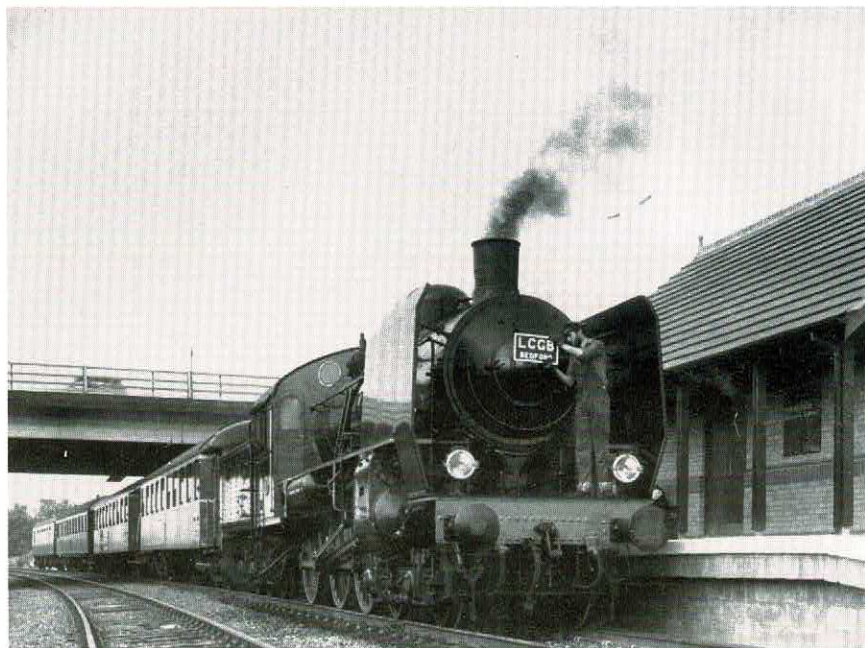


# L C G B



1958 - 1998  
A CELEBRATION OF  
40 YEARS OF THE  
BEDFORD BRANCH

**THE LOCOMOTIVE CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN  
BEDFORD BRANCH 1998**

**Chairman**

(and acting Secretary)  
Bryan Cross,  
103, Oliver Street,  
Amphill,  
MK45 2SD

**Treasurer**

(and Outdoor fixtures)  
Jack Butcher,  
31, Senwick Drive,  
Wellingborough,  
Northants,  
NN8 1RX

**Committee Members**

Peter Bland,  
49, Spring Field Crescent,  
Harpenden,  
Herts.,  
AL5 4LL

**Librarian**

John Dolamore,  
197, Cardington Rd.,  
Bedford,  
MK42 0BZ

**Indoor fixtures**

David Eatwell,  
16, Robin Hill,  
Bedford,  
MK41 7QP

Monthly meetings are held in the St John's Church Hall, St John's St., Bedford usually on the first Tuesday of the month (excepting August), commencing at 19.30 hrs sharp and ending at 22.00 hrs. The Club strives to engage first rate speakers on a wide variety of subjects for these talks which are nearly always illustrated with slides. Entry is 30p for members, 60p for non-members, and refreshments are always available during the interval.

The LCGB will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 1999, and has 10 Branches throughout England. Its main objectives are 'To foster a keen interest in railways and to support the railway preservation movement both at home and abroad'. An illustrated magazine entitled 'The Bulletin' is published ten times per year and is distributed free to all members. The Club also organises several overseas tours every year and these cater for both the steam and modern traction enthusiast. A photographic competition is held each November and the Club is very fortunate to have many accomplished photographers amongst its members who are always willing to give advice. If you're not a member, why not join?

## FOREWORD

To have founded a branch of the LCGB in Bedford in 1958 and to find it in 1998 as strong as ever is an achievement worth celebrating. About forty years ago a letter of mine (on a separate matter altogether) appeared in *The Railway Magazine*, and as a result Jack Turner was soon on the telephone suggesting that I joined the LCGB. I am very glad that I did. To remember the names of members from those early days is not easy, but particularly I recollect the late Ian Simpson, and the late Tom Rownthaite, and we had a genial secretary in Vic Jeffs.

One pleasing feature was the frequency of Club visits, such as Kettering Loco, Banbury (Merton Street), the Post Office Tube and Kings Cross Top Shed. Club members were always to be found on the 'last train' such as to Hitchin (1961) and Northampton (1962). We owed much to Arthur Goldsmith and Ken Dickens for these early activities.

The indoor meetings were always well supported and excellent speakers were engaged. In those early days the success of the Branch was celebrated by an annual dinner (see page 6) at several of which we had the pleasure of welcoming our worthy President, the unique Mr J. C. Rogers. The club was indeed fortunate in having at its head a gentleman of such capability, enthusiasm and delightful sense of humour. We had further support from London and I well remember John Cramp attending the dinner, but there must have been others, to whom I must apologise for omitting their names.

During the 1970s, the club used to meet at the Grosvenor Centre under the guidance of Peter Butler and Richard Crane. The lecture room was always full and it was a case of 'standing room only' for members who arrived late. Here again it is difficult to remember the names of the speakers, but the Rev. Teddy Boston (expert on the Upwell & Outwell Tramway), the one and only Ken Nunn (the Club's first president) and John Slater (then editor of *The Railway Magazine*) come to mind. Members also took their turns.

Of course, Bedford members could attend Club meetings in London and I remember one such where again I had the good fortune to meet up with Ken Nunn. He was not only a great photographer but had a fund of amusing stories about his adventures with his camera.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than wish the Bedford Branch of the LCGB another forty years of successful activities.

Fred Cockman,  
September, 1998

## THE CHAIRMAN'S PIECE!

I consider it a great honour to be the Chairman of Bedford Branch in this its 40<sup>th</sup> year. There have been four previous to me, Jack Turner (1958-74), Peter Butler (1975-79), Derek Robinson (1980-82) and Chris Jones (1982-89). All of these are hard acts to follow. We all owe a great deal to Jack Turner and his committees who for the first 17 years strove manfully to establish the Branch in the town, putting down the solid foundations from which we all benefit today.

During the last four decades our railways have changed considerably. In those far off days in 1958, steam to the railway enthusiast was still supreme. Few of us realised the impact modernisation would have in the following ten years. Not only would we have to contend with decimation and finally extinction of steam from British Railways, we all had to come to terms with the destruction of the railway network from the axe wielded by Dr Beeching and company.

The 70s and 80s were no better with lack of government support and investment so the decline continued. The Thatcher era brought us 'privatisation' and the promise of a 'New Dawn' for our railways with a bottomless pit of private cash. Privatisation has come, the Tories have gone and we now have 'New Labour' and the promise of an 'Integrated Transport System' with the railways playing a major role to remove freight from our congested motorways. Will the circus go full circle with another re-grouping, to be followed by Nationalisation (à la 1923 and 1948)? Only time will tell. One wonders what the Chairman will be writing for our fiftieth anniversary in 2008.

Through all this time the Branch has endeavoured to provide local railway enthusiasts with a diet to satisfy all their needs. This I feel it has done most admirably for the past forty years and hopefully will continue to do so for a further forty, although this can only be achieved with a committee that has the full support of you the members.

This booklet has been compiled by myself and David Eatwell from notes and recollections of past and present Branch members. I make no apologies for concentrating mainly on the early years in the days when steam was still in abundance. This in no way should detract from the later years, since 1968, when the club has been (and still is) very active.

I would like to dedicate this booklet to present and past members and friends who over the last forty years have supported the Bedford Branch, in particular founder member Jack Turner, the late Tom Rounthwaite, Ian Simpson, Stuart Lorney, Trevor Northwood, Derek Robinson and finally Geoffrey Webb, all fondly remembered.

Bryan Cross, November, 1998



Branch members at Irchester on Monday 25th June 1984 for a special steaming of metre gauge Peckett No 85 of 1934. Photograph David Eatwell



The Grosvenor Centre was the first home of the Branch (in the Branch's early years, the centre was called the Grosvenor Club). At that time members had to join the club for authorised entry to Branch meetings, similar to the requirements when meetings were held at the Southend Working Men's Club in the 1980s. If you were not a member of the SWMC, you had to sign in the registration book on entry to satisfy the licensing regulations. This photograph was taken in recent times by Richard Crane who was the Branch Secretary in the 1970s.

## THE FIRST 25 YEARS

Harold MacMillan was Prime Minister and was soon to proclaim the well known phrase that "we've never had it so good". The year was 1958 and for the railway enthusiast those immortal words of the Prime Minister were probably never so true. The residents of Bedford could travel by steam train to London for just a few shillings and for even less enjoy the delights of branch line travel to Hitchin, Northampton, Cambridge and Oxford.

But 1958 was the year that heralded major changes to the railway scene in this area. By the end of that year the first serious threat to steam's supremacy had appeared in the shape of three small diesel railbuses for the Hitchin and Northampton branches but more importantly, four-car diesel units began their trials on the main commuter trains to St Pancras. Bedford's local railways were to change beyond recognition in the space of just a few brief years. It was the changing railway scene that largely inspired a group of local enthusiasts to unite to further their interests and thus the Bedford Branch of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain was born.

At the first Annual General Meeting of the new Branch in 1959 Mr Jack Turner, the Chairman, reported to the 13 members present at the Grosvenor Centre that funds totalled a balance of 1/- but that 2/- was due in outstanding subscriptions. Yet not everything has changed as much as financial values since that far off date, for the Chairman suggested that future meetings should be retimed to commence at 7.30 pm "due to the erratic arrivals of trains from London". The new club soon blossomed and by the third AGM the 19 members present were presented with a financial statement that funds had reached the dizzy heights of £2 6s 0d. With such wealth it was decided to reduce the members' subscription from 5/- to 2/6.

Interest in the now rapidly vanishing steam train was causing more and more enthusiasts to seek the company of fellow sympathisers and the result was increasingly well attended meetings which covered a wide range of railway topics. It was noticeable that many of the early speakers were local members and indeed the Bedford Branch has long numbered several professional railwaymen within its ranks as well as railway authors and historians. The Grosvenor Centre became the accepted home for the Branch until the Summer of 1963 when for various reasons it was necessary to find new premises. This change was minor however, compared with the changes that the Bedford rail scene was going through. By the end of 1962 we had seen the closure of both the Hitchin and Northampton lines, but their passing was trivial when compared to the stunning news in 1965 that closure of the 77 mile Cambridge-Bedford-Oxford route was proposed by British Railways. Steam traction had all but vanished on passenger trains in the area and goods traffic had

begun what was to become an accelerating decline.

The two years to 1965 were years of upheaval and depression for many rail enthusiasts but meetings continued. Members made desperate efforts to chase the ever diminishing numbers of steam locomotives. These efforts are highlighted by the notable increase in the number of visits to railway depots, many involving members in overnight travel by mini-bus to reach these disappearing heartlands of steam: Tebay, Carlisle Upperby and Kingmoor, Rose Grove, Patricroft and Newton Heath. By the Autumn of 1965 however, the branch was 'back home' in the Grosvenor Centre and speakers that season included Col. Robertson, the Inspecting Officer of Railways. The average attendance was steady at 25. Funds were healthy at £83 8s 1d, helped by a successful 'South Midlander Railtour'. Meetings continued to provide a good cross section of railway subjects to the members in Bedford but attendance declined noticeably towards that fateful day in 1968 when the very last main line steam train was run by British Railways. An era had ended and for some their love for railways had largely ended too. Bedford itself suffered the heavy blow of beginning the year without its important cross country line from Cambridge to Oxford when all but the 16 mile stretch between Bedford and Bletchley was closed to passenger services.

The demise of steam trains and branch lines in general following the Beeching regime was not allowed to demoralise the Bedford enthusiasts, and they were determined not to follow steam into the history books. The irrepressible Jack Turner still chaired the Branch committee and they fought back with an entertaining programme of meetings which gradually gathered an increasing number of supporters at the Grosvenor Centre. Steam subjects featured largely on the menu, but enthusiasts found that they could be interested in a much wider diet of rail subjects. The late Tom Rounthwaite edited a Branch news letter and several major film shows filled the local Civic Theatre. New names joined the committee, and in 1971 Derek Robinson became Treasurer, later to become Chairman, a position sadly foreshortened by his untimely death in 1982. Richard Crane became Secretary for an eight year stint and Alan Ledwick amazed everyone with his wizardry in extracting money from the great British public in his position as Sales Officer.

By the 1972 AGM dieselisation had reluctantly been accepted by most and decimalisation had been equally received with sufferance but inevitability. Funds were a little low at just £13.97 and the average of 26 attending Branch meetings disappointed the keen committee. It was with much regret that members accepted Jack Turner's decision to stand down at the 1974 AGM, his successor Peter Butler taking up the challenge and by the Branch's 18th AGM numbers at indoor meetings had increased to an average of 40. Overcrowding was now becoming a real problem and despite the much higher cost, the Grosvenor Centre's larger room was booked for several meetings. The next few years saw the number of members attending

Branch meetings steadily rising to an average of almost 60.

The 21st Anniversary AGM was celebrated with over 50 members present. The Secretary Richard Crane reported the highest attendance yet, a record 94 being present for an evening of 'Steam Cinema' films. Bryan Cross took over as Secretary in 1979, a time when the railway scene was once again under great strain and facing



The Bedford Branch's second annual dinner which was held on the 26th January 1962. This Ken Dickens photograph shows (left to right), Pat Turner, Pauline Dickens, J. C. Rogers (who became the club President), Jean Goldsmith, Leslie Leppington, Jack Turner (Branch Chairman)

many changes. Electrification of the Bedford to London line was under way, the once traditional freight train was virtually a thing of the past and the new Conservative Government, in its insistence on free competition, had enabled private coach operators to put previously unknown competitive strains on many rail routes. More cuts were in the air, union unrest was growing and financial difficulties were affecting every part of society. The increasing expense of travelling to

Bedford had slightly reduced numbers at Branch meetings and after an Extraordinary General Meeting in November 1981, the growing concern over the future financial stability of the Branch caused the long attachment to the Grosvenor Centre to be broken. A move to less expensive premises at the Southend Working Men's Club was authorised.

## THE LAST 15 YEARS

In the fifteen years since we celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary, the Branch has continued to provide local rail enthusiasts with a venue where they can





The Bedford Branch's 25th Anniversary dining train at Wansford on the Nene Valley Railway on 11th July 1983. Photograph by David Eatwell.  
Left to right; Jack Turner, Charles Firminger, Peter Butler, Bryan Cross, Paul Watson, Dennis Cadman, Chris Jones and Chris Fox.  
Inset the late Derek Robinson . Photo courtesy of Charles Wells.

meet and share their passion for railways. When the Branch moved to the SWMC some members were convinced that it would not survive the transition. But survive it did. Shortly after the move there was the sad loss of the Chairman Derek Robinson. For a short time until the next AGM, Peter Butler was acting Chairman, a position not unfamiliar to him, but this was to be temporary. At the following AGM, Chris Jones was elected Chairman and remained so for the next seven years. Since the late 1970s, the Branch has struggled to attract members in great numbers, the average attendance at meetings declining into the low twenties for a period in the 1980s. Chris and his committee (along with solid support from the remaining members) were determined that the Branch must continue. In 1989 Bryan Cross became Chairman at a point when finances were very low, but fortune played its hand with an anonymous donation of £100 from a Branch member that helped to

keep the club afloat. Meetings were reduced to one per month and against strong opposition, a voluntary entrance fee to cover the cost of room hire was also introduced (later to become a fixed nominal charge).

When the SWMC closed in December 1991 (last meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec) the Branch was again forced to relocate, but fortune once more played its hand. Alan Ledwick had connections with St John's Church and suggested the Church Hall, but only Tuesday evenings were free. The facilities were found to be ideal; the Branch needed to look no further, although it did mean a change from the traditional Monday evening to a Tuesday. This was quickly agreed and the move went ahead without a hitch. Well maybe there were a few small ones!! The first meeting at St John's was on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992 when Charles Firminger presented 'LCGB Railtours'.

Indoor meetings over the years have brought to Bedford a number of eminent railwaymen, historians and photographers. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dick Hardy was a regular who first spoke of being a 'Doncaster Apprentice', whilst a later talk was 'Stratford from Steam To Diesel'. John Click came in October 1985 and talked about O.V. Bullied and working under him in the design office at the time when the experimental 'Leader' locomotives were built. On May 13<sup>th</sup> 1985 Peter Townend (ex-shed master of Top Shed) spoke of his time as Shed Master at 34A. Particular mention was made of the professional pride taken when preparing and turning out the A4s ('Streaks') for the crack express trains of the day such as the 'Elizabethan'. The October meeting frequently featured 'Steam Cinema' presented by Roger Crombleholme. Photographer Joe Rajczonek, is another regular; his artistic skills with the camera are second to none. There have been far too many speakers to mention them all, but two people who will always be remembered at Bedford for very different reasons are Trevor Northwood and Geoffrey Webb. 'Big Trev' will be remembered for his Christmas film shows, nearly always finishing with a 'Tom and Jerry' cartoon, for his enthusiasm and dour sense of humour but mostly for his friendship and kindness. Geoff, ever present at Branch meetings, was always willing to lend a hand, and his talks 'What My Camera Saw' were an education.

In 40 years little had remained unchanged in Britain in any walk of life, and yet as over 100 rail enthusiasts crowded into their privately hired steam hauled special train on the Nene Valley Railway on 11th July 1983 to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Bedford Branch, and 40 members attended the Branch's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1998, one thing was certain, and that was that a large and continuing interest in all matters concerning railways was still being enjoyed by many in the Bedford area. For 40 years the Bedford Branch has catered well for the railway enthusiast, and with its dedicated committee solid membership support and interesting future programme, it seems certain that it will continue to do so for many years to come.

## **THE REAL BATTLE FOR 'THE ASHES'**

(Based on *The Railway Magazine* article dated Sept. '97.)

Every other year or so the English and Australians lock in mortal combat for 'The Ashes' at various cricket grounds in their respective countries, but to LCGB and RCTS members in the towns of Bedford and Northampton, a **far** more important 'Ashes' series is regularly underway. This is the railway competition between the two clubs (held twice-yearly: during the Spring in Bedford and the Autumn in Northampton), the proud winner retaining the trophy until the next time they compete.

The 'Ashes' origins are interesting, because although the competition itself dates back almost to time immemorial, it was not until 1972 when John Harrison (current Chairman) and Ian Lynham of Northampton's RCTS were taking a stroll to Ravenstone Junction that the idea for **our** 'Ashes' was born, springing from the discovery that the signal box had been burned to the ground not too long previously, and all that remained was a pile of ashes!

But, being true enthusiasts, they scooped some up into a paper bag and, feeling that the opportunity to perpetuate the memory of such an historic building should not be lost, they later suggested to the LCGB Bedford Branch Committee that these ashes might make a suitable trophy in the societies' regular quizzes.

A respectable receptacle was constructed, and more than a quarter of a century later it is still being keenly fought for. Honours have more or less been shared, but even the losers do not go home empty handed as a model pair of buffers is awarded to the second-place team, currently RCTS Northampton. (For the last few years, LCGB St. Albans have provided a 'guest' team to compete when the event is held in Bedford, but even if they were to win ... which they haven't quite succeeded in doing yet! ... it was decided that **our** 'Ashes' should stay either in Bedford or Northampton, and so it has been.)

In 1997 the format was changed in an attempt to stimulate more interest, so instead of a straightforward railway quiz, we had a two-part competition (quiz and photographs), usually followed by a 'Special Presentation' by a member of the visiting team. Judging methods varied, but there can be no denying that more interest was stimulated alright! So, instead of some clever-dick question master asking "How many 'Jubilee' Class locomotive's names end in 'A'?", for example, or "Exactly how long does it take the fastest train in the current timetable to travel between Birmingham and Penzance?", other questions were heard, such as "Is it sharp?" and "Isn't it a bit over-exposed?".

'Mastermind' is the current format, but this is constantly under review, and gives us something to discuss when we meet up in the bar for a pint or two afterwards. Anyway, there's always a certain satisfaction to be gained from hearing the losers complaining "We was robbed!", isn't there?



Bedford Branch member Ian Hall (now resident in Tasmania) puts on a brave face after placing the wreath on the front of 2-6-2T No 84005, which hauled the last scheduled passenger train between Bedford and Northampton on 3rd March 1962. Photograph Ken Dickens.



With Bedford Branch members prominent in the specially attached brake-van, 3F 43449 shunts at Henlow Camp between Bedford and Hitchin. The building to the right is the camp's 'D' block . Photograph Arthur Goldsmith.



On Sat 17th October 1964, the Bedford Branch organised a railtour using various locos on a number of local lines (including the Bletchley flyover to Swanbourne) and here 2-6-4T No 42105, sits in Newport Pagnall station. Picture Tom Rounthwaite.



D5287 at Olney on 1st May 1965 heads the brake-van trip on the closed Bedford to Northampton branch that was organised by Club President J.C. Rogers. Amongst those present were: Ken Dickens, David Mills, John Dolamore, Geoff Webb, Jack Turner, Colin Smith and Richard Crane. Photograph John Crawley

## EARLY BRANCH-LINE BRAKE-VAN TRIPS

Memories of the LCGB Bedford Branch brake-van rail-tour of some  
Northamptonshire branch-lines.

( Extracts from notes by Ken Dickens.)

Thirty three years have passed since Saturday 3rd July, 1965, when members of the Bedford Branch of the LCGB, along with a few members from London, travelled down the Midland main line to Wellingborough, the starting point of the tour. The special train consisted of ten brake-vans, and was hauled by BR Standard Class 2 2-6-0 No. 78028 in very clean condition and carrying the Bedford Branch headboard. Departure from Wellingborough (Midland Road) was 'on time' at 11.40am.

Heading south along the goods line, we branched off at Irchester Junction, and after passing through Rushden, we arrived at this line's terminus: Higham Ferrers. Here we had time to look at both the station and the goods shed while the engine ran round the train for the return journey. (Passenger services had ceased on the branch in 1959.) On reaching Wellingborough once more, No. 78028 ran round the train again and we set off for the town's other station at London Road, abandoning the Midland as we did so and joining the former LNWR as far as Irthlingborough on the now truncated line which once reached Peterborough. (The only remaining source of revenue for the line at this time was iron ore from the workings at Irthlingborough.)

After a short stop to allow the locomotive another chance to run round, we re-traced our path and headed off through Castle Ashby towards Northampton for a photographic stop near Billing, and a view of some fine old LNWR semaphores. At Hardingstone Junction we observed the severed Bedford-Northampton branch and 0-6-0T No. 47590 shunting in the yard. Further on, a short stop at the junction adjacent to Northampton shed just gave us time for a flying visit to the yard where some of the steam locomotives stabled here were noted as Nos. 48020, 44938, 48635, 44863, 48626, 41218, 41219 and 48215. Black Five ('Mickey') 45454 was also noted travelling through Northampton (Bridge Street) Station at this time. Finally we arrived at Northampton (Castle) Station where signs of electrification and modernisation were very evident.

Our return was along the same route back to Wellingborough (Midland Road), and then we travelled north down the Midland main line to Kettering, passing the MPD (15A) which by now had lost its steam allocation completely. 9Fs 92101 and 92106 were seen stored in the yard, and No. 48045 was standing in



BR Standard Class 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78028 stands in the bay at Wellingborough (Midland Road) at 11.20 hrs waiting to depart for Higham Ferrers with the Bedford Branch's brake-van tour on Saturday 3rd July 1965. Photograph by Ken Dickens.

the station with a southbound goods train.

In the yard, our train was prepared for the trip along the Loddington branch which was constructed in 1877 by the Midland as a mineral line to service the Cransley Ironworks (and later the Loddington Ironstone Company). It was four miles long and never saw a passenger service.

After departing southwards from Kettering, we joined this branch-line which swung sharply to the right and passed the now dismantled Cransley Ironworks where so many steam locomotives had been reduced to scrap at George Cohen's, and where a pair of 9Fs were standing, still intact, but no doubt soon destined for the same fate.

The first attempt at the branch's 1 in 44 incline, made at a sedate pace but with plenty of steam, met with total failure at MP 1½ due to poor adhesion, so we set back for another try at a brisker pace, and although initially we seemed to be succeeding, we again came to a dead stand, this time at MP 2. The second failure resulted in us all returning to Kettering where it was decided that if the ascent was to be achieved at all, six brake-vans would have to be removed! The whole group was therefore crammed into the remaining four vans and (amid much cheering), we finally stormed up the incline through dense lineside vegetation to the derelict loading-dock at Loddington. The smoke and steam effects, coupled with the echoes of the exhaust as we reached the summit were quite spectacular, and the easy drop back to Kettering to collect the six abandoned brake-vans gave the crew a well-earned rest.

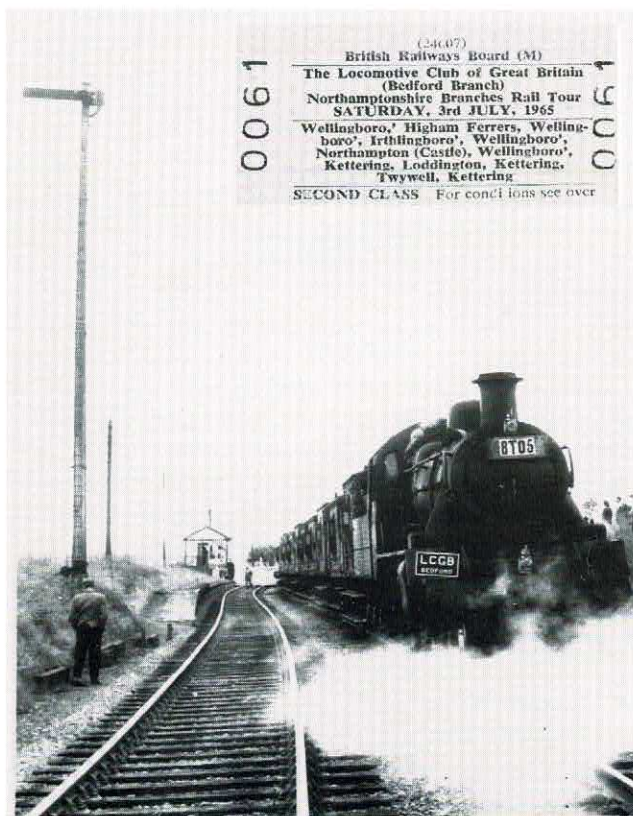
But our day was not quite finished, and soon No. 78028 was at work again, taking our re-formed train over the slow line at Kettering Junction on to the line which formerly went to Huntingdon, but as parts of this route had been closed in 1959 and 1965, we could now only journey along it as far as Tywell. There had been a passenger service here pre-Beeching, but all that was left when we were here in 1965 were some iron ore workings from Cranford, and even these were now very much in decline. Obviously the end was nigh, and unavoidably my thoughts went back to my youth when, in the early 1940s as a young trainspotter, I had travelled to the branch from Bedford to see the ex-MR 2-4-0s which once worked the line through to Cambridge. Sadly, they too were no more.

Our journey came to an end on our return to Kettering where, after looking in on the now silent MPD, we just about had time for a nice cup of tea before catching a service train back to Bedford. Prior to departure, the estimated route-

mileage had been 74, but with the extra goes at Loddington Bank, we must have achieved at least eighty, and looking back, I feel that this was the most interesting and ambitious tour ever undertaken by the Bedford Branch of the LCGB. It was much enjoyed by the participants, and was a great credit to all those involved in its organisation.

The photo stop at Billing. Photograph Tom Rounthwaite.

Inset Ticket loaned by our current Branch Librarian John Dolamore.



(24.07)  
British Railways Board (M)  
The Locomotive Club of Great Britain  
(Bedford Branch)  
Northamptonshire Branches Rail Tour  
SATURDAY, 3rd JULY, 1965  
Wellingboro', Higham Ferrers, Welling-  
boro', Irthlingboro', Wellingboro',  
Northampton, Loddington, Kettering,  
Tywell, Kettering  
SECOND CLASS For conditions see over



## 1964 to 1968: 'THE SHED-BASHING YEARS'

(Prepared from notes by Alan Ledwick)

The end of steam in the Bedford area was in 1964 when the final revenue-earning working took place on the 17th April. An 8F worked the Wellingborough to Goldington Power Station service and this spurred some of the Bedford Branch members to try to record the remainder of the British steam scene before it finally finished. Over the period under review the only parts of Britain which were not visited were those where steam had already disappeared (Devon, Cornwall, Kent and Sussex) or were too far away from Bedford to visit, i.e. Wales (west of Bridgend and west of Mold Junction) and Scotland (north of Perth).

Four visits have been chosen to sample what was around and the stamina needed to undertake some of the trips. The usual arrangement was to meet at Elstow (on the A6) once a month, at around midnight and decide which area to visit that day.

The first visit, on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1964 was rather low key with five members including Alan, Stuart Lorney and Alan Ross travelling in Geoff Oliver's (the fixtures officer) car. The group met at around 6.00 hrs and set off in a south-westerly direction. In those pre-Motorway days the route was rather more rural than now and approaching Ascot we suffered a flat tyre, which was changed with the sort of speed that a F1 racing pit would envy, as we headed west to visit:-

### **Weymouth 70G**

19 steam. Grange 6816 Bullied Pacifics 34021/38/97/103, 35005/20/2/4/9, 41261/93/8, 41310/24, 73002/20/30, 76011 and five diesels D2082, D2295, D2397/98 and finally Hymek D7020.

### **Bristol (Barrow Road) 82E**

49 steam of which 26 were ex-GWR owing to the closure of St. Phillips Marsh (SpaM to many of us) 9 ex-LMS including Stanier 2-6-0 42974 of 2F Woodford Halse and 43924 (now preserved), 13 BR Standard class including first of class 9F 92000 and preserved 92214, plus 5 diesel shunters. As a sign of the long distance some of the older locos worked, among the visitors was 44527 of Burton-on-Trent, used in preference to a Jubilee, a number of this class being in store at Burton-on-Trent at that time.

### **Bath (Green Park) 82F**

20 steam consisting of 3 ex-GWR, 8 ex-LMS (5 Stanier 8Fs) 9 BR Standard class. Only two locos were visitors: 73047 of 6D Shrewsbury and 76013 of 70F Bournemouth.

### **Radstock (Sub 82F)**

2 steam ex-LMS 0-6-0T 47276 and 47544, both 82F.

### **Westbury 83C**

20 steam 19 ex-GWR including 2 Granges and 5 Halls. The Southern region

was represented by withdrawn 35006 'Peninsular & Oriental S.N. Co.' en route to South Wales for scrapping. 5 class 08 350hp diesel shunters, all at their home shed, visiting Hymek D7046 of 82A Bristol (Bath Road) completed the list.

### **Yeovil 83E**

11 steam including ex-GWR 6416 and now preserved 14XX 0-4-2Ts 1441 and 1450. 2 ex-LMS 2-6-2Ts 41285 6C and 41290. 6 BR Standard class locos were also present. Only one diesel, this time Warship D824 'Highflyer' visiting from 83A Newton Abbot.

### **Templecombe 83G**

16 steam BR Standards 75008/72/93, 80059/67. Ex-LMS 2-6-2Ts 41208/14/42/96, ex-GWR locos were 22xx 0-6-0 2217/18, 3200/1/10 all withdrawn plus 4631 and 9670.

Totals for the day: 7 sheds visited. Locomotives seen: 127 steam and 17 diesel.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1965 we travelled northwards for Manchester, Leeds and Doncaster, plus a few other places in-between.

**Newton Heath 9D** 86 steam (9 withdrawn) 12 diesels including Metrovic Co-Bo D5712.

**Agcroft 9J** 19 steam (2 withdrawn) and 2 class 08 350hp shunters.

**Bolton 9K** 51 steam (4 withdrawn) including Jubilee 45596 'Bahamas' and 'Jinty' ('Jocko'?) 47202 ex Horwich works shunter, plus 2 diesel shunters.

**Lostock Hall 10D** 48 steam (8 withdrawn), notable visitor Britannia 70025 'Western Star', 20 Stanier 8Fs, a Brush type 4 (CI 47) and 4 diesel shunters.

**Doncaster 36A** 59 steam (9 withdrawn) 2 2-6-2 V2s, 11 4-6-0 B1s, 8 0-8-0 Q6s, 37 WD 2-8-0s, a 2-10-0 9F and 35 diesels.

**Leeds Holbeck (steam depot) 55A** 34 steam including 7 Jubilees (including now preserved 45593 'Kholapur') and Britannia 70033 'Charles Dickens'.

**Stourton 55B** 21 steam (13 ex LMS, 1 ex LNER 62046 and 4 BR Standard 2-6-0s) plus 3 350hp diesel shunters.

**Royston 55D** 30 steam (2 withdrawn) and 7 350hp diesel shunters.

**Normanton 55E** 17 steam ('Mickey' 45111 visiting from Chester 6A) and 3 diesels (CI40 D346 from York 50A).

**Huddersfield 55G** 14 steam and 1 diesel shunter D2095.

**Leeds Neville Hill 55H** 14 steam including 4 A1s 60118/131/4/154 and preserved ex LNER locos 3442 'The Great Marquess' and 69621.

**Mirfield 56D** 16 steam and 1 diesel shunter.

**Wakefield 56A** 72 steam (9 stored and 3 withdrawn) including 45 WD 2-8-0s and 4 diesels.

**Doncaster Works.** Only 1 steam present, J50 Departmental No 14. 49 diesels

including 6 Deltics and 10 electric locomotives under construction: E3125/3129-3137 inclusive. Statistics for the day: steam 482, diesel 126, electric 10. (78% steam, 22% diesel and electric).

The following year (1966) we hired an almost brand new minibus (DTM143D) with only 2500 miles on the clock for a weekend's unlimited mileage trip to Scotland on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June. On the way we called in on Tebay 12E, Carlisle Kingmoor 12A and Upperby 12B. In Scotland the menu was Dumfries 67E, Ayr 67C, Hurlford 67B, Corkehill 67A, Eastfield 65A, Polmadie 66A, St Rollox 65B, Grangemouth 65F, Stirling 65J, Thornton 62A, Dunfirmline 62C, Perth 63A, Bathgate 64F, Haymarket 64B and St Margarets 64A. Saturday's visits were concluded at 22.00 hrs. The day's tally of engines was 316 steam, the most notable being 15 Britannias (4 at Upperby, 11 at Kingmoor), Clan 72006 'Clan Mackenzie' stored at Kingmoor, 46115 'Scots Guardsman' withdrawn at Kingmoor, 4472 'Flying Scotsman' and withdrawn 60041 'Salmon Trout' at St Margarets. Diesels numbered 292. The balance of steam to diesel being close to 50-50. Steam was just about holding its own in Scotland at this time.

Day two (26<sup>th</sup> June) would see us moving southwards via the North East for home, visiting Tweedmouth 52D, Alnmouth, sub of 52D (no locos present), North and South Blyth 52F. Here the sheds were separated by the river and we had to wait for the ferryman to book on duty at 06.00 hrs before we could make the crossing. At Hughes & B'low we found 64595 (being broken up), Cox & Danks (South Blyth) 3 withdrawn steam locos 61188, 63371 and 65851 (breakers' yards), Sunderland 52G, Tyne Dock 52H, Gateshead 52A (no steam present), Darlington 51A, York 52A, West Hartlepool 51C (and the local bus depot which was clear of its entire fleet!), Thornaby 51L and lastly Doncaster 36A (7 B1 4-6-0s and 19 WD 2-8-0s). The second day's tally was 176 steam and 159 diesels; 56%-44% in favour of steam, only slightly better than the first day. In the two days we saw 492 steam and 451 diesels, a grand total of 943 locomotives.

The minibus was returned to its garage at 22.00 hrs on Sunday. The owner was fairly surprised to see the mileage recorded on the vehicle and nearly exploded when informed that we had been to Perth! A very tiring but successful weekend.

The fourth and final tour (Alan's final steam shed bash) was on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1968. This tour covered most of the remaining steam sheds in the North West. We started at Edge Hill 8A, 21 steam (7 'Mickey's' and 14 Stanier 2-8-0 8Fs) 23 diesels. Warrington (Dallam) 8B, only withdrawn 'Mickey' 45256 and 10 diesels. Speke Junction 8C, 11 'Mickey's', 6 Stanier 8Fs and 7 Standard 2-10-0 9Fs. 38 diesels (including 11 withdrawn shunters). Widnes 8D shed was empty. Northwich 8E, all 12 steam locomotives present were Stanier 8Fs, diesels 12. Springs Branch (Wigan) 8F, 9 withdrawn steam, 5 'Mickey's', 4 Stanier 8Fs and 34 diesels. Sutton Oak 8G, 6

diesels. Birkenhead 8H, 20 diesels. Heaton Mersey 9F, 28 steam (26 withdrawn, 6 'Mickey's', 22 Stanier 8Fs) 2 active 8Fs, 48687 of 8A and 48723 of 9F plus 8 diesels in the new diesel depot. Patricroft 9H, 39 steam (16 withdrawn, 5 Stanier 8Fs, 10 Standard C15s 73xxx and a 9F). Active steam was 4 'Mickey's', 10 Stanier 8Fs and 9 Standard C15s. There were 10 diesels present. Stockport 9B, 11 steam were present, only one was active, 48720 of 9F. This was the last BR steam locomotive to leave Stockport shed. 8 diesels and 2 AC electrics were also on shed at 17.05 hrs. Newton Heath 9D, 39 steam were on shed, only 6 were withdrawn and out of use. Active were 19 'Mickey's', 12 Stanier 8Fs and 2 Standard 9Fs, 21 diesels. Bolton 9K, 35 steam locos were noted (11 were withdrawn: 4 'Mickey's' and 7 Stanier 8Fs). Remaining steam were 17 'Mickey's' and 7 Stanier 8Fs. Diesels numbered 8. Reddish 9C, 7 diesels and 14 EM1 electrics. And finally: Bury 9M. The only steam was preserved 5596 'Bahamas' which was in the company of 16 stored electric locomotives: 9 Type A AC electrics plus DC electrics EM1 26000 'Tommy' and EM2 27000-27005.

This tour was only weeks away from that fateful day when the last revenue-earning steam hauled train ran on BR metals. Although enthusiasts still tour the country visiting locomotive depots, nothing can compare with shed bashes in search of steam in the '50s and '60s, when it was not unusual to see a thousand locomotives in 24hrs. So ended the 'Glory Years'.

## **FURTHER BRANCH OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN THE 1970s**

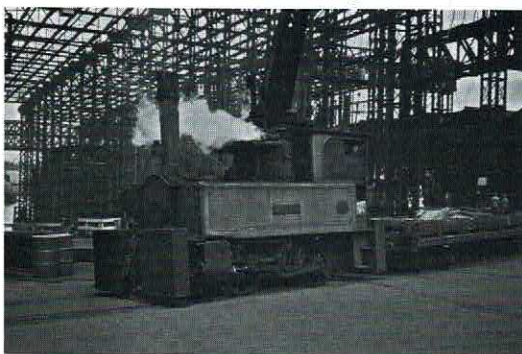
Although steam had finished on BR by now, it was still possible to see steam locomotives in action on many industrial lines throughout Britain, and Bedford LCGB members continued to visit them. Locally, the power station at Goldington retained its steam operation into the 1970s, and several club visits were made to this site where visitors were positively encouraged to take turns with the locomotive's shovel and regulator. Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST No. ED10 was the last loco to depart from Goldington, and it is currently based on the Swindon & Cricklade Railway, 'awaiting restoration'.

Between June 20th and 27th 1970, Derek Robinson took a small group on a tour of the northeast, the main aim being to visit as many steam-operated industrial installations as possible, but not forgetting BR and preserved lines. Much correspondence had taken place prior to departure, and an officer of the infant 'Railway Preservation Society' had written on June 8th with reference to Chasewater: "I am pleased to confirm that members of the R.P.S. will be on site to receive you, and that subject to availability, we are steaming our locomotive 'Asbestos' to take your party on a trip over the line". Such courtesy. How things

have changed in the preservation movement since then!

Another letter from the Lakeside Preservation Society is dated July 8th 1970 referring to a proposed visit to Carnforth MPD on June 20th (!) and also mentions the Lakeside branch. It says: "... You may be interested to learn that subject to contract and the granting of a Light Railway Order, the Holding Company backing the project is concluding a deal with the BR Property Board for the acquisition of the Harworth - Lakeside portion of the Lakeside branch. So, possibly by next summer, you may be able to ride the line".

With Derek on this trip were Stuart Lorney, Alan Ross, Robin Weywell, and five other members who started at Chasewater with the promised trip behind the 0-4-0ST 'Asbestos' along both the branch and the main line. Shugborough came next where an NSR 0-6-2T and ex-LNER 0-4-0 No. 1439 of 1865 were housed along with an 0-6-0 frame and wheel-set from an ex-Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton locomotive of 1865. It was then a quick dash along the M6 to the Sheffield Guest House at Lytham St. Annes where the party stayed the night



'Roker' (RSH 7006/40) at Doxfords, Sunderland. Picture Robin Waywell

for 25/- per head, plus 1/- each for supper, and whilst here, some members took the opportunity to make a quick visit to Lostock Hall MPD. Sunday 21st began with a tour of Lytham Motive Power Museum where ex-LNER Y9 68095 of 1887 was noted amongst a number of standard and narrow gauge types. After another trip along the M6, the party toured Carnforth MPD which at that time housed 'Mickey's' 44767/871/932/5231 and 5407. Also there were 2MT 2-6-0 46441, B1 4-6-0 61306 'Mayflower' and ex-SNCF Pacific 231K22, along with a number of industrials. Travelling northwards via the Hard Knott and Wrynose Passes, the group then enjoyed a trip on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway before driving on to Seascale for the night, but not before some members were able to visit Barrow shed and docks where they found Hawker Siddley HS4000 'Kestrel' awaiting what was thought to be shipment to Russia.

Monday dawned dull and wet, but the tour started in earnest at the Haig Colliery system where two 0-4-0STs (RSH 7049/42 and Peckett 2028/42 'Victoria') were working in Whitehaven Docks at the foot of a precipitous rope incline from

the colliery on the cliffs above. Ladyship Washery was the site of the colliery shed, and 0-6-0STs 'Revenge' (HE 3699/50) and 'Charles' (HC 1778/42) were at work there. At Harrington Colliery, a little to the north of Whitehaven, were 0-6-0T 'Unity' (HC 1587/27) ... it hadn't worked since its arrival ... plus 3 0-6-0STs (VF 5282/45, 5297/45 'Amazon' and HE 3778/52). Further north still, at Solway Colliery, were 0-4-0ST HC 1814/48 'Solway No. 2' and 'Askham Hall' (AE 1772/17), and in Workington Docks the party found 0-4-0ST YE 2585/54 in steam. The rain had stopped by the time Penrith was reached for the night, but an impromptu visit was made during the fine evening to the British Gypsum Crocklades works where three o.o.u. Andrew Barclay saddle tanks were stored.

Tuesday started with a visit to the Kirkby Thore works and more Andrew Barclays. The locomotives were named after former British Gypsum directors, and it was later noted that four of those seen ... 'John Howe' (AB 1147/08), 'J.N. Derbyshire' (AB 1909/29), 'W.T.T.' (AB 2134/42) and 'Ken Boagman' (AB 2343/53) ... moved to Carnforth for preservation that October.

For the rest of the week the group embarked on a long series of visits to N.C.B. and other industrial sites in this part of England, among them being Philadelphia where four locos were stored pending preservation, and Sunderland Docks where crane tank 'Roker' was the only one in use due to an industrial dispute. 'Southwick', 'Hendon' and 'General' were all noted, dead, with 'Millfield' and 'Pallion' under repair. Seaham Harbour was a particular disappointment though as 'Lewin' had been dismantled and was in a very sorry state.

The week ended with visits to the two main preservation centres in the area: the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway and the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. By great good fortune, the latter was holding an Open Day, and the party was able to enjoy live steam action in the form of Q6 0-8-0 63395, 0-6-0T No. 29, 0-6-0ST 'Salmon' and 0-4-0ST 'Mirvale'.

The tour to Scotland (26<sup>th</sup> June - 4<sup>th</sup> July 1971) had only two Bedford Branch members in the party of 11, the late Derek Robinson and Stuart Lorney. It covered a large area of Scotland and even included a day trip on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to the I.O.M. via the ferry from Troon. Other notable places visited were: Alsager Museum, Falkirk SRPS, Lochty (home for 60009 'Union of South Africa' at that time), British Steel Clydebank Works, Glasgow Central Signal Box (Wed 20<sup>th</sup> evening visit), a number of NCB sites in both the north and south Scottish Coal Board areas and what must have been a most memorable visit to Andrew Barclay & Sons, Kilmarnock at 16.00 hrs on Thurs 1<sup>st</sup> July. Although steam was not present, the party visited the drawing office and was allowed to view a number of steam locomotive drawings. A very tired but satisfied party returned home on the 4<sup>th</sup> July after what was obviously an extremely enjoyable tour. Ah, happy days.



During the LCGB tour of the northeast 'W.T.T.' (AB 2134/42) shunts wagons in the British Gypsum Works at Kirkby Thore on Tuesday 23rd June 1970. Photograph Robin Waywell.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was in a moment of madness that I suggested that the Branch should publish a booklet to commemorate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With past and present members' memories and photographs combined with the Branch's records, it should be a doddle. How wrong and naïve could one be? Now, some months later, and with more than a little help from my friends, especially David Eatwell, the idea has at last become reality. My thanks go to David for his advice, correcting most of my grammatical errors, proof reading and photographs; to Peter Butler, Fred Cockman, Richard Crane, Daniel Cross, Ken Dickens, John Dolamore, Arthur Goldsmith, Alan Ledwick, Jack Turner and Robin Waywell for their notes, memories and photographs; to Douglas Rounthwaite for giving me access to his father, the late Tom Rounthwaite's photographs; to Colin Stone and Mark Davies for their computing skills and finally to my wife Toni and my family for their forbearance during the last few months.

Bryan Cross, Chairman.

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Front cover: The Branch's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dining train on the Nene Valley Rly, 11th July 1983. Picture David Eatwell.

Back cover: The RCTS and Bedford Branch's joint special train on the L.B.N.G Rly with 'ELF' at Stonehenge on Wednesday 22nd of July 1998. Picture Bryan Cross.



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