968 onwards.

Consequently, my knowledge base with respect to the 4-4-0 is somewhat limited, I own a 1980’s Hornby OO gauge Midland Compound but that’s about where it ends! With respect to the above, the opportunity to put right, or at least attempt to by reading this book seemed to be an obvious choice.

The book starts with an introduction by the author, also proclaiming his knowledge to be somewhat “sparse”, but at least he did have the opportunity to witness 4-4-0s in service.

He then moves on to the designers, Johnson, Deeley and Fowler with a brief summary of each designer’s career.

Following on from this the book works through the designs chronologically with the emphasis being towards statistics and performance. All the major designs are described along with upgrades, which tended to be centred around boilers and associated reinforcements. These modifications are discussed fully with the changes supported by tables of performance records with a large number of period photographs.

This is very comprehensive portrait of the locomotive classes, even if you view it as a well-produced photo album of over 400 images.

With respect to the 400+ images it is worth noting that by sheer coincidence your editor produced a short article for the 400th edition of The Circular “No.400 on the Railways” where he investigated locomotives displaying the number 400. This article mentioned the Johnson designed 483 class which had the number 400, but alas no photograph could be found on the web at the time. There is, however, a picture of this

very locomotive on page 47 of this publication (since reproduced by Ian in edition 401 of The Circular).

All in all, a very interesting read.

“Midland Railway & LMS 4-4-0 Locomotives”, by David Maidment, published by Pen & Sword, 2021 (Locomotive Portfolio series). 352 pages; ISBN 9781526772503; Price £35

“British Railways in the 1960s – Western Region”, by Geoff Plumb (review by Ian Button)

This is one of four photo albums of The Geoff Plumb Collection, which cover the areas allocated to each of the pre-1948 Big Four railway companies – so this one deals with locos on ex-GWR metals. It encompasses a wide variety of subjects - steam and diesel, main-line, branches and heritage lines, with locos from all the Big Four.

An Introduction of 5 pages describes how first Geoff’s father, and then he himself, became railway enthusiasts, and how their family holidays were devoted to photographing trains. There follow nearly 170 excellent full-page colour and black-and-white photos, all with very detailed captions, mostly giving a life-history of the locomotive illustrated, as well as details of the locations and services. The period covered is 1963-1969, through Geoff’s teenage years.

Locos appear in various conditions - polished by steam-loving shed staff for normal services during the final years of steam, and bulled up for enthusiast specials; and also in grimy run-down states as so often was the case during that last decade.

This is a very well-produced volume, as always from Pen and Sword – a colourful dust-cover over a nicely printed hardback book, printed on heavy gloss paper - certainly worth adding to the bookshelf.

“British Railways in the 1960s – Western Region”, by Geoff Plumb, published by Pen & Sword 2021. 176 pages hardback, ISBN 978 1 47382 395 2; Price £30

“Mail by Rail - The Story of the Post Office and the Railways” by Peter Johnson (review by Frank Robertshaw).

This is a very ‘meaty’ book in which is very difficult to describe everything within it. I can understand why I was requested to review it as I have a passion for Mail related items especially Letter Boxes, and also the same thing goes for Railways, so what could be better than a book relating to both these items.

The author has given us information about a lot of Mail by Rail items which makes it very good not just as a good read but as a very useful reference book. Alongside some very interesting images of the older original Mail Trains, there are some modern images of Mail Trains’ which I would be pleased to have in my collection. Prints with sketches of the men working inside the Mail Trains give an insight into the hard work

which had to be done inside a moving train. I was amused to see the dressed-up uniforms of the sorters on the Trains.

There is a chapter describing the equipment used for picking up and dropping mail from moving trains running at a high speed. Some of this equipment is preserved at present day preserved railways. As you would expect one that springs to mind for me is at the Great Western Railway Society at Didcot. So have a good look at the diagrams in this book and get along to see how it is done on one of Didcot's wonderful 'Steam Days'.

The Post Office had its own Underground Railway in London which runs for 6.5 miles. They had trains that were driven but also had some which were driven remotely. The Post Office Underground Railway still runs but no longer regularly carries mail. It closed in 2003 but is still open as a museum and rides can be made on it. Some years ago I had the honour of a ride on the Post Office Underground Railway. Some of the Post Office rolling stock can be viewed at the Amberley Museum, Beeches Light Railway, Buckinghamshire Railway, Launceston Steam railway and of course the main Mount Pleasant Museum.

Throughout this book there several interesting diagrams and timetables about the Mail's connections with the Railway and its trains. There are lists of the cost of several different parts of the Post Office Railways. Some of the costs may have been high in those days but if you compare them with today's costs they are just coppers.

This book is a good record of a past age before the days of the internet and emails.

“Mail by Rail - The Story of the Post Office and the Railways” by Peter Johnson. Published by Pen & Sword, 2022. 296 pages hardback; ISBN 9781526776136 Price £35

“Gresley's Silver Link - The Evolution of the A4 Pacifics 1911-1941”, by Tim Hillier–Graves & Ronald Hillier (review by Michael Leahy).

I know that some of you will be aware of my enthusiasm for most things Gresley, especially the locos with a streamlined front. Strangely, though, I have struggled with this request, taking several months to complete the task.

The first thing that I did was to look at the index for a particular A4 by name and then by number, only to find that none of them are listed. I thought that very strange - and what I did notice was the names Hitler, Goebbels & Himmler, to mention just a few! I found that this was due to the rivalry between the German railways and the British railway companies in their quest for speed, Gresley having visited Germany in 1934.

Starting now at the front of the book there is a dedication to an Australian airman who had an interest in railways. The contents page lists the chapters which have such evocative names as “Gresley's Golden Thread Revealed” & “To Everlasting Glory”. Acknowledgements produces mention of the poor quality of some of the rarer

photographs used, but 4 pages later there is a blurred photo of 4498 at speed, in preservation, that was taken in the 1980's - why?

There follows a brief biography/appreciation of R.A. Hillier, mainly about his experiences in WW2 & mentioning Bergen Belsen concentration camp. I mention that in passing because my mother's cousin was a front-line nurse with the fighting forces & she was one of the first people into the camp. I had in my possession until recently a copy of a report that she had to produce, which gave graphic details of what they had to deal with. I passed this document onto a WW2 records museum located in Leeds & did not keep a copy. Back to Gresley . . . and the LNER's quest for speed, constrained by money & economics. This book goes way back (as the title says 1911) to the pioneers of streamlining, art deco, electrification & diesel units, involving the USA, France & Germany. Gresley comes to the fore in the book in Chapter 3 in the year 1911.

Proof reading seems to have been a bit lacking, i.e. page 53 "not helped by a long threatened national in March 1912". Another typo I noticed was a reference to F. A. S. Brown who produced a book "Nigel Gresley Locomotive Engineer" in 1961. The author is shown three times as E. A. S. Brown. Page 68 has a photograph of a train of empty "FISG" wagons. One has to wonder how many other mistakes have slipped through that might be more controversial or even totally incorrect.

Chapter 4 "The Big Engines Arrive", with mention of the general strike, A1's, trials of locomotives, modifications to valve gears, the A3's & P2's.

The 16 centre pages consist of colour plates detailing art deco themes, cars, and liners before turning to the reason for the book - the silver A4s & The Silver Jubilee using advertising, photos & diagrams. Finally, page 125 has a photograph of the then unnamed 4495 at Doncaster Works.

The next chapter covers the designing & shaping of the A4s whilst the A3s go on setting up new records for steam locos. The building of the new coaching stock required for the new services is detailed. Germany features again with their streamlined 4-6-4 05 loco. Details of the press run of A4 2509 *Silver Link* follow, listing the record mileage for steam at speeds of over 100 mph (for younger readers: you will have to google it to get kph). The new public service, when introduced, was covered by 2509 alone for 13 round trips before A4 2510 became available. Various minor faults on both locos & the new coaching stock became apparent & were dealt with. It's hard to imagine the TLC that must have been given to the trains to keep them running.

Germany returns to the story, with their 05 reaching a record speed of 200 km/h. The book says 190 km/h is 118 mph, so what is 200 km/h? I think we all know that the LMS also decided to join in the fun, with that 114 mph approaching Crewe & managing to get down to 60-70 mph over the 20mph restricted reverse curve, and staying on the rails - just!

There is a wonderful selection of pre-war photographs of the A4's at various locations on various trains. Sad that the over used shot of 4495 at Leeds Central on the test run of The West Riding Limited appears once again. More modifications to the A4s & other Pacifics are detailed, trying to cure the "nosing" (would we call that

“hunting” now?) & jerking. A stray comma on page 213 detracts again, how many more have I & the proof reader missed, I wonder?

There follows in great detail *Mallard*’s record run of 3rd July 1938 testing the Kylchap exhaust & the Westinghouse braking system. The story so far ends with the death of Sir Nigel Gresley on 5th April 1940. The war is touched on with mention of a service from Kings Cross to Newcastle on 5th April 1941 consisting of 25 coaches, 750 tons hauled by 2509 *Silver Link*. It is said that the train was 4 mins late arriving but there is no mention of what the wartime timings might have been. Mention has been made of the various talented people that worked with, around & under Gresley’s direction. Credit is given to the lower grades without which the vast LNER services could not operate.

Finally, the book is a must for any Gresley, LNER Pacific steam locomotive enthusiast wanting more of the background details that went into the design & production of the 35 A4s. The most wonderful Pacific ever built!

Gresley’s Silver Link - The Evolution of the A4 Pacifics 1911 to 1941, by Tim Hillier–Graves & Ronald Hillier, published by Pen & Sword, 2022. 224 pages hardback; ISBN 9781399073394; Price £35

Part 2, The A4’s After Gresley - 1942-1966 is due to be published later this year 2023.

Books for reviewing

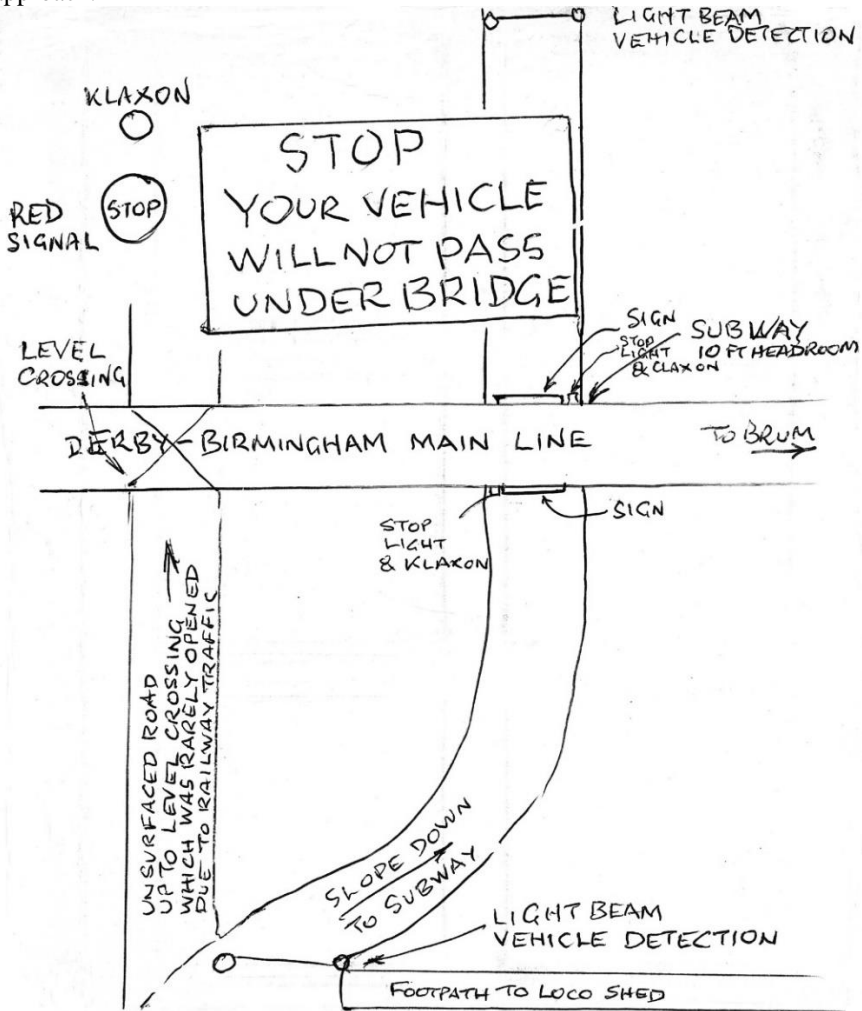
The current list of railway e-books offered free by Pen & Sword in exchange for review has been emailed to members. If interested, please choose one or two from the list (not more, please) and preferred format, and advise the Circle Editor. The e-book will be emailed free by Pen & Sword. First come, first served, though!

A Railway Accident Without A Train Ben Burrows

When the main line from Derby to Birmingham was built through Burton-upon-Trent, a level crossing was provided at Shobnall Road. Owing to the frequency of railway traffic and the signalling required by the station and goods yard, this level crossing was rarely able to be opened, so the railway provided a “subway” with about 10ft. headroom as an alternative. The road loop to the “subway” was asphalted (with asphalt, patented by the highways superintendent Mr Gooch, called Goochphalt) but the direct slope up to the crossing was unsurfaced. Normal “Low Bridge” signs warned of the limited headroom.

Two miles up Shobnall Road was an army camp, and in the evenings soldiers were brought down into Burton in a covered army lorry for a night out. This lorry was normally driven off Shobnall Road to use the station overbridge to access the town.

On this occasion (c.1956) the lorry driver had not been informed of the deviation, so he went for the subway and missed the warning signs and hit the bridge with the lorry canopy, and killed and injured several soldiers. This caused a big outcry, and the Borough Engineer came up with a preventative solution. The advance signs would be larger, with similar internally illuminated signs on the bridge. The bridge itself would carry a large internally illuminated sign (as per the diagram here), plus a large red "Stop" traffic light and a loud klaxon horn, all actuated by the breaking of a light beam situated near the road deviation, with a similar arrangement on the other approach.



This arrangement worked for some time, until regular accidental actuations annoyed nearby inhabitants. It was thought that this was due to vandals shaking the light

source pole, so this was replaced by an old tram standard. Experiments with the light beam increased its sensitivity so that it could detect narrow nameboards fixed above lorry cabs. I am of the opinion that the accidental breaking of the light beam was due to cyclists from the nearby locomotive depot swinging round the pole with an arm as they joined the road. On a recent visit to Burton I found that there was now a bridge over the railway and that the whole scene had changed. Incidentally the station bridge had an enamel sign about 25ft long reading “Burton-on-Trent” – not the correct name given in its creation Act of Parliament.

Ben’s Bits

Jumbo

... was the name of the largest known elephant which became the favourite of the visitors to London Zoo in Queen Victoria’s times. He was sold to Barnum & Bailey’s Circus and was taken to the USA. One day when he was being loaded into a railway van he was hit and killed by a passing freight train. Jumbo’s fame has led to his name being applied to anything very large, even though it stated out as just a name.

More Photographic Puzzles

Robert Anderson



Photo 4 - Which shed is this? An array of locos from diverse parts of the country. Response from Duncan Eccles – “I have checked some old photos in books, and now think that picture 4 is definitely at Mirfield. Newton Heath did have a similar roof style, but I don’t think the water columns were quite the same as those in the

photograph. Also, the presence of an LNER loco. would suggest it isn't in Manchester. Incidentally, 61411 was a B16/1."

Answer from Robert: Taken in 1961 we have a line-up of 61411 allocated to Mirfield, 45321 of Warrington and 42974 of Aston. A fairly ordinary shot just an array of locos from a diverse part of the country. The clue, as to where it is, is 61411 which along with five others spent just ten months at Mirfield.

Also from Duncan, more about the white "O" painted on 52121 at Sowerby Bridge, shown in issue no.402 – "Apparently the locos with the white circle were nicknamed "polo's", for obvious reasons. The only reason I can think that the old L&Y engine was so adorned is that it may have been a local joke, as those at Wakefield with the circle were considered to be the fastest and most reliable. Or maybe it was an advertisement for Sowerby Bridge Railway Circle!"



Photo 5 – Where & roughly when?

Answer: no date given, but it is at Horwich Works. The top of the cab has been cut off and is lying on the track bottom left of the picture which suggests the loco is for scrap. It was withdrawn either August 1961 or September 1961 again depending on one's source of information. 52129 was allocated to Bury and apart from being the shunter at Castleton Yards it was also used by that depot for towing EMUs for attention at Reddish as they were no longer dealt with at Horwich Works. This snippet comes from Trains Illustrated July 1961 which goes on to say the reason for this loco being used for this duty is that it was the only one of Bury's engines that

could be relied upon to be promptly returned as it was such an alien loco. By then it had become the last of its class at Bury.



Photo 6 – Again, where & roughly when?

Answer: no date but probably the same day as 52129 at Horwich Works and anyone who has worked out the location of 52129 will realise this is the same even on the same length of track! These unwanted engines were broken up all over the country including Scotland. During 1959 and 1960 a lot of the locomotives sent to Horwich for scrap were officially sent on to Crewe because Horwich couldn't cope with them, but Crewe refused to accept some of them! Did any of these withdrawn locomotives actually make the journey? Peter Hands, in his "What Happened to Steam?" series, (which were often discredited in later years, somewhat unfairly in my opinion) does show 40118 as being scrapped at Crewe Works. So now this raises another question. Does anyone know the true facts as to where 40118 was actually scrapped?

On to this issue's new puzzle pictures . . .



Photo 7. 50818 – where?



Photo 8. A bit off the beaten track this one but what lovely little engines the Great

Central J11s were. Nicknamed Pom Poms, this one is at one of four mainline stations at a major northern city (across the border). J11s would be occasional visitors to two of these stations but never ever at the other two which were linked (Clue 1). The station depicted here suffered severe bomb damage in WW2, signs of which were still visible until this part of the station was extensively modernised in the 1990s (Clue 2). The date is 23rd September 1961 and 64420 is waiting to set off on an exotic railtour organised by the RCTS: "Sixbellsjunction" here we come. Of further interest is the lady being helped off the footplate - perhaps she was the driver's wife, but it is a pleasant reminder of an event which has disappeared from today's modern railway.

The above five photos are © Copyright of Robert Anderson Archive ©

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Meeting Reports

Philip Lockwood

5th April - A History of Low Moor MPD, by Granville Dobson

A healthy turnout for this talk by local engineman Granville. A good number of new faces who I suspect were in many cases old work colleagues.

Granville started with a historical look at the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, the builders of the Low Moor engine sheds. This was illustrated with a collection of historical pictures. This MPD was the second largest on the L&Y system, which shows its importance in the West Riding of Yorkshire. After this, Granville gave a more intimate account of his working life firstly as a cleaner and later as a fireman. I think it became obvious that his allegiance was with the LMS and the products of Mr Stanier to the detriment of the products of Gresley and Thompson. An interesting and somewhat disturbing account was of the union problems which often drove a wedge between workmates causing lifelong loss of working friendships. Also, another thing became clear was that the steam locomotives even of the same class often had very different characteristics.

Next month Granville will be making a return visit entitled "My Footplate experiences" so I am sure he will have many more entertaining tales to tell.

Vote of thanks by Ian Button

3rd May - My Footplate Experiences, by Granville Dobson

As a follow up to Granville's previous talk on the history of Low Moor Shed, Granville today gave a talk about his shed and footplate experiences at Low Moor. Apparently, it all started whilst on a visit to London and the sight of a Stanier Pacific locomotive at Euston. He was allowed on to the footplate by the crew. That decided to Granville that this was going to be the job for him.

Starting as a cleaner at quite a low wage he was soon asked if he would like to move on to boiler cleaning work, which involved climbing into the fire hole door of often still warm fireboxes, armed with a large spanner and a wire brush. This dirty and potentially harmful work only lasted for a short period. After moving on to a position as a passed fireman Granville related the often humorous escapades of his drivers, quite an assorted bunch of characters!

Not all was plain sailing and many tragic events occurred either to Granville or to his associates including blow backs and burst water gauge glasses. But generally Granville enjoyed his time on the railway this coming over in his enthusiasm in relating this to his audience.

Both his talks were very well attended bolstered by a number of his former colleagues from Low Moor.

Vote of thanks by Ian Button

31st May - Toronto & Vancouver 1981 and Vintage Steam, by Dave Peel

Dave Peel, our country member from Wareham, returned to give this slide show relating his journey made in 1981 across Canada by train. He started by providing maps showing the various provinces which make up Canada as a whole. Surprisingly many only became part of Canada relatively recently. The talk was illustrated by colour slides many taken from the observation dome car. Dave explained that photography was not great if the dome car was immediately behind the locomotive, as the view could be marred by exhaust fumes.

It was interesting to see the motive power used in 1981, very much the American style front end unlike the more modern austere but functional designs of today. The second part of the show comprised bought slides of classic American steam mostly from the mid 1960's including the world's largest steam locomotive, the Union Pacific "Big Boys". Thanks, Dave, for coming north to present this talk to the Circle.

Secretary's Page

Peter Holden

I am glad to report that our attendances at meetings so far this year have continued to be satisfactory. Long may it continue! I think we may have gained a few new members as well, which is great. Welcome!!

We are trying to arrange a few days out again this year. The two visits to the KWVR were great last year. Details of two trips we have arranged, to the Middleton Railway and to Keighley, have been emailed to members (if not received, please contact a committee member). As ever, if anyone would like to make any suggestions, please get in touch. (pholden1960@hotmail.co.uk).

I have had to make an alteration to this year's diary. Steve Armitage is now sadly unavailable to present his talk "West Coast Mainline Part 3 on October 18th. So, I have swapped dates with Steve. Please see the revised diary below.

Circle Diary 2023

Please watch the website <http://www.bradfordrailwaycircle.co.uk>. Meetings are currently every 4 weeks, not fortnightly as before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Please remember that all the meetings below start at 2:00pm.

P	Jun. 28	WCML, Part 3. Preston to Glasgow	Steve Armitage
	Jul. 26	In Search of Big Steam in Spain	Mike Swift
C	Aug. 23	From the Back of the Cupboard	Steve Batty
P	Sep. 20	French and Belgian Steam	Colin Boocock
	Oct.18	Neville Hill Depot, Diary of an Escapee	Peter Holden
C	Nov.15	Railways in the Lake District	Martin Bairstow
P	Dec.13	AGM plus members night	

C - Copy date for *The Circular* – 4 weeks prior to ...

P - Publication – last meetings of March/June/September, & last before Christmas
