



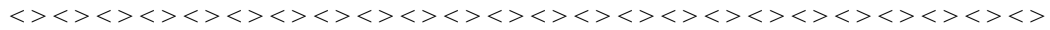
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WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

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Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter.
Your contributions for future editions are welcome;
please contact the editor, Steve Page
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The Mayor of Wells, Alison Gibson, on behalf of the Fraternity, handing our cheque for £700 to David Maidment, founder of the Railway Children Charity, at the Railwells Exhibition.

34092 – THE CITY OF WELLS STORY

by John Sagar

13 September

Our first meeting of the season took place on the 13th September, when we welcomed Dr John Sagar from Bury. His subject was '34092 - The *City of Wells* Story' and, as he had been closely involved with the restoration and operation of the locomotive over many years, we looked forward to learning more about its exploits - and we were not disappointed.

John began with an illustrated outline of the locomotive's history. One of the 'West Country' Class 4-6-2s, designed by O.V.S. Bulleid for the Southern Railway, No.34092 was not completed until after Nationalisation, leaving Brighton Works in September 1949. The earliest photograph he had traced was of the brand-new 'Pacific' on a train near Folkestone, with its nameplates boarded over pending its formal naming as *WELLS* in our City on the 25th November 1949. Despite its name, however, No.34092 was allocated for the first dozen years of its existence at Stewarts Lane shed in London and worked on the Kent Coast lines, frequently hauling the prestigious 'Golden Arrow' express. Following representations from the city whose name it bore, the engine was renamed *CITY OF WELLS*, without ceremony at Stewarts Lane in March 1950. It was used on several special trains conveying visiting heads of state from Dover to London, including those for the Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin in April 1956 and King Feisal II of Iraq three months later.

In the summer of 1961 No.34092 was transferred to Salisbury and worked until the end of Southern Region steam mainly on the South Western main line - and was rumoured to have reached 114 mph on one occasion ! The locomotive received a Heavy Intermediate overhaul in 1962 and its original 5500 gallon tender was replaced with a 4500 gallon one, but was to be withdrawn from service in 1964, having run some 510,000 miles in BR service. A period of seven years in the Barry scrapyards followed before *City of Wells* was purchased by Richard Greenwood in July 1971.

Restoration followed and from April 1980 the loco was based on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway in Yorkshire and late in the following year began to work main line specials, including the 'Cumbrian Coast Express' and the 'Scarborough Spa Express'. In 1986 a Giesl ejector was fitted, resulting in an improvement in fuel efficiency. We were shown a photograph of its Austrian inventor riding on the engine during trials.

In 1989 *City of Wells* was taken out of service and a further heavy overhaul and restoration was commenced at Haworth - a task that was to take some 25 years to complete. The loco finally re-entered service on the K&WVR in 2015 and, after visits to the Llangollen Railway and the Gloucestershire-Warwickshire Railway, went on to the East Lancashire Railway at Bury. Here a formal renaming by the Fraternity's chairman, Colin Price, took place on the 25th November 2015, the 66th anniversary of the original naming at Wells. Meanwhile new weight restrictions on roads in the vicinity of Haworth were frustrating a return to the K&WVR and it seemed that *City of Wells* was destined to remain at Bury for the time-being.

After the break, we were treated to various sound recordings of No.34092 in action and a couple of films, one made by Richard Greenwood in the 1980s and the other, made by BR, of a run by *City of Wells* over the South Western main line from Templecombe to Yeovil Junction, under special arrangements whereby the locomotive was filmed from a diesel-hauled train running on the adjacent Up line which is signalled for two-way running.

A vote of thanks was given to John by our Chairman, Colin Price, for a truly entertaining and informative evening.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY, WELLS TOWN HALL

by Andrew Tucker

Saturday 10 September

For the last seven years the Fraternity has had a stand at the Heritage Open Day at Wells Town Hall. The open days are held on the second weekend of September each year and give free access to historic buildings and other places of interest, often with the opportunity to go 'behind the scenes' to areas not normally open to the public. They are coordinated nationally by English Heritage and the local organiser is Dr Julia Wood, the archivist for the City Council and Wells and Mendip Museum.

This year we had a larger than usual display in the Parkes Room using the 'Railways of Wells' and '34092 CITY OF WELLS' photographs and other items that were put together in August for Railwells. We shared the room with other displays about Crime and Punishment in Wells and the Wells Charter Fairs. Other organisations had stands in the main hall, and the Mayor's Parlour was open to the public.

The one day event this year was much busier than in previous years with a remarkable 585 visitors. There was a lot of interest in the railway history and we sold eight maps and one framed print of 34092. Elsewhere in the city Open Day events were held at the Cathedral, the Old Deanery and Almshouses.

DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY TIME THE DAY WE WENT TO BURNHAM

by Andrew Tucker

17 September

On Saturday 17 September a group of 19 Fraternity members and friends were joined by a few other passengers on the Somerset & Dorset Railway Branch Tour organised by Derek Gawn of Mendip Mule Motorbus. After complimentary coffee and biscuits at the Natterjack Inn (formerly the Railway Hotel) at Evercreech Junction we boarded Derek's 1980 Bristol VR open top double decker.

To start our journey down the branch properly, Derek drove us through the adjacent industrial estate that now occupies the site of the station. We were able to go up to the point where the Somerset & Dorset Railway's Bath Extension veered sharply right away from the original Somerset Central's line to Glastonbury. With the land now taken over again for agriculture we had to return to the A371 to continue our tour. Turning off down the lane to Pylle we came to Elbow Corner crossing where the crossing keeper's cottage and a pair of gate posts survive. A little further on we made our first stop at the former Pylle station. This is actually just off the A37 at Street-on-the-Fosse and we were able to walk down to the site to view the outside of the station building which is now in residential use. A neighbouring home is the former station master's house which was unusually incorporated into the goods shed.

Travelling on via the A361 through Pilton we turned into the Pop Festival site and up to Steanbow's dairy unit to drive a short way along the trackbed of the branch. It was interesting to see the land after the Festival has been packed away and we also had a short walk up Pylle bank, the 1:100 incline that brought the railway up from the Levels.

DAYTRIP TO BURNHAM - continued

Heading on towards Glastonbury we paused briefly at what was West Pennard station before skirting around the east and north sides of Glastonbury Tor to Tin Bridge. This is where the line from Evercreech was joined by the Wells Branch and they continued side by side to Glastonbury station. We diverted briefly along the A39 to view what remains of the only intermediate station on the line to Wells at Polsham.

Going into Glastonbury the modern relief road follows the line of the former railway for much of the way. At the south end we turned into the town to see the former station canopy that has been re-erected in a car park as a cover for market traders. Little remains at the station site itself. We pulled into Avalon Coaches premises where the former railway engineers' office still exists and in John Snow's timber yard nearby there is a building that was used as the Somerset Central Railway's offices. Setting off across the levels we saw the former railway bridge across the River Brue known as the Aqueduct. After visiting Sharpam crossing we arrived at the site of the former Ashcott and Meare station. Almost nothing remains of the old station but fortunately the Railway Inn survives and we stopped here, in very traditional surroundings, for lunch.

Suitably fortified we continued our zigzag journey across the moor with Derek taking the bus on what seemed to be ridiculously inadequate roads to follow the course of the old railway as closely as possible. We saw the sites of Shapwick station, Catcott crossing, Edington station, Huntspill crossing and Bason Bridge station. Arriving at Highbridge we were taken to where the railway works used to be (now an industrial estate) and the former S&D station (now a housing estate) before going on to Burnham-on-Sea. Although there is little to be seen of the branch terminus the railway is remembered with a replica station sign and a recently erected set of buffer stops. The S&D jetty also remains as a reminder of the hoped for cross channel traffic from Wales.

After a short break we travelled on to Bridgwater via the former Great Western (originally Bristol and Exeter) station at Highbridge which is still in use for passenger trains. Throughout the journey Derek Gawn provided a running commentary via the PA system on the bus. Going in to Bridgwater he explained the quite complicated network of lines in the town that served the docks and wharves as well as local industry. We turned into a site now used by the Bridgwater carnival clubs to build their floats. The GW main line forms the eastern boundary and parts of the old embankment, where the branch from Edington crossed over, could be seen. Touring around this part of the town Derek pointed out the site of the former terminus, latterly known as Bridgwater North, which is now a supermarket car park.

Leaving Bridgwater we headed along the A39 to Bawdrip. Little remains of the Halt built here in the 1920s but a nearby masonry bridge that carried the line over the road is in remarkably good condition. Our final stop was at Cossington where the former station building and station master's house are now both dwellings. The owners of the station building kindly allowed us into their garden to see the platform side of the building and the trackbed. This was a suitable end to a great day out.

Derek went to a lot of trouble to pick out the remaining fragments of railway infrastructure. We were blessed with a fine autumn day and the upper deck of the bus provided an ideal mobile viewing gallery. Of course it was something of a surprise to many locals to see an open top bus passing by and in some places we found that we were the ones being photographed!

40 YEARS OF HSTs ON THE GREAT WESTERN MAIN LINE

by Roy Kethro

11 October

Our speaker on the 11th October was our Hon. Treasurer, Roy Kethro, whose subject was '40 Years of HSTs on the Great Western Main Line'.

Roy joined the Western Region of British Railways as an engineering apprentice in 1970 and, during his 43-year career, was involved in the engineering, commercial and operations departments. Upon privatisation, he remained with the railway, taking advantage of the Great Western Trains staff buy-out and the subsequent purchase of the franchise by First Great Western. Roy retired in 2012 as Area Operations Manager based at Bristol Temple Meads.

Roy's early responsibilities included work on the maintenance of the china clay wagon fleet but in 1976 he was unexpectedly transferred to the new depot being set up at St Philip's Marsh, Bristol, for the maintenance of the new high speed trains then being introduced. His manager there was Peter Newton Sales, to whose memory Roy wished to dedicate this evening's presentation. He paid tribute to his former chief and expressed his pleasure that five members of Peter's family were present as his guests.

As an introduction to his illustrated talk, Roy briefly reviewed passenger trains on the Western Region immediately prior to the high speed era. The transition from steam, first to diesel-hydraulic and then diesel-electric traction had taken place and steam heated coaching stock was being replaced with air-conditioned and electrically heated vehicles. Traditional locomotive operation, however, was labour intensive and becoming more expensive. The first taste of the future came with the 'Blue Pullman' diesel-electric trains with a powered driving vehicle at each end - avoiding the necessity of the running-round of locomotives. BR then experimented with the Advanced Passenger Train but various technical complications unfortunately led to the postponement and eventual abandonment of the project with only a half dozen production trains being completed.

Derby was then instructed to proceed as quickly as possible with a 'stop gap' high speed diesel train relying on more proven technology. The prototype HSDT No.252 001 proved highly successful and soon set a new speed record of 143 mph. Not unexpectedly the trade unions objected to the proposal for single manning in the cab but a compromise was reached and the production of a fleet of High Speed Trains commenced. The first batch of 27 units was allocated to the Western Region for London - Bristol and South Wales services. The trains initially were composed of seven Mark III trailer cars sandwiched between two power cars, each having a 2,200 hp Paxman engine and electric transmission. The fleet was introduced during the summer of 1976 with running at the maximum speed of 125 mph being authorised from October, following the completion of an extensive track renewal and improvement programme. Beyond Bristol, the HSTs were - and still are - restricted to 110 mph. They proved an immediate success and heralded a sustained increase in passenger numbers.

In addition to St Philip's Marsh, maintenance depots were established at Old Oak common, Laira (where heavy overhauls were undertaken), Landore and Penzance. Comparatively few problems were encountered with the new trains and the stylish fibre-glass cab unit proved to be extremely strong when power cars were involved in the inevitable collisions and other mishaps. One problem concerned an unpleasant smell which permeated through the passenger accommodation when heavy braking took place. After several remedies had proved unsuccessful, the problem was solved by the simple resiting of the position of the air intake away from the bogies.

Roy entertained us with the tale of his experience with power car No.43020, which at one time suffered so many failures for no apparent reason that it gained the nickname 'Damien'. Finally, Roy had the fuel tanks drained and climbed into them himself, only to find that a 'Mother's Pride' plastic bag containing sandwiches had been fouling the fuel outlet !

In due course, the replacement of the original Paxman engines became necessary and, after trials with four power cars being re-equipped with Mirrlees power units, all the remaining Great Western trains received new MTU engines, resulting in improvements to fuel and operational efficiency.

Nationally, a total of 98 HSTs were built and, having regard to the many millions of miles run over the past 40 years, they had a good safety record. Roy went into some detail, however, regarding the seven accidents on GW lines during the 1990s, and also referred to the 'Operation Dragon' exercise with the emergency services which had simulated the evacuation of an HST after a supposed incident in the Severn Tunnel.

Roy reminded us that a large proportion of the power cars received names over the years, inspired by a incredible number of themes. In recent years, a number had been repainted in various advertising and promotional liveries whereas the main fleet had seen a wide range of 'standard' colour schemes. Since privatisation, the GW fleet alone had received six changes in livery !

In conclusion Roy showed a selection of photos of the recent St Philip's Marsh Open Day when HSTs in the distinctive liveries of all except one of the current franchises operating the trains. Also on show were the HST power car named after the Wells celebrity *Harry Patch* and painted in a striking livery commemorating the veterans of the First World War, and the converted HST which now served as the Network Rail Measurement Train - painted in all-over yellow. During the event, the very first production power car No.43002, restored to its original 1976 livery, was named *Sir Kenneth Grange* after the industrial designer responsible for styling the HST, which, with its distinctive front end, had scarcely dated over four decades. It was no exaggeration to claim that the HST had transformed passenger travel in much of Britain and its replacement with new electric and bi-modal trains would be watched with interest.

A vote of thanks was given to Roy by Andrew Tucker for a most comprehensive and fascinating account, excellently illustrated, covering an important period in our local railway history.

VISIT TO THE TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT BOOKSHOP

By Andrew Tucker

11 November

Ten members made their way to Bath for this 'out of hours' visit. As usual the bookshop owner, Simon Castens, made us very welcome with cups of tea/coffee and biscuits. There was a lot of chatter between the browsing of the well-stocked shelves and some significant purchases were made.

Of particular interest was a new book from Wild Swan (an imprint now run by Simon Castens). In *Memories of the Withered Arm* Peter Barnfield recalls his travels around the far west of BRs Southern Region between 1958 and 1962. It makes fascinating reading and the book is illustrated with excellent photographs that Peter took at the time.

After a very enjoyable evening we agreed that the Fraternity should continue its biennial visits to the Titfield Thunderbolt bookshop.

40 YEARS OF HIGH SPEED TRAINS ON THE G W MAIN LINE

– a Postscript

by Roy Kethro

When I first came up with the idea of this talk I thought long and hard about which of my old colleagues from the railway industry would be able to put it together. A few names came into the frame but they were principally engineers who had limited experience of the operational and commercial issues surrounding this iconic train. It was an old manager of mine who suggested that I do it myself as he thought I had a good breadth and depth of knowledge acquired in different roles over many years. I found it hard to disagree so it was with some trepidation that I embarked on what was to be my first full two hour presentation.

The whole project took nine months to put together with a lot of arm twisting to obtain suitable photographic material to supplement my own meagre collection. I certainly regret not carrying a camera with me for much of my career. In fact over the past year I had to make several trips to Temple Meads to fill in some of the gaps which emerged. A few months ago while browsing a second hand bookstall at a model railway show I came across a copy of a book entitled 'Two Miles a Minute' by local historian Oswald Nock. Despite my own extensive experience working around HST's, this book gave me a lot of information regarding the philosophy behind the train and its early performance so it was £3 well spent.

There is an enormous amount of additional material which I would like to have included. Much of this will never have been officially recorded anywhere and will be totally lost with the passage of time. To quote but a few examples:- Most of the HST sets had a British Telecom payphone booth installed in a luggage rack area in one of the first class coaches. The phones did not accept cash but phone cards were sold from the buffet car. We had a dedicated number to ring for reporting faults to their engineers in London. As well as giving them details of the fault we also had to state the times when the set would be at Paddington. This often gave them a window of less than half an hour to work their magic and on odd occasions they ended up at Reading. The whole project slowly withered as mobile phone ownership grew.

One of the restaurant cars was fitted with a Coca-Cola vending machine for a while. It was removed following reports of rough riding and banging from the bogie area as the extra weight caused the suspension to bottom out.

In 2007 I was privileged to take part in the Three Peaks Challenge by Rail in aid of our adopted charity Railway Children. To raise additional sponsorship money during the build-up phase, pairs of us would travel up to Reading and join evening peak down HST services. Following a quick announcement over the public address we would move down through the well filled trains rattling our collection buckets. The generosity of passengers never failed to impress with each trip raising something like £200 - £300.

As part of our fundraising for Three Peaks a HST was chartered for a special run from Westbury to Bristol then through to Minehead on the West Somerset Railway. The driver and train manager of the 'Mendip Marauder' volunteered their time for free. The sale of tickets and on-board catering added a few thousand more to our total. (That year the 48 teams from across the railway industry raised £220,000 for Railway Children).

HST POSTSCRIPT - continued

On September 5th 1997 a HST set was stabled overnight in platform 1 at Paddington. It was made available for people to sleep on but with the toilets locked out of use to prevent the track underneath turning into an open sewer. It had been anticipated that accommodation in the capital would be at a premium on that date as the following day the nation bade farewell to its favourite princess as she was taken from St Paul's Cathedral to her final resting place at Althorp.

My next project will be a talk entitled '24 Hours in the Life of Temple Meads' but don't hold your breath as it isn't even a work in progress as yet.

2016 - 2017 PROGRAMME

All meetings are on Tuesday evenings, commencing at 7.30, in Wells Town Hall.

13 December	AGM <i>followed by</i> Quiz – set by last year's winner	Jim Allwood
10 January	The Strawberry Line – Past, Present and Future	Lois Brenchley
	<i>followed by</i> Steam and Diesel	Paul Burdett
14 February	Bristol Buses	Mike Walker
14 March	The Class 59s and Mendip Stone	John Barlow & Robin Jacobs
11 April	1960s BR Steam Miscellany	Michael Clemens
9 May	Swindon Works part III	Brian Arman

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome the following who have recently joined:

Richard Blunden (Leigh-on-Mendip)	Arthur Feltham (Shepton Mallet)
David Lane (Glastonbury)	John Traynor (Morden, Surrey)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder from our Membership Secretary, Roy Kethro, that subscriptions are now £18 per year, and are now due for the forthcoming season. Anyone who has not yet paid him can do so at any of our meetings.

AND FINALLY :

Did you know that the first railway tunnel to be used for passenger traffic was the Tyler Hill Tunnel on the Canterbury & Whitstable Railway, opened on 4 May 1830. It was 828 yards long. Passenger services ended on 1 January 1931 and the line closed completely on 1 December 1952.