

# THE CIRCULAR

Bradford Railway Circle

No.387 – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2019

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## Editorial

Firstly, a Happy New Year to all our readers! We kick off 2019 with another 20-page issue, and I look forward (perhaps optimistically) to a continuing flow of articles from you the members, to keep up the momentum.

This issue is something of a Robertshaw edition – more travel notes from John Robertshaw, and Part 1 of Reminiscences from Frank Robertshaw our ex-Secretary. Thank you, gentlemen both, for your contributions.

The future of the Circle’s locomotive name & number-plates has been under discussion in recent months (as has been the case quite often in past years), and they are now to be disposed of. If any member has a wish to own one or more plates, either for its inherent interest as railway memorabilia, or as a souvenir of the Circle, or merely as an investment, then now is your chance – they are being offered for sale by tender, with a reserve price at the low end of an auctioneer’s official estimates. The Circle membership has first option, and the highest bid wins. Please see page 16 for details.

# The Little Trains of the Pyrenees John Robertshaw

In early September of 2018 we travelled from Halifax with Grand Central to overnight in London before departing on a Rail Discoveries trip to Northern Spain as entitled above. We entrained at St. Pancras for the Eurostar service to the Gare Du Nord and by coach to the Gare de Lyon where we took the TGV south through France and into Northern Spain to Figueres. Here we alighted and joined a coach for the short journey to Rosas on the coast our base for the next seven days.

The next day was to trip into the Pyrenees to enjoy a journey on the Little Yellow Train from Villefranche de Conflent to Font Romeu although the line continues to La Tour de Carol which we would visit later in the week.



It is a splendid journey climbing steadily through narrow wooded valleys, crossing a fabulous bridge to peak in the sunny uplands at Bolquere-Eyne at 1592.76 metres above sea level. We detrained at Font Romeu-Odeillo-Via at 1553.83. One of the highlights is an open carriage.

Our next trip was to the Nuria Valley Rack Railway which is twinned with the Jungfrau Express in Switzerland. This marvellous rack railway allows spectacular views of steep slopes and the superb mountainscapes. The Railway is the only access to this remote valley and the lack of car traffic has a calming influence.



After a day's break, we travelled by coach to

Ribes, north of Ripoll where we joined the Nuria Railway. It was a fantastic journey up into the Pyrenees albeit that we left the sunshine down in the valley only to find grey skies above.

The signboard in the station can be fairly easily translated giving the history of the line since its inception. The trains are now very modern and I was able to stand at the rear and take photographs through the rear cab windows back down the track. It is single track with a few passing places until it arrives at the terminus. There is a small lake, hotel and cable car which I was able to utilise to take some elevated pictures of the valley which was only spoilt by the overcast conditions. The journey back was equally fascinating gaining vistas that were not apparent on the upward journey.

The following day we retraced our steps but this time only as far as Ripoll to join a train from Barcelona to the town of La Tour De Carol mentioned earlier. This was a substitute outing in place of the Red Train trip which we knew had had to be cancelled owing to doubts as to whether it would run or not. In all fairness, this was not the most exciting of outings for those with not a great interest in trains. We left Ripoll station on RENFE electric travelling again through some very nice countryside, steep valleys and rushing streams.

La Tour de Carol was planned as an “International Station” even though it is situated on a broad plateau high in the Pyrenees. It’s claim to fame is that it houses trains on three different gauges; the metre gauge of the Yellow Train from Villefranche, with



connections to Perpignan, the SNCF line into France finishing eventually at the La Gare D’Austerlitz and the 5” 3’ line to Barcelona. There is a small village near to the

station but we only had time to call in the station café to eat a sandwich with a mountain of frites and a coffee before we entrained to make the return journey. It is interesting to note that this year's brochure has a totally different day planned! Obviously, last year's feedback has had some effect.

We left Rosas the following day to journey back to the UK taking the coach to Figueras to catch the 10.23 to Paris Gare de Lyon. The train arrived on time and all were safely boarded but it didn't depart. Eventually, an enterprising member of our party spoke with the Train Manager to ascertain that there were reports of people in the tunnel between the border and Perpignan and until a search had been made, no trains were running. We left after waiting for about 90 minutes which meant that despite a splendid run up through France, we were never going to catch the 18.13 Eurostar from the Gare Du Nord.



Thus, it was that with having to have all our tickets changed we left Paris two hours late at around 20.05 and arrived at St. Pancras at around 2150 instead of 19.39. This was obviously a problem for members of the party travelling home that night but we only had to walk around the corner to York Way and the Premier Inn for a good night's sleep before catching the Grand Central back to Halifax the following day. It was an enjoyable trip despite the hiccups and the weather was very good. Rosas is a very pleasant seaside resort with long sandy beaches, an excellent promenade and good hotels.

## Reminiscences (Part 1)

Frank Robertshaw

### How did you become interested in Railways?

I had an unusual childhood. The first train ride that I recall was to Southport for a holiday with my Mother and Auntie. I am not sure how old I was but I certainly was not old enough to go to school. We went through a huge station called Manchester, where we saw long trains hauled by huge engines. I had not learned to say “locomotive” at this time.

### What is your first railway memory?

My mother re-married in 1945 when I was 9 years old. My new stepdad was a tall good looking Welshman who she had met in a fish and chip Shop in Lidget Green. I did not realise it at the time but he was to have a big influence on my future interest in railways. Eventually my Mum and new stepfather who I liked to call Dad went to live in Monmouthshire in a place called Caldicot and I went to live in Queensbury with my Auntie and Uncle. This was a time I hated but it has nothing to do with my railway story.



The 'Devonian' with a pair of 'Jubilee' class 4-6-0's in charge blasts out of Wickwar Tunnel.  
Painting by George.F.Heiron.

I was given the chance to go for a long Summer holiday in Caldicot with my mother. Mother took me there on the well-known train that ran between Bradford Forster

Square and Paignton, and called 'The Devonian'. It left Forster Square at 9-50am (no 24 hr times in those days) and arrived at Paignton at 7-15 pm. This was the longest journey I had ever had on a train and a great adventure for me. I remember a lot of the interesting things that we spotted on our journey to Gloucester. It is a long time ago now but I remember things like the fiery steelworks at Sheffield, the crooked spire at Chesterfield, the dark tunnels just outside Birmingham, the smell of chocolate as the train went past Bourneville station and many other things, like the huge tyres on the building of Fort Dunlop. By this time Dad was working for the railway as a plate layer in the Severn Tunnel, so we travelled by having privilege tickets (known as 'Priv's') and this meant that we had to travel by the cheapest way possible. So this meant we had to change at Gloucester and cross the City by the footbridge which went from Gloucester Eastgate station (Midland) to the Central (Great Western) station. I recall Mother showing me the view through an open window on the footbridge, of Gloucester Cathedral. Below is an image of the footbridge between Gloucester Stations.



After we crossed the footbridge I was to find a new wonder for me. This was 1948 and although the railway had been nationalised there was still a big influence of the Great Western Railway infrastructure still to be seen. I fell in love with the Brunswick Green locomotives with lots of polished brass on the chimneys and number & nameplates, and the chocolate & cream coaches. Inside the carriages were some wonderful prints of holiday places which could be travelled to on the GWR. The train we caught was a slow train to Cardiff, stopping at every station and small halt on its way. I remember seeing lovely red soil which I had never seen in Yorkshire and the sight of the Severn Rail Bridge which was still in use then. The train eventually stopped at Caldicot Halt and we tried to alight. We had not realised that the front of the train which we were in

was off the platform. We could see Dad standing on the platform to greet us. We started to make our way down the train when it started to move. We had to get off the train at Severn Tunnel Junction and walk down the cinder path back to Caldicot. There was even a treat for me here as we passed close to Severn Tunnel Junction steam shed with all its wonderful snorting steam engines. Half way along the cinder path we met Dad coming to meet us and take us home. This last bit of travel on the BR/GWR, from Gloucester to Severn Tunnel Junction, was the start of a love affair with the Great Western Railway that has lasted me all my life so far.

### **Were you a trainspotter? What was your favourite home patch?**

Fast forward to September 1948 when for family reasons which I cannot discuss here (see my life story written previously if you are interested) I went to live permanently in Caldicot with my mother & stepdad. Caldicot was, along with Roggiatt, Magor, Undy & Sudbrook along with parts of Newport where known as railway villages because of all the railwaymen who worked and lived there. I started attending at Larkfield Grammar School in Chepstow. I got a new friend called Colin who lived close to me. Colin remained a good friend all my life till he died in 1990. Colin introduced me to the joys of trainspotting and we would spend most evenings at Caldicot Halt or Severn Tunnel Junction station taking engine-numbers instead of doing our homework.



Colin's father Ern was a signalman at Severn Tunnel Junction East Signal Box, which controlled locomotives running into and out of the engine sheds connecting with the main line into the station. We would visit Ern in his signal box and under his supervision we were allowed to pull a few levers to let the trains in and out of the shed. Caldicot in those days was a place where everybody knew everybody else, and people worked mostly 'on the line' or in agriculture at local farms. We would go to STJ shed where we saw a lot of people we knew. We would ask the shed foreman if

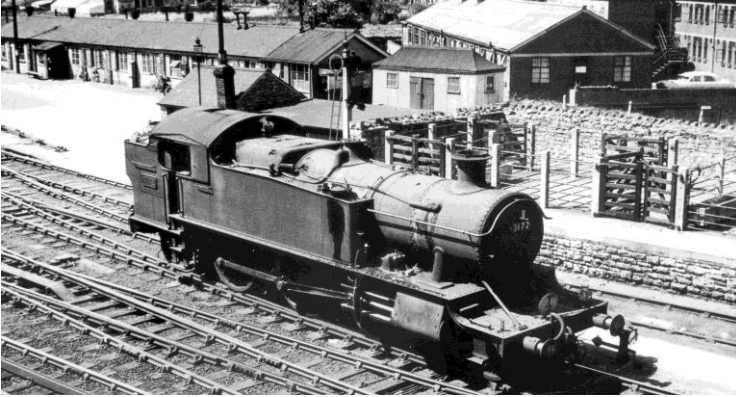
we could walk through the shed to 'take numbers'. We usually got permission. There was always someone who knew us and would escort us around. When they got to know us better they would let us walk around the shed on our own, after being warned to be careful and look out for moving engines and holes in the floor. There were some occasions where, if we knew the drivers or firemen they would let us ride and on the footplates. If we were really very lucky and the foreman was not around they would let us take the controller for a short while and drive the engines. A wonderful experience for a 13 year old boy. Guess what I asked for at Christmas? Yes of course it was a copy of Ian Allan ABC of Western Region Locomotives.



### **What is your favourite locomotive class & why?**

It is difficult to tell which is my favourite class of locomotive as there are so many. Most people will chose some of the large passenger locomotives, but as a young trainspotter in South Wales we saw a lot of former GWR Castles, Halls and even County class engines with their straight nameplates. We never saw the Kings because they never came to South Wales because of weight and gauge problems. (I understand that the Kings did run to Newport & Cardiff in later years but I never saw them there.) We did however sometimes manage to get a Saturday out at Bristol Temple Meads where we saw some Kings. But my favourite locomotives were not the large passenger ones but the more humble Class 3150 Prairie Tank Engines. These had been built at Swindon originally as Class 3100 but later 1938 they were converted to larger ones and more of them were built. They were built mostly for use in the Severn Tunnel Junction area for both freight and local passenger use. There were 33 of them and most of them were in Severn Tunnel shed at some time. One of the delights of this class was that, like a lot of young spotters of my age we could spot every one of the 31 Class locomotives. Later some more Class 3150 locomotives were built but we

weren't so enthusiastic about these. Illustrated is one of my favourite STJ Engines '3150' Class 2-602T No 3172 at the West End of Severn Tunnel Junction Station.



[The Editor's acknowledgments to the original authors of the above photos]  
*[Continued in next issue]*

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## Meeting Reports

**Philip Lockwood**

Wednesday 2nd January, 2019 - Long Ago & Far Away, by Ian Button

The subject of our presentation this evening was a journey made in 1986 overland to Russia. The tour was organised by Yorkshire Tours, a wonderfully eccentric tour group based in Huddersfield, and was made in the company of two then members of the Circle - Roland & Dorothy Walmsley. The trip involved a midnight start from Huddersfield and collected further passengers on the way south. Part of the requirement was to bring your own cup and sufficient food to last three days. The need for a cup was for brewing hot drinks from a large kettle which the group brought along! The coach journey terminated in Budapest where the party had a eleven hour wait before commencing the train journey onwards. In order to get the best value three of the group hired a taxi to see some of the sights. On joining the train the group found that they were in comfortable 4-berth compartments in a coach towards the rear of a very long train, ideal for photography, less ideal for the restaurant car which was at the front! Interestingly each coach not only had a coal-fired boiler but also a lady attendant - Northern Rail, take note! Of note was the almost all lady track workers viewed from the train. An unusual item available from a trolley on the platform was "kvass" a drink made from fermented bread. Ian assured us that it was quite palatable! The coach attendants were supplied with yellow and red flags, flag-signals to start (or hold) the train being passed forward by each attendant. After several days on the train, the party finally reached Lake Baikal in Siberia, this amazing lake many miles long, is the largest (in volume) in the world and freezes over in the winter with ice 10

feet thick, so thick that in the early years of the Trans-Siberian Railway locos and wagons could be transported across the ice.

A most interesting slide show, for which we must thank Ian and Lena. Vote of thanks by Bill Jagger.

#### Wednesday, 16 January, 2019 - Before The Railways Came - An Introduction To Canals, by Paul & Diana Monahan

A departure from our usual talks on railway subjects, our subject being a illustrated talk on the canal system prior to the more widespread adoption of railways. Paul explained that prior to the canals goods were usually carried by horseback. This was not only a much slower means of transport, but one narrow boat was able to transport the equivalent of 250 pack mules! One of the first instigators of canal transport was the Duke of Bridgewater who used canals to transport coal directly from his mines near Manchester. Another prime user was the pottery industry - manufacturers found that transport by canals resulted in fewer breakages. All features of canals were explained, narrow and wide, canal locks, tunnels and bridges. Paul and Diana were able to give a better understanding as apart from leisure use, Paul had worked canal boats as a commercial venture.

A different talk but one which seemed to generate a good number of questions from the members present. Hopefully we can invite them back in the future for another talk. Vote of thanks by Eddy Lumb.

#### Wednesday 30th January - German Narrow Gauge, by John Holroyd

A good attendance on a very cold evening for a presentation by John showing four visits to Germany, the first having been in 1967 on a RCTS tour. At this time plenty of main line steam was to be savoured. John visited many engine sheds where prize examples of large German steam were pulled out of the shed to be photographed, including a German answer to our own A4's and also the replica *Der Adler*. The trip passed through Minden, now well known as a major builder of new steam boilers where a fireless locomotive was seen. This resulted in John purchasing a similar locomotive in model form.

A further visit in 1979 to the German Berchtesgaden area where the steam tram locomotive of the Chiemseebahn took John to the lake where the *P.S Luitpold* was waiting for a cruise on the lake. A visit was also made to Wuppertal to ride the unique suspended railway.

In 1993 John returned to Germany this time to the former East Germany famed for the Trabant car as well as many narrow gauge lines. John related apart from photographing the trains he was also using a portable tape recorder to capture sound. In a field of long grass he had an anxious few moments trying to find just where he left it! Visits were made to Dresden, still showing much damage still evident from allied bombing, and onwards to the Harz where much still was as in the Soviet period. Finally much more recently a return to the Harz region to ride the line to the Brocken summit where long distance views, something of a rarity were enjoyed. Vote of thanks by Eddy Lumb

### Wednesday 13th February - Isle of Man Transport, by Julian Halstead

A welcome return by Julian who previously gave a talk to the Circle on the Caledonian Sleeper. Tonight it was the turn of the IOM. As is the form with Julian, this was a two day visit to cover as much of the transport scene as possible. There was something for all branches of enthusiasm - aircraft, steam train, various trams, buses and horse power. Julian flew out from Manchester to Ronaldsway airport then by bus to Douglas where he boarded the steam train for the sole remaining steam journey to Port Erin. He then returned by bus to Douglas to sample the horse tram along the front. Next by Manx electric tram to Ramsey before returning to Laxey to join the Snaefell Mountain Railway to a misty summit station. The impression of this journey seemed to have alarmed Julian with the car starting to slip back at one point! An interesting and informative show, making your reviewer, who has never visited the island (!) want to visit. Vote of thanks by Ian Button.

### Wednesday 27th February - Steam Locomotives You Wouldn't Believe, by Paul Abel

A unusual subject for tonight's meeting – one never covered previously at the Circle. Paul Abel gave a well-researched talk on the more unusual designs of steam locomotives. Paul has a background in marine steam and explained just how many of the principles used in marine boilers were tried on experimental steam locomotives, the Gresley-designed 'Hush Hush' (LNER 10000) being an example of this. Marine steam boilers tended to work at much higher pressure, this resulted in the 'Hush Hush' having the unusually high boiler pressure of 450 psi. Paul related that on a test run the locomotive stopped on the Forth Bridge for photography purposes with a total of 17 people on the footplate including Gresley and his three daughters! Marine developments which started with the Parsons turbine launch *Turbinia* and developed on the MacBraynes steamer *King George the Fifth* resulted in the trial on steam locomotives, the probably best known example being the LMS "Turbomotive" which was later converted back to a more normal piston locomotive. A well-researched subject illustrated mostly by line drawings or black and white images, but supplemented by model examples from his own model railway. Vote of thanks by Eddy Lumb

### Wednesday 13th March – Mixture No.5, by Dorothy Burrows

Dorothy returned tonight to give no.5 of her photographic saga. On this occasion without Ben who has recently had a knee operation. Stand in was son David, although Dorothy came well supplied with information notes as well as a selection of prints. We commenced at Bingley both historic and modern, although even the more modern pictures showed work on bridges and the by-pass under construction. We next visited the miniature railway at Pugney's near Wakefield before a longer selection of pictures taken at Statfold Barn. The cliff lift enthusiast was catered for with a picture of the Saltburn cliff tramway as far as I am aware the only one still worked by water. Moving to Derbyshire with a visit to the national tramway museum at Crich. Further pictures taken at the attractive station at Cromford before moving into Staffordshire with a visit to the remains of the narrow gauge Leek and Manifold light railway. The

celebrations on the Worth Valley on that sweltering weekend with pictures of the special train on arrival at Oxenhope complete with brass band on the platform. For a change members on the whole seemed to have escaped Dorothy's camera although one picture taken of John Holroyd in South Africa, plus a picture taken on a circle outdoor visit to the Yorkshire Dales railway at Embsay with a good selection of members posing on the footbridge.

As always with one of Dorothy's presentations a good mix of pictures. I for one will be looking forward to Mixture No 6 in due course. VOT of thanks by Ian Button.

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## **Book Review**

**Ian Button**

### **"Gloucester Locomotive Sheds – Horton Road & Barnwood", by Steve Bartlett**

This book is right up your reviewer's street, literally – for virtually throughout his trainspotting years he lived near Gloucester, close to the 4-track section of joint WR/LMR main line between Birmingham & Bristol. Steve Bartlett's book deals very comprehensively with the two major Gloucester sheds (GWR and LMS, respectively) and all their subsheds. There is a well-written and interesting text, enhanced by detailed shed layouts, locomotive allocations and duties. The book is beautifully produced, with 229 pages and many large and nicely printed black & white photographs of sheds, stations and trains working on the main line and the numerous branches. The photos have detailed captions, which add greatly to the interest. Besides Gloucester with its Central and Eastgate stations, Cheltenham is also covered (it actually had five stations if you count Racecourse and Leckhampton as well as Lansdown, Malvern Road & St James). Further chapters deal with the Forest of Dean, the Stroud Valley, lines to Ross-on-Wye & Hereford, the Tewkesbury branch, and more.

This book comprises an excellent and comprehensive reference work on the railways around Gloucester, and brings back many happy memories to your reviewer. It is highly recommended to anyone who knows the area, and also to anyone who wants to expand their knowledge of the district.

Publisher – Pen & Sword Books, 2018; ISBN 978 1 47387 559 3; Price £25.00  
[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

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## Special Traffic Notices

Would members please take note of the following points :-

- **Fire Precautions.** Please familiarise yourselves with the positions of fire exits and extinguishers at Sedbergh Community Centre.
- **Members' Discounts.** In return for free advertising in *The Circular* members receive 10% discount on cash purchases at Frizinghall Model Railways and at Buffers – in both cases on production of a valid Circle membership card. See inside rear cover of *The Circular* for details.
- **Contributions to *The Circular*.** Original material, preferably in electronic format (almost any PC word-processor, preferably Microsoft Word or MS-DOS format, but not Microsoft Works, please), or by email to [ianbutton1@btinternet.com](mailto:ianbutton1@btinternet.com)) or typescript – the Editor can scan & OCR (optical character recognition) typed pages.
- **Railway Magazine bound volumes.** The volumes of RM have been removed from the library due to lack of space. Any member wishing to read any volumes (we have c.1929-2010) should contact Eddy Lumb, and he will bring them to the next meeting.
- **Pictures for *The Circular*.** Photographic material submitted for consideration for reproduction in *The Circular* is accepted at the owner's risk. Landscape format is preferred for half-page reproduction, obviously, although if the photo is spectacular a vertical format full-page layout may be possible, or the picture might be used for our *Circular* cover picture.
- **Disclaimer.** The opinions expressed in *The Circular* are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Committee.

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## Notes from the Internet

Michael Leahy

Chaos on the Trans-Siberian Railway as Russian coal train derails tearing up 1,000ft-stretch of track and blocking the famous route beloved by tourists. The 29 carriages of coal derailed on the Delyur-Tyret section of railway, some 2,918 miles east of Moscow on 12<sup>th</sup> January. Some 1,000ft of track was damaged in both directions in the incident.

[https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6584413/Cargo-train-derails-Trans-Siberian-Railway-tearing-1-000ft-stretch-track.html?ito=email\\_share\\_article-top](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6584413/Cargo-train-derails-Trans-Siberian-Railway-tearing-1-000ft-stretch-track.html?ito=email_share_article-top)

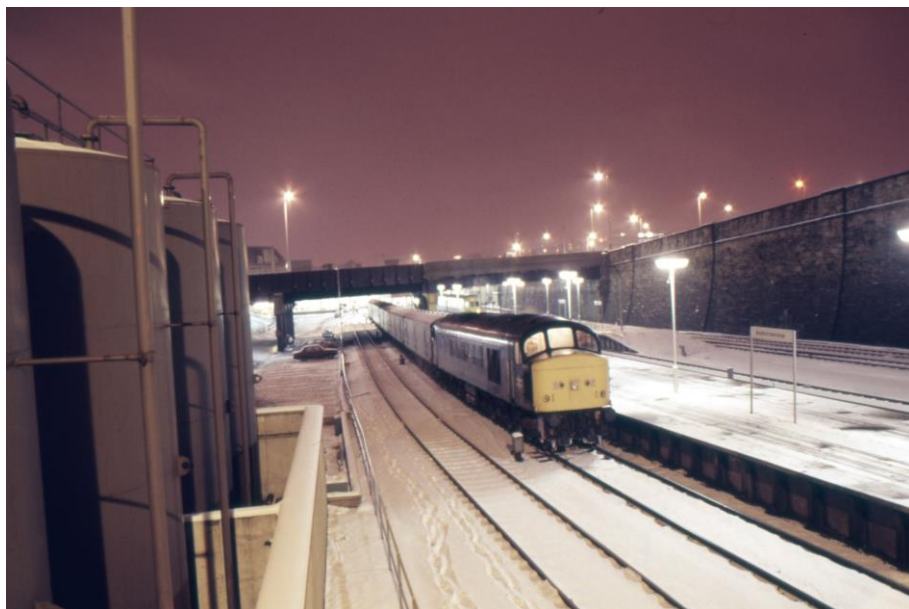
A novel way to link together Japanese railway enthusiasts

<https://japantoday.com/category/features/lifestyle/notebook-passed-by-hand-from-hokkaido-to-kagoshima-connects-railway-fans-in-heartwarming-event>



31 447 at Apperley Bridge, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1986

Peter Holden



Unidentified class 45, Bradford Interchange, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1986

Peter Holden

## Bradford Railway Circle Nameplates

As agreed at the AGM last December, the Circle is offering its locomotive plates to members for sale by tender at the following minimum prices (the lower end of auctioneer's official estimates) :-

*Bradford City* - nameplate £18,000

*Saint Ambrose* – nameplate £6,000

*Chaffinch* - nameplate £5,000

3443 – brass cabside numberplate (from *Chaffinch*) £1800

GWR tender-plate No.1471 £400

If any member wishes to tender for any of the above, please send your bid (by post or email) to the Honorary Secretary by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – address inside front cover of *The Circular*.

### **Locomotive information (research by Ian Button)**

*Bradford City* – Designed by Gresley. Built Darlington as LNER B17/4 No.2868. Involved in tragic accident at Ilford on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1944, when heading a passenger train hit from the rear (9 passengers killed). Rebuilt by BR in June 1949 - class B17/6 and No. 61668. Last of class to be withdrawn in August 1960.

*Saint Ambrose* – GWR 4-6-0 No. 2912 was built at Swindon in August 1907 and was in service until February 1951 when it was withdrawn from Weymouth shed.

GWR 3443 *Chaffinch* – see old Circular article below. Withdrawn 1949. Name and numberplate both gifted to the Circle by W. Hubert Foster in 1949. (Mr Foster was an early Circle member, co-author of the 1948 book on the Settle-Carlisle Railway, and owner of the shop that later became Frizinghall Models & Railways.)

Tender-plate 1471 was gifted to the Circle by Mr A E Harris of Bristol Railway Circle in 1951. Mr Harris said this tender had run behind a 4-4-0 “Bird” class loco and so was in keeping with the *Chaffinch* plates.

Even more detailed notes on the histories of *St Ambrose* & *Chaffinch*, and tender 1471, are available on application to Ian Button.

### **From The Circular October 1949 :-**

#### **Chaffinch and the “Bird” class, by A E Harris**

The GWR 4-4-0 *Chaffinch* was in the last batch of new double-framed engines in a long series built between 1895 and 1910. Subsequent double-framed engines were the hybrid “Earl” class of 1936-9, these being rebuilds of withdrawn engines and about which no more need be said.

The basic class name for the 156 engines of the type was “Bulldog”, though the engine that bore that name was “experimental” and in many respects unlike the rest in its early days. They were equally well known as the “Camels”, but the last fifteen were the “Birds”.

The first forty of the “Bulldogs” had curved frames but upon the building of “Blasius” in 1900 these gave way to the standard straight frame, which was also used on the double-framed 6’ 8½” “Cities” and “Flowers”. It was from this straight-framed engine that the class multiplied by 100 and evolved by the fitting of a taper boiler with Belpaire firebox and steam reversing gear.

In 1909 the final batch was put in hand. These were the “Birds”, of which ten were built in that year and a further five in 1910. They were numbered 3731-3745, later becoming (in December 1912) 3441-3455. No. 3733 *Chaffinch* became 3443. They were easily distinguished from the “Bulldogs” by their deep outside framing for the driving and coupled wheels, giving them a powerful and sturdy appearance.

Latterly they were coupled to 3,500-gallon tenders, second-hand from scrapped engines, in place of the 3,000-gallon type, and the cabs were fluted out to match their greater width.

*Chaffinch*, or which the Bradford Railway Circle is the proud possessor of a nameplate and a numberplate, was the subject of one of the two official photographs of the “Birds” used by the GWR in their publications for many years – the other being *Peacock*, 3450.

I contend that they were the most beautiful engines of their period and the greatest tribute to William Dean by G. J. Churchward in the latter’s perpetuation of the former’s double-framed design so long after his retirement.

Unlike the earlier “Bulldogs”, the “Birds” had no chance of displaying “chocolate” framing, for after 1906 the framing of all GWR engines was painted black.

The class was built for a number of cross-country services that were being developed by the GWR, and for through trains into “foreign” companies’ territory. They were ideal for all passenger traffic west of Newton Abbot and I believe that one or two are still stationed there as assisting pilots on the heavily-graded Plymouth road.

I have seen all the “Birds” both at their best and at their worst. I felt quite distressed at seeing the state of *Penguin*, 3452, prior to her going to Swindon for scrapping in April 1948 – from Bristol though she was a Swindon engine.

When I was a lad I cleaned *Penguin* for a long period for the fast Bordesley (Birmingham) goods train from Bristol. This engine and *Taunton*, 3389, had to kept in scrupulous condition for this working as the train ran for some distance over the Midland Railway, a rival company whose claim to clean engines was never disputed. I still remember the green paint could look quite blue with the reflection of a cloudless sky when the gleaming engine was marshalled up in St Philip’s Marsh yard to await her turn away.

I saw *Chaffinch* at Bath Road many years ago, looking very becoming in a khaki coat of paint, in common with a number of GWR engines from 1916-1920.

I believe the “Birds” were originally slide-valve engines, but they definitely all became piston-valve. Earlier on, besides the steam reverser, they had steam brake for

the engine and vacuum brake for the tender, also an exhaust injector on the left hand side. These fittings were later superseded by screw reverser, a large cone ejector vacuum brake and two live steam injectors.

Like many engines, the “Birds” have had their day and are now being gradually withdrawn. I trust the Bradford society’s memento of these engines will in future become an even more valued relic. The specification and dimensions of *Chaffinch* and the rest of the “Bird” class were :-

Lot 177. 15 engines. Built Swindon between May 1909 and February 1910.

Classified “Blue” for road and “B” for load. Coupled wheels 5’ 8” diameter; bogie wheels 3’ 8” diameter. Cylinders 18” dia. X 26” stroke. Final type boiler carrying a steam pressure of 200 lb.sq.inch. Heating surface: Tubes, 1144 sq.ft. Firebox 121.8 sq.ft. One row of six superheater elements 82.2 sq.ft. Total heating surface, 1348 sq.ft. Tractive effort 21.060 lb. Weight of engine, 52 tons 10 cwt. (Note: The “Bulldogs” were 51 ton 16 cwt, and this weight is often quoted for the “Birds”). Weight of tender 40 tons, when carrying 3,500 gallons of water and 6 tons of coal.

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## Ben’s Bits

## Ben Burrows

Liverpool & Manchester Railway – In 1830 this was originally laid with fish-bellied cast-iron rails inscribed L&M, of which a length survives and was exhibited at Rainhill Exhibition for “Rocket 150”. However, after 3 or 4 years life on the L&MR they were replaced, some of the old rails going to be used in 1836 on the Storeton (Quarry) Tramway, 2½ miles long, worked by horses & gravity. Stone was carried from the quarry to Bromborough Pool – the rails were in use for 65 years until the tramway’s closure in 1903. The quarry was supervised by Thomas Brassey, the 1820’s railway engineer. Storeton stone was used in the Sankey Viaduct and the Liverpool Customs House. Sleeper blocks were used for walling at Rest Hill Road/Mount Road junction in Birkenhead.

In 1957 the West Midlands Gas Board purchased a vertical-boilered Sentinel steam locomotive for the Pleck works at Walsall. A steam loco as late as this was probably chosen because it could burn coke at minimal fuel cost to them. Its number was 9632 and when the Pleck works closed it found its way to the Chasewater Light Railway, but without its WM logo – the reason for a short article in the Historic Gas Times magazine. It was probably the last steam locomotive purchased by a British gas works and was probably the last steam locomotive made by Sentinel, who continued to produce diesels.

The largest locomotive cylinder ever manufactured was a 41” diameter low-pressure cylinder cast in the USA, for John E Muhlfeld’s 2-cylinder high-pressure cross-compound 2-8-0 of 1924.

## Secretary's Page

## Peter Holden

As you will be aware sadly Malcolm Riley passed away on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February. He will be missed by all of his friends at the Circle. Malcolm was indeed a larger than life character and I am honoured to say he was also a great friend. He was always happy to come along to the pub following Circle meetings for a chat. He would entertain us with his anecdotes from the Signal Box for hours! So funny, so correct, so none politically correct! We both shared a love of railways and also a disdain for the modern railway's management! Malcolm would also join me for days out on the train when possible. This would involve an early start, a very long train journey and lunch in a Brewery / Pub somewhere. Great days indeed. I have fond memories of train journeys made with Malcolm and Mike Wade. Malcolm served for quite a few years on the Circle Committee, he was responsible for publicising our meetings in various places. I could always count him to contribute to decision making on the committee. He worked tirelessly for the RCTS for many years and was the backbone of their outside visits. A large assembly of his friends from RCTS and BRC joined his family and helped to pay a fitting tribute to this great man at his funeral on 1<sup>st</sup> March. Condolences to his family and friends at this sad time.

This year's diary is now completed. Hopefully we should enjoy good mixture of various transport talks during 2019.

As you will be aware, we have been looking to find a better venue to hold our meetings. As yet nothing has come along which can be said to be a vast improvement. If anyone has any suggestions, please have a word.

### Forthcoming meetings.

On **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April** we will be joined by Andrew Barclay who will be presenting a selection of "The Slides of Peter Fox". Peter, as I am sure you will know, was an editor at Platform 5, he was indeed a very knowledgeable man on all things railway. Andrew presently works at Platform 5 and has become the custodian of the late Peter's slide collection. I am sure there will be some very interesting images for our enjoyment.

On **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May** "The Rise and Fall of USA Passenger Trains" will be the title of Chris Davis's presentation. Chris is indeed a very capable photographer and as I am sure you will be aware, he has made very many journeys across to America to photograph the railroad scene.

Ian Dougill will hopefully return on **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May** to present the second half of his talk on "Bradford City Transport (part 2)". Part one was indeed most interesting and I am sure part two will also be of interest.

On **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June** we welcome guest speaker Steve Fort. He will be presenting "Steaming through Lancashire and the West Riding" Now obviously we will have to show respect to Steve as he presents the Lancashire bit! Knowing that he will of course be showing us steam trains in the much more wholesome, more scenic West Riding of Yorkshire as well!

Dave Peel has kindly offered to travel up from Wareham and present to us "Flying Scotsman and all 78 others!" on **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June**. Well I for one am looking

forward to hearing what Dave has to say about Mr. Gresley's locomotives. As we are all well aware the NRM recently spent rather a lot of money restoring Flying Scotsman, was it worth it?

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July** sees a visit from Steve Armitage. Steve will be presenting the first part of his talk on the West Coast Main Line this section covering the line from Euston to Crewe.

Jane Ellis will be making a very welcome return to the Circle on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July** to present "Around the UK in Classic Railway Posters" What a fascinating subject. I think it would be fair to say that we have all seen these fantastic railway adverts and been inspired by them. We all probably have a favourite poster as well?

## Circle Diary 2019

	Mar 27 <sup>th</sup> .	10 Years Plus at Platform 5	Robert Pritchard
	Apr 10 <sup>th</sup>	Australia & New Zealand	Peter Holden
	Apr 24 <sup>th</sup>	The Slides of Peter Fox	Andy Barclay
C	May 8 <sup>th</sup>	The Rise & Fall of USA Passenger Trains	Chris Davis
	May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Bradford City Transport (Part 2)	Ian Dougill
	Jun 5 <sup>th</sup>	Steaming Through Lancashire & West Riding	Steve Fort
P	Jun 19 <sup>th</sup> .	Flying Scotsman and all 78 Others!	Dave Peel
	Jul 3 <sup>rd</sup>	WCML Part 1 Euston to Crewe.	Steve Armitage
	Jul 17 <sup>th</sup>	Around the UK in Classic Railway Posters.	Jane Ellis
	Jul 31 <sup>st</sup>	Railways of Ireland	Keith Preston
C	Aug 14 <sup>th</sup>	Steam, Steam and more Steam.	David Tillotson
	Aug. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Steam Train Travel Through the Countryside to the Coast.	Gary Hayhurst.
	Sep.11 <sup>th</sup>	Bradford Trolley Buses.	Robin Kitson
P	Sep. 25 <sup>th</sup> .	From Contraction to Expansion.	Paul Bigland
	Oct 9 <sup>th</sup> .	Not Switzerland Tonight	Philip Lockwood
	Oct 23 <sup>rd</sup> .	50 years back	John Holroyd
C	Nov 6 <sup>th</sup> .	TBA (Latest Book!)	Jan Rapatz & Alan Whittaker
	Nov 20 <sup>th</sup> .	TBA.	Anthony Hicks
	Dec 4 <sup>th</sup> .	Circle Annual General meeting	
P	Dec 18 <sup>th</sup> .	Halifax to Hong Kong by Train.	Geoff Budd

Speakers are required for several dates in the second half of next year – if you can help, please get in touch with Peter Holden (contact details inside front cover)

C - Copy date for *The Circular* – three meetings prior to ...

P – Publication date, ditto – last meetings of March, June, September & December