

WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.197 - April 2020

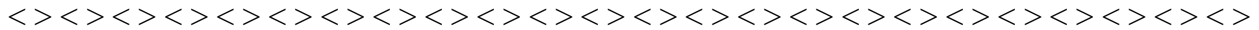
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Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter.

Your contributions for future editions are welcome;

please contact the editor, Steve Page

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“Arun Quay” was one of the layouts booked to appear at Railwells.

WELCOME - to this, the largest edition of the WRF Newsletter so far. With so many of our events being cancelled due to the coronavirus situation, we hope that this extended newsletter will help make up for the lack of other activities. Thank you to all who have contributed. Now is the time to for you, yes *you*, to write something to share with everyone in the next newsletter!

**THE HORSES THAT MADE THE RAILWAYS – by David Mace, and
SARA AND BEYOND – by Colin Price** **Tuesday 14 January**

On our first evening in the New Year, on the 14th January, we had two talks by Fraternity members.

During the first half of the meeting, **David Mace** spoke about his researches, mainly via the Internet, on the subject of '**The Horses that made the Railways**'. By way of introduction, he began with a photograph, taken in 1878, of 'The Mint', as the GWR stables at Paddington were known; this building housed some 600 horses, out of the 1,000 the Company owned in the London area. It was extended in 1910 and was a 2-storey building with 140 horses being accommodated on the upper floor. The Mint lasted until 1950 and the site is now part of St.Mary's Hospital.

Horses, of course, had been used on the primitive waggonways and tramroads in the earliest years and the transport of horses back to the foot of an incline in specially-built 'dandy carts' was often a noted feature. With the advent of railways proper, the use of horses for cartage of goods from and to stations was a natural development. In some cases this was undertaken by common carriers or contractors but most railways preferred to have their own horses for this purpose. Stables were established at stations depending on their catchment areas - for example, Weston-super-Mare had a stable accommodating 20 horses.

Horses for railway use were generally purchased at the age of 5 years and would be used for about five years before being sold on for other, lighter, work. The main breeds favoured were Shires, Suffolk Punches and Bays., with Clydesdales being favoured for shunting work. They were regarded as a valuable capital asset and were well cared for with companies employing their own full-time vets and farriers. Horses were given a two-week annual holiday and, with the large companies, there was a substantial associated infrastructure. The GWR, for instance, had convalescent stables and even a horse sanitorium, whilst the 4-storey provender store, built at Didcot in 1884, contained bedding and feed with a barn holding up to 300 tons of hay. Delivery vehicles were known as 'cars' and were hauled by one, two or four horses according to size and load. Some horses were used for the haulage of wagons over short branch lines or in yards, as well as for shunting; horse shunting was often preferred at stations serving race courses where the gentle movement of rail horse-boxes was important. It was said that the load of the standard 4-wheel mineral wagon was fixed at 16 tons as this was regarded as the maximum that a single horse could be expected to haul or shunt.

The number of railway horses in Britain reached a peak of 27,826 in 1913 but the First World War took its toll with many horses requisitioned for military use. At Grouping in 1923 the number had dropped by several thousand and, on Nationalisation to 8,793. This was very much due to the introduction of internal-combustion vehicles, notably the 3-wheeled Mechanical Horse. The decline accelerated in the post-war years and BR's very last railway horse, *Charlie*, was retired from Newmarket station on 21st February 1967 and, as a matter of local interest, spent his retirement at Clare Hall, Ston Easton. In 1954 a society had been founded to rescue redundant railway horses and find new homes for them.

SARA AND BEYOND

The second talk was given by our Chairman, **Colin Price** and was entitled '**SARA and Beyond**'. Colin began by reminding us that the GWR line from Bristol to Frome via Radstock had been closed to passengers in 1959. The line was later also closed to freight traffic and the track was lifted north of Radstock in 1968, although the section between Frome and Radstock was reinstated in that year to provide an outlet for coal from Writhlington and Kilmersdon collieries (until 1973), and to serve the Marcroft Wagon Works, situated in an old forge in the latter town. When these works closed, 20 years later, in 1988, a society, the Somerset and Avon Railway Association (SARA) was formed in an attempt to preserve the line. SARA established its headquarters at the old engine shed in Radstock and also had the use of the small stationer's shop near the level crossing. The Association was soon afterwards converted into a limited company. Several locomotives arrived at Radstock, the first being a Thomas Hill 0-4-0DH (delivered initially to Mells Road), followed by a Yorkshire Engine Co, 'Janus' shunter from the nearby Foster Yeoman quarry. A Polish ('USA' type) 0-6-0ST was also at Radstock for a while before moving on the Dean Forest Railway. SARA held several 'Open Days' using GWR 0-6-0PT No.9681 on loan from the Dean Forest line and *Pectin*, the Peckett 0-4-0ST from the Yeovil Railway Centre.

Colin told us that he joined SARA in April 1996 and became a shareholder in the limited company to the tune of 35 shares! He became involved in the restoration of an ex-LSWR carriage, found in use as a 'summer palace' at Priddy. This 6-wheel vehicle dated from 1881 and had been withdrawn from regular railway service in 1904. It eventually went to Midsomer Norton where it was used as a temporary second-hand bookshop.

SARA proceeded with plans which envisaged the complete re-opening of the Radstock - Frome line by 2007 but these became frustrated by the long drawn-out process of the local authority (Bath & North East Somerset District Council) in agreeing a Local Plan for the Radstock area. Although some proposals considered, looked favourably on the presence of a preserved railway, it became apparent that BANES were not interested in seeing a revival of the line and wished to use as much railway land in Radstock as possible for housing development. The line has become a Sustrans cycle track between Radstock and Great Elm, although most of the track remains in situ, albeit very overgrown .

Since then, despite the SARA Co. Ltd still remaining in existence, there had been no meaningful developments over the past 15 years or more, apart from the purchase of some items of rolling stock, including a 'Flatrol' wagon (now on the East Somerset Railway at Cranmore) and of an ex-BR Class 117 diesel unit, which had been converted for departmental use as a water cannon (No. 960301) which still remained at Eastleigh Works. The company had been kept in existence by an anonymous supporter over several years who had, on his death, bequeathed some £250,000 to its funds. Colin concluded by commenting that the future of SARA remained a matter for conjecture and was far from clear.

Andrew Tucker thanked both David and Colin for most interesting and well-illustrated talks, one concerning a largely-neglected aspect of railway history and the other dealing with a local preservation scheme which sadly had so far not come to fruition.

THE LT MUSEUM and STEAM ON THE UNDERGROUND

by **Barry Le Jeune**

Tuesday 11 February

On the 11th February our speaker was Mr Barry Le Jeune whose subject was 'The London Transport Museum and Steam on the Underground'. Barry had had a long involvement with London Transport and its Museum and was currently the Chief Executive of the Museum Friends and editor of their quarterly 'News' magazine. He was, however, in the process of retiring from the Home Counties and was making his new home at Templecombe.

By way of introduction, Barry pointed out that, in the London area, an enormous number of buildings and other features of transport interest survived, even if some were no longer fulfilling their original function whereas some 30 Underground stations were listed buildings. Other structures such as the Kingsway Tram Tunnel, the Kings Cross horsebus depot and various tram depots and power stations survived whilst other aspects of public transport such as signage, posters and associated artwork, maps, the original tiling at stations such as Covent Garden all deserved preservation in some way or another.

When London Transport established its Museum, its first home was in the former Clapham Bus Garage whilst, after a few years, it moved to Syon Park in West London before finally being housed from 1980 in the Old Flower Market at Covent Garden. The Museum became and still was a very popular attraction, currently attracting some 400,000 visitors each year. The railway interest was emphasized by the presence of a Metropolitan Railway 4-4-0T No.23, built by Beyer Peacock in the 1860s and two cars of 1938 Tube stock. A story has it that the lorry transporting one of the last named to the new Museum received a parking ticket soon after arrival !

The Museum was of modest size and there was no way that London Transport could put more than a handful of items on display there. One of its predecessors, for instance, the London General Omnibus Co. Ltd had pursued a policy of preserving one example of every type of bus that it had used during its existence. Accordingly, most of the railway and road vehicles in its new collection were put into storage at the former Acton Bus Depot, whilst some were found new homes, such as at the newly created London Bus Museum at Brooklands. The Acton Depot now officially formed part of the London Transport Museum and is opened to the public on three days a year.

The London Transport Museum Friends, a charitable trust, was established in 1982 and now had some 3,150 members, of whom 150 were active volunteers, acting as museum guides and giving support in other ways to the work of the Trust. In addition to arranging visits and events for members, the organisation was active in raising funds to support the work and aspirations of the Museum. Over the past three years the Friends had made grants totalling no less than £400,000 towards various projects. They were currently very much involved in raising funds for the restoration of the last three 'Q' Stock cars, built in the late 1930s and mainly used on the District Line until 1971.

The Museum at Covent Garden featured regular exhibitions on such subjects as 'The Story of Metroland' and 'The Crossrail Project'. It now ran very popular 'Hidden London' tours, visiting such sites as the disused Aldwych station, the former Down Street station (used by Churchill during the Second World War as a secret base, and also by the wartime Railway Executive Committee), the former LT headquarters at 55 Broadway (now being converted into a hotel), the bomb shelters under the platforms of Clapham South station and the never-used station at Highgate, built in 1940.

THE LT MUSEUM - continued

Barry then spoke about the 150th Anniversary celebrations in 2013 of the opening of the Metropolitan Railway. The then Traffic Commissioner for London, Sir Peter Hendy (now Chairman of Network Rail) had surprisingly agreed to the running of a steam train over two weekends along part of the original line, including part of the Circle Line. For this purpose, the ex-Metropolitan 0-4-4T No.1 of 1896 was borrowed from the Buckinghamshire Railway at Quanton Road and a set of coaches from the Bluebell Railway. The train also featured a milk van and the oldest surviving carriage, No.353 of 1887. The latter had many years ago been sold to the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway and was used on that line until its closure. After some years at a military camp, it was bought for preservation and restored to its original 1st Class condition. The runs were very successful without disruption to the normal service. The 150th Anniversary of the District Railway in 2019 was also celebrated with the special train running between Ealing Broadway and High Street, Kensington, also using the Met.Rly electric locomotive No.12 Sarah Siddons as a back-up.

Barry concluded his presentation by pointing out that the Underground network would be gradually equipped with a new digital signalling system in coming years and this would preclude the running of special trains into Central London in the short-term future. This would not only apply to locomotive-hauled specials but also to preserved older Tube and Surface electric stock, which would be incompatible with the new signalling.

A vote of thanks was proposed by John Uncles. He thanked Barry for a fascinating and informative insight into the London Transport Museum, supported by a most comprehensive selection of illustrations.

RAILWELLS

by Chris Challis

Railwells including Scalefour Southwest 2020.

This year's Railwells has been **cancelled**. This was mainly due to the City Council Closing the Town Hall for 12 weeks and I was also informed that this time was likely to be extended. The other reason was that most of the helpers are senior citizens who have all been told to take extra care for 4 months. This would mean that there would only be 3 weeks before the show was due to be held - no good.

As 2 traders have said they would not be attending again, there would have been 3 new traders this year. Also coming would have been the 7mm scale Bridgwater S&DJR layout by Trevor Gibson as it was in 1906. Also again in 7mm scale Stodmarsh by Kevin Cartwright, set in WW2 it portrays Captain Mainwaring's Home Guard. Attending from Holland, Vincent de Bode with his H0 layout De Graafstroom. For those wishing to see these layouts they can be found on the internet.

Let's hope 2021 will be a better year.

**“THE BERLINER” – BRITISH MILITARY TRAIN
and THE ROYAL TRAIN - by Douglas Beazer**

Tuesday 10 March

Our speaker on the 10th March was Mr Douglas Beazer and he entertained us with a double bill with two illustrated talks on very different subjects, one either side of the traditional refreshment break.

The first half of the evening dealt with 'The Berliner' British Military Train and Douglas explained that his interest stemmed from his army career. He had served for 25 years in REME until his retirement in 1988. During that time, he had been posted for some time in Berlin and had been able to travel on 'The Berliner' as it was unofficially called. He reminded us that at the end of the Second World War, the four allied powers decided, at the Potsdam Conference to divide Germany into four occupation zones (British, American, French and Russian); in addition Berlin was also divided into four sectors, despite the fact that the city lay well within the Russian Zone. Under the Potsdam Agreement, however, the three Western allies were guaranteed access to Berlin; a journey from the British Zone - mainly North-West Germany - to Berlin therefore involved a journey of at least 120 miles. The Russians soon closed the border of East Germany with the 'Iron Curtain' and this led to the blockade of Berlin in 1948/49, the population of the three Western Sectors only being saved from starvation by the famous 'Air Lift' using three air corridors to Tempelhof and Tegel airfields in the city. From 1945, however, under the Potsdam Agreement, five military trains had been established to run between Berlin and centres in the three Western Zones. By the mid-1960s, with the greater use of air transport, the American and French trains were withdrawn but the British one continued for several more years. In fact, the train ran every day of the year (except Christmas Day) from 1945 until February 1991.

'The Berliner' was operated by the Royal Corps of Transport, being owned by the British Army, although paid for by the West German government. It was self-contained and used to transport both military and civilian personnel for leave or administrative purposes. The train was sealed whilst running through East Germany with armed guards and, originally, all blinds had to be drawn although this was later relaxed. The westward train left Berlin Charlottenburg station at about 8.30 a.m. and was allowed 2 hours 30 minutes for the run to Braunschweig. Some 5 miles before the border, at Marienborn, the train was stopped for the inspection of documents, etc. by the East German military whilst at the border station at Helmstedt, the East German locomotive (originally a Cl. 52 2-10-0 but later a Russian-style diesel-electric) was exchanged for a West German one - under strict security. At first, the train continued to Hannover but later it was terminated at Braunschweig. The rolling stock was originally in the customary German green but later newer vehicles were blue and cream; all coaches bore a large Union Jack painted below the waist at each end.

Obviously, photographs of the train are quite rare but Douglas managed to illustrate his talk with a selection, mostly from official sources, together with various documents and booklets. He concluded by referring to a celebration held on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway in 2012 marking the 21st anniversary of the final run of the last British Military Train.

THE ROYAL TRAIN

The subject for the second half of the evening was 'The Royal Train', in which Douglas briefly surveyed the history of the vehicles built specifically for the use of the Royal Family. The first royal saloon was that built for Queen Adelaide with the first journey taking place between Nottingham and Leeds in 1840. This vehicle is now included in the splendid collection of royal vehicles on display at the National Railway Museum in York. When at Windsor Castle, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert regularly travelled by train between Slough and Paddington and this made the use of a Royal Train fashionable. This led to competition between the major companies (particularly the GWR and L&NWR) with regard to the degree of luxury their Royal vehicles could offer. In 1869, Queen Victoria paid £800 toward the cost of two new coaches being built for her use and these were the first in the world to incorporate lavatory facilities.

In 1902 new trains were built for the use of King Edward VII whilst King George V's Royal Train of 1915 was the first to include a bathroom. Today's Royal Train comprise nine vehicles, mostly converted from BR Mark 3 coaches from 1977; seven of the coaches are intended for use by HM The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, the other two for the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall - although, with Royal permission, the train may occasionally (but rarely) be used by other VIPs. The train is based at Wolverton and maintained currently by DB Schenker. The train is painted in a distinguished royal claret livery and we also saw several photos of those Class 68 diesel-electric locomotives which also sport that livery, being designated for Royal Train haulage when required.

Douglas illustrated his talk with photographs of several Royal vehicles and, interestingly, with several showing various interior details of the present Royal Train. Finally we saw scenes at Sherborne when the Royal Train visited in 2005.

The Chairman, Colin Price, proposed a vote of thanks to Douglas for a most interesting evening.

A ROYAL VISITOR



This photo was taken in 1993 by Jacky Tucker and shows Her Majesty the Queen arriving at Castle Cary station before travelling on to Wells for the Maundy Thursday service at the Cathedral.

ALL CHANGE

by Andrew Tucker

Although the Coronavirus epidemic was in the news when we met for Douglas Beazer's talk on 10 March, I for one did not think that within a short period of time this disease was going to have such a huge impact on our lives. Within a day or two major sporting events were being cancelled and then over the weekend we were hearing about local organisers and venues taking the Government's advice to avoid social gatherings. After discussing the situation with our Chairman and consulting the committee we sent out the email on 17 March informing members that the Fraternity's April and May meetings had been cancelled. Letters followed to the small number of members who are not on email and everyone was sent a copy of our Programme of Meetings for 2020/21. We subsequently heard that the Town Hall closed on 17 March until further notice.

It was not of course just the two monthly meetings that we had to cancel. The exhibition to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Opening of the Cheddar Valley Railway to Wells on 5 April also had to be called off. The visits to the Bath & West Railway and Pendon Museum later in the month and the proposed outing to the Dean Forest Railway in July are all postponed for the time being.

As far as our Speakers are concerned it was not too difficult to ask Brian Arman if he would present 'To Scotland for Steam – part 2' in May 2021 rather than May this year. However, with Eric Bottomley, who was due to give his presentation 'Railways in Art' on 14 April the best date I could offer him is 14 September 2021! This is of course because our Programme for next season has recently been settled.

ERIC BOTTOMLEY – RAILWAYS IN ART

by Andrew Tucker

Eric was brought up in Oldham and he says that at school art was all he was good at. Having worked for a commercial artist in Manchester, at the age of 25 he moved south to Bournemouth and had his 'big break' when he was commissioned to produce artwork for Graham Farish, the manufacturer of N-gauge model railways. More commissions followed and Eric became a member of the Guild of Railway Artists in 1979.



ERIC BOTTOMLEY - continued

Following an appearance with the Grafar stand at the International Model Railway Exhibition in London in 1984 Eric took to having stands at model railway exhibitions to promote and sell his work with fine art prints, greetings cards and, occasionally, originals. Some of you may remember Eric's stand at the Bristol Model Railway Exhibition and you may even have purchased items of his work. If not a painting or a print you will very likely have bought an exhibition guide. From 1996 to 2014 examples of Eric's paintings were used as the cover illustrations for the Bristol Exhibition guides.

In 2018, at the fiftieth Bristol Exhibition, Eric had a small stand where he was signing his second book. I talked to him about the Fraternity and the special events to mark our 50th year. When we got round to the subject of Speakers for our regular meetings Eric readily agreed to come along and give a presentation. He would bring paintings and prints from his extensive portfolio of work over nearly 45 years as a professional railway artist. There would be no projector and screen – but a man talking about a lifetime's interest. What a shame that we now have to wait over a year for Railways in Art.

CASTLE CARY RAILWAY SOCIETY

- by Andrew Tucker

This Society has been holding regular meetings in the Methodist Church in Castle Cary for a number of years. Their format is similar to ours and indeed some of the Speakers have been the same. Unfortunately, the organisers (Chairman and Treasurer) are not in the best of health and attendances recently have not been good so it has been decided to wind up the Society.

The final AGM with Peter Triggs as the speaker was due to take place on 17 April but with the Coronavirus emergency this must now have been cancelled. We have sent commiserations and copies of our 2020/21 Programme and of course said that any members who would like to come along to our meetings will be made very welcome.

EVENING VISIT TO TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT BOOKSHOP

- by Andrew Tucker

This year we are due to make one of our biennial visits to the Titfield Thunderbolt Bookshop. These usually take place around the end of November and on 9 February I sent an email to the proprietor, Simon Castens, suggesting Thursday 19 November as a possible date. His reply arrived on 1 April agreeing to my proposal provided of course that the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted by then.

Simon also told me that he is currently moving the bookshop from Larkhall to the Tollbridge Studios just off the A4 London Road on the outskirts of Batheaston. He is obviously excited about having more space and looks forward to welcoming us later in the year. More details in the autumn.

NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

This is a relatively new feature for our newsletter. It has been suggested that we include news from other locally based groups with railway connections, so please send in your contributions. This time we take a look at what has been happening on the East Somerset Railway, courtesy of Ian Elliott.

EAST SOMERSET RAILWAY – NEWS DIGEST SPRING 2020

Welcome to our yearly overview of the East Somerset Railway.

But before we look at last year we should look at the most immediate threat to UK Heritage Railways - The Corona Virus Pandemic

All Heritage Railways are closed, just how long this continues we don't know, but we're planning on maybe steaming again in July. But that's very much a guess. The Heritage Railway business is reliant on ticket and event sales, and that's come to a complete halt, which will affect all railways badly.

All Heritage Railways are affected, this also affects our CTMS business, restoring rolling stock and Locos. No railway will commit to capital expenditure until the lockdown ends and the leisure sector is allowed to open again.

We managed to steam for one weekend in mid-March, before realising that we could not run our annual Steam Gala as we were unable to comply with the social distancing requirements of Public Health England. That was followed by the countrywide 'Lockdown' under which we are not classified as an essential business to trade.

Besides that we rely on volunteers to run the railway and half of our Guards are over 70, which meant we only had four guards to roster, and you cannot run a railway with that low staffing level.

SO WE ARE COMPLETELY CLOSED, INCLUDING OUR RESTORATION BUSINESS.

We had a very busy 2019, during the year income exceeded our targets, but passenger numbers were slightly down. Our daytime Dining services have reached capacity, so it is our intention to re-introduce evening dining 'Murder Mystery' Services in 2020, after a break of many years.

We ran 'family' special events throughout the year and this year we are introducing two 'Bring Your Dog' days, a sort of travelling dog show with prizes! We ran our ever popular 'The Way We Were' weekend last year, which was refreshed incorporating a live band and dancing.

This year, as well as building our educational services, which saw 13 schools visit us during 2019, we are introducing 'Dementia Friendly' service days. Becoming a 'Dementia Friendly Organisation' and increasing our Educational services was an integral part of our National Lottery funding award.

The National Lottery award has enabled us to restore our original Ticket Office and Waiting Room on the Up Platform, reinstate the Down platform and rebuild its Waiting Room to a period design.

EAST SOMERSET RAILWAY - continued

To complete our station we also have the opportunity to obtain a platform footbridge, courtesy of Network Rail, which is at St Erth station in Cornwall,. The footbridge will be available later this year. We already have plans drawn up and surveys complete, with a civil engineering scheme planned to install the footbridge, so watch this space!

Permanent Way. We have continued to replace rail and sleepers on the remainder of our track to Mendip Vale, We rebuilt some of the complicated crossings and points at our Steam Sheds and at the entry to the Tanker Sidings. This has completed work started in 2019. The new rail and concrete sleepers should reduce maintenance costs and effort in the future.

Rolling Stock and Motive Power.

For our own rolling stock this last year has seen a major effort to deliver a new kitchen coach for our catering services. The coach incorporates a kitchen, bar and servery, together with two dedicated dining tables capable of taking wheelchair guests so they can dine in the same comfort as our other wine and dine guests.

We have now completed the overhaul of 5239 'Goliath' for the Dartmouth Railway, she has left for Dartmouth after running in with our Xmas Santa Services.

In replacement, again from Dartmouth we are refurbishing a large GWR Prairie 4110, which is expected to take 3 years to complete. After the refurbishment 4110 will stay with us for another 3 years in revenue service.

This year sees our long serving class 56 loco leaving us in late March, we wish her well in her new home. In replacement we are hiring a small GWR Prairie 4555 from Dartmouth Railway for 3 years, whilst the 4110 is in our workshops.

Our Ivatt 46447 continues to run effectively with little maintenance needs.

Cranmore Traincare & Management Services (CTMS) is our commercial carriage and wagon operation. June 2015 saw CTMS achieve 20 years in business. During that time they have overhauled and/or repainted over 100 vehicles, including Mark 1 and Mark 2 coaches, luggage vans, steam and diesel locomotives and a number of historic wagons for both the heritage and charter markets.

During the last year CTMS have carried out work on:

Mendip Traction and Rolling Stock Group DMU unit, The 'Sir Nigel Gresley' support coach,
A TSO for the Bluebell Railway, A first open coach for the Spa Valley Railway,

Sentinel Diesel Preservation Group

This small group was formed in November 2005 to restore recently acquired 0-4-0 Sentinel locomotive 10165 'Joan' but their collection has since expanded. 0-4-0 Sentinel 10199 was kindly donated by Esso Petroleum Ltd, then 0-6-0 Sentinel 10221 by Lafarge Cement UK and Sentinel 10175 DH16 joined the collection from its previous base at the West Somerset Railway in 2015. They also kindly assist the ESR with the maintenance of our Sentinel 10218. The group constructed a two-road shed at Cranmore to house the collection, which was completed in late 2013.



Those of us who went on the Anniversary Year trip to Swanage will remember Ron Bennett who was our host and guide at Herston Works. Although the visit had been arranged well in advance, a sudden increase in workload at Southern Locomotives Limited meant that the key players in the Works were otherwise engaged. Ron was parachuted in at short notice to look after us and I did raise an eyebrow when I was told that he was 91 years young. But what a delightful, charming and knowledgeable individual he turned out to be.

Sadly, Ron passed away in February at the age of 93. He had been a volunteer for almost a quarter of a century, rising through the ranks to chief painter and more importantly chief teaboy. His last day in the Works was just two days before he passed away and I am sure that he is being sorely missed by his fellow workers there.

AWARD FOR SWANAGE RAILWAY

- by Andrew Tucker

At our October 2015 meeting we had a presentation by Mike Walshaw about the project to connect the Swanage Railway to the mainline. Mike is a signalling engineer and he led the team who designed and installed the token block signalling scheme that is now in use for trains running off of the Network Rail tracks at Wareham via Worgret Junction on to the Swanage Railway.

I was pleased to see this photo in the Swanage Railway Magazine of Mike and the SR Trust Secretary, Mark Woolley, receiving the National Railway Heritage Signalling Award from HRH the Princess Anne. Mike tells me that when he was invited to the National Railway Heritage Awards ceremony in London all he knew was that the Swanage Railway was one of three contenders and that he was very surprised when the announcement was made, and the winner is...



MY ABC OF TRAINS - THE RAMBLINGS OF A FORMER LOCO SPOTTER

-by Roy Kethro

Having moved on from my O gauge tinplate train set and my Hornby Dublo 3-rail 'Bristolian' set in my early years, thoughts turned full sized trains resulting in my introduction to trainspotting. The stimulus was having been presented with Ian Allan's Trains Annual and Locospotters Annual for Christmas as well as avidly watching the popular TV series Railway Roundabout.

When I was 9, we ended up in a house which backed out onto the four track Bristol to South Wales main line. While we were out doing the weekly family shop on the first Saturday morning, I managed to pick up a copy of the same publisher's Abc of British Railway Locomotives. It came from a local shop, possibly the newsagents, which only goes to show how popular the hobby was back then. Instinct told me I needed the Western Region edition which also included the Southern Region. It cost 2s/6d. Had we bought a house a mile to the east I would have been better off with the Midland Region version as we would have been close to Fishponds Bank on the Bristol to Birmingham route.

The following morning was fine and sunny so I perched myself at the bottom of the garden studying my new booklet and waited for any sign of movement on the tracks. It was Sunday and it seemed like ages before I heard an approaching movement. It was a Castle 4-6-0 running north light engine on the Up Relief line closest to the garden fence. The smokebox number plate was easily identified as 5050. The nameplate on the splasher was quite a long one and very difficult to read as it flashed by. Reference to my new Abc confirmed it to be named *Earl of St Germans*, a sister loco to *Bristol Castle*, which was the Hornby Dublo model I had with my train set, not yet unpacked following the house move. My difficulty in reading number and nameplates was instrumental in discovering that I had a problem with my eyesight. This led to me wearing glasses constantly from the age of 11.

So having copped my first loco, I encountered my first trainspotting conundrum as in how to record the fact. Somehow I worked out that the done thing was to underline it in my Abc. But how to actually do this? Pen or pencil? Ruler? Underline the name as well as the number? I think I worked it out eventually.

And then another conundrum landed in my lap. A slow freight train growled past with one of those new diesel locos at the head. The number had a 'D' in front of it and I could not find it in my Abc. Somehow these numbers had to be recorded separately until such time that I discovered there was an edition dedicated to diesel and electric traction and, very importantly, there was enough pocket money available to buy a copy. Further problems arose when I started to see locos with 5-digit numbers starting with a 4. More pocket money needed to buy the previously mentioned Midland Region version.

On the Monday following the house move dad took me along to enrol at the local junior school at Bannerman Road. I was put into a class whereby the room was in earshot of the main line about half a mile north of home and quite close to Stapleton Road station. I soon learnt that the routine when a train approached was for a group of lads to stand on their chairs to look out of the high windows with precision timing. This was usually a signal for the girls to go into little groups chattering away with each other. The poor old teacher Mr Lansdowne did his best to restore order but it was frequently a futile effort for a minute or two.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

And then it would happen all over again with monotonous regularity to the frustration of anyone who was actually interested in what was being taught. I'm sure our teacher had more than a passing interest in railways as I spotted him glancing across in the direction of the railway on many occasions with eyebrow raised, especially if it was a special loco like the white Sulzer powered *Lion*. He was quite tall so didn't need to stand on a chair to see over the window sills.

It wasn't long before I was befriended by a group of lads who were avid spotters. Once they learnt that our house backed out onto the line, our garden was never short of visitors in the evenings. The one important thing I learnt from them was not to faff around with all these little books but to invest in the *Abc Combined Volume of Locomotives* covering all regions and types. It just meant I had to save up the princely sum of 10s/6d. and also invest in a copy of the *Locoshed* book listing the shed allocations of all locos, which was a useful accessory.

In March 1963 when I was still aged 9, a gang of us from school ventured from Stapleton Road to Temple Meads by train to see my first Eastern Region loco. It was none other than the famous Gresley A4 pacific no. 60022 *Mallard* on a special working. A memorable day out getting soaked in the rain, having an internal sliding door on a dmu slammed on my thumb, struggling to work out how to get back home as we didn't understand railway timetables and then finding myself stood near the front of the loco in a photo on the front page of the *Bristol Evening Post*. Luckily, I had been up front with my parents as to where I was going that day, otherwise I might have had to protest that I had a double out there somewhere.

Trips to Temple Meads became very regular on Saturdays and I started to learn a lot about railway operations. Our regular little gang were frequently seen congregating with many others at the west end of platform 4 which afforded panoramic views of Bath Road diesel depot. A large notice mounted on a post there dictated that 'Locospotters and members of the public must not pass this point'. There was always the temptation to go beyond it and nip down the ramp onto the end of the barrow crossing to get a better view of a loco which was stabled at too acute an angle to read the number. A few brave souls would chance their arm and see how far they could get before being shouted at. Little could I have known at that time that within around five years I would be an apprentice there and allowed to walk down the ramp, across the crossing and into the depot with impunity.

Something I learnt from my peers was the art of 'cabbing'. As soon as a train came to rest, a small group would descend on the cab area asking the crew if they could step on board. If the outcome was successful you were allowed to put a 'c' against the number in your *Abc*. The first time it happened to me was on a trip to Temple Meads. Two of us watched a Midland 4F 0-6-0 draw a rake of empty stock into the old Brunel train shed. While waiting for the train engine to take the service forward towards the midlands, the crew of the 4F, which had been uncoupled pending running light engine back to shed, actually invited us to climb onto the footplate. They spent quite a time chatting to us while we roasted in front of the open firebox door. I suspect they had a laugh at our expense as we must have had very red faces when we eventually climbed down onto the platform. With rows of withdrawn locos languishing on our sheds, cabbing became quite easy. In later years and with the number of actual locos severely reduced, I understand that the next challenge was to record 'mileage' travelling behind each loco although I don't think it was a general objective in my day.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

During light summer evenings trips to Bristol's Midland shed Barrow Road were commonplace. We used to mess about on the swings and roundabout in what became known to us as Atchley Park. It was directly in front of the concrete coaling stage and we could watch numerous locos coming on shed to be serviced and stabled for the night. We would also attempt to bunk the shed itself by descending the stairs leading from the viaduct over the complex down into the yard. It was usually successful but on the odd occasions that we were slung out there was the option of climbing over the parapet of the bridge round the back in Days Road. That way in was infamous for the brown sticky goo which stained your hands and clothes as you climbed over the wall. It took some creative explaining to your mum when you got home. To this day I don't know if it was a fallout of residue from the gas works next door or did the shedmen put it there as a deterrent?

Around this time, the Western region shed at St Philips Marsh closed and its remaining steam locos transferred to Barrow Road. Panniers, prairie tanks and Halls became stable mates with the remaining London Midland Region 4F's, 8F's, Black 5's, Jubilees and BR Standards, as well as rows of withdrawn locos minus their coupling rods from the Southern Region stabled there while en-route to await the cutter's torch in the South Wales scrapyards.

With such a variety of traction in the Bristol area during the 1960's the Abc Combined Volume was an absolute must have to record your sightings. Steam was rapidly being replaced by the new generations of diesel traction, so the annually published updated version was equally important. Otherwise the inside back cover became inundated with jottings of new locos which were not yet listed. Most of our travels would take us past Max William's model shop, a very short stone's throw from Lawrence Hill station. Max would always display the new edition in the shop window as soon as he received them from the distributors. That was a signal for us to enter the shop and ask if we could browse a copy. We would stand there aghast at how many classes of steam loco had been decimated or disappeared altogether since the previous edition, also checking on the lists of planned new locos which had yet to enter service. Of course, the shrewd amongst us would have put aside the 10s/6d pocket money to invest in a copy straight away. As the years progressed it could take up to a week to transfer all of your cops across from the old book, carefully noting those which were no longer listed. Realising that this would be a recurring problem I came up with the idea of a separate master book listing all locos seen in as far as possible numerical order. A computer would have been very useful back then.

To try and keep up with all the alterations it was necessary to buy one of the monthly railway magazines which listed withdrawals, new locos and reallocations. I didn't consider it necessary to continually update my Combined Volume with all the alterations especially as my neatness with the pen left a bit to be desired. The pages would have started to look a bit messy had I done that. My chosen method of recording cops was a line drawn with the aid of a ruler straight across under number and name. One of my mates who was very neat used to underline the numbers and each word of the name separately and it looked really tidy. With the glossy paper used in my later editions you also had to be careful to avoid smudging which looked very sloppy.

Loco spotting in my case lasted for a little over a decade. During that time main line steam disappeared altogether, firstly on the Western Region and later on the Southern and Midland Regions. I never once made it as far as the Eastern or Scottish Regions during the steam era.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

There were numerous trips to South Wales chasing the last remnants of steam as well as the impressive sounding new English Electric type 3 diesels which rarely ventured through the Severn Tunnel in their early years. Severn Tunnel Junction, Newport and Cardiff were visited by train on numerous occasions, as often as pocket money allowed.

At my grammar school there was a railway society. As well as monthly after school talks, each term a day out was organised with permits to visit loco sheds and main works. We went to locations which not only had I not heard of but would have had no way of reaching on a day trip if travelling under my own steam. We had a trip along the Somerset and Dorset from Highbridge to Templecombe behind an Ivatt 2-6-2 tank then on to Bournemouth including a shed bash there. A repeat visit was made to Bournemouth and included Weymouth, having travelled up to Paddington and across to Vauxhall to pick up the former London and South Western main line. I remember a very slow journey to Paddington during heavy snow, crawling into London one signal at a time while the up Bristol Pullman was allowed to overtake us. That was a trip to Finsbury Park diesel depot, home to many Deltics and Brush type 2's. As steam came close to the end we concentrated on the midlands and north west, taking in depots such as Saltley, Tyseley, Crewe, Stoke, Buxton, Westhouses, Stockport and Patricroft over several terms. We would often arrive at some of the smaller depots to find just one or two locos on site. I remember Stoke shed being such a dirty place that I joked about it not mattering if you took your photos in colour or monochrome, the result would look the same.

With steam gone from the main line the D prefix on diesel locos became redundant so it was gradually removed, leaving just the number of up to four digits. Presumably it was a policy decision by the BR Board. With less and less locos overall, as you held the latest copy of the Combine Volume in your hand it always seemed to be thinner than the preceding one. As Dr Beeching carried out the remit he had been given by the government of the day, railways were in serious decline and locospotting became a bit less interesting as a result.

My railway apprenticeship started a year after main line steam ended. A few years in I was sent away from my home depot of Bristol Bath Road to far flung places like Derby, Doncaster and York. Although basic engineering training was carried out at the once great Swindon Works, it became marginalised as far as actual main works experience for trainees on loco overhaul was concerned. The Western Region non-standard classes of diesel hydraulic locos were being downgraded to secondary duties before being phased out altogether. It made sense for training to concentrate on the diesel electric fleets which would be the mainstay of traction on non-electrified routes for many years into the future. My time at Doncaster was supposed to give me a grounding in the English Electric type 3's and Brush type 2's. But given the opportunity, who wouldn't have taken the chance to play around with the mighty Deltics including witnessing one being taken up to full chat in the test house? I continued locospotting during this period as being so far away from my home turf there were lots new cops to be logged. It was extremely rare for the English Electric type 1's and type 4's and the Sulzer type 2's to venture south of Gloucester but they were plentiful up in Derbyshire and Yorkshire as well as during my occasional foray over to Lancashire at weekends.

On a train journey home to Bristol one weekend I spotted a very strange sight. It was commonplace on passing through Birmingham New Street to see a few of the light blue overhead electric locos numbered in the E3xxx range on Euston to the north services. But on this occasion, if my eyes hadn't deceived me, there was one with a five-digit number and no E prefix.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

I made a note of it and parked it to one side for the time being but over the following weeks I noticed several others in this format. It turned out to be a wholesale reclassification BR's loco fleet with renumbering as a means of introducing the TOPS (Total Operations Processing System) computer package. It was a system which allowed the location and status of each loco to be accessed from a mainframe computer. It became an essential tool for traction controllers.

Renumbering of some classes of loco was fairly straightforward. For example, the Deltics became class 55 with D9001 becoming 55001. In the case of the Brush type 4 fleet which was made up of several sub types it was a lot more complicated. The basic model became the 47/0 whereas the electric train heating fitted version was the 47/4. Later modifications resulted in the 47/7 (Scottish Region push-pull) and 47/8 (Inter City long range fuel tanks) to name but a few. It was probably the most intensive renumbering exercise since the Grouping of railway companies in 1922. Even the renumbering at nationalisation in 1948 was fairly straightforward by comparison, with the Western Region not being affected at all so as not to necessitate removal of the brass cabside number plates. Not all locos survived long enough to receive their new numbers. The Western Region Western class diesel hydraulics became class 52 and while they were briefly referred to as such in official records, they retained their cast D10xx number plates until withdrawal. Similarly, the Hymek diesel hydraulics became class 35 but none were physically renumbered.

I don't remember ever attempting to transfer all of my old records into the new format. It was probably around this time that I ceased going out of my way to record loco numbers. With my daily 'fix' of working in the railway industry I suppose there wasn't much point. There were no prizes for being first past the post in underlining every loco in your Abc, even if you were able to verify the accuracy of your records. One of the older lads we used to congregate with claimed to have seen every steam loco bar one in the then current edition of the Abc. He drove all the way up to Scotland to try and locate his final J37 0-6-0. Was that taking things to extremes?

I once found out that if you were a bit over zealous in insisting that you had seen a particularly rare loco in your part of the world with nobody else able to confirm it, you could become the subject of much derision. It happened one summer evening when I had just returned home from a spotting trip with my mates. As I walked indoors, I heard an unusual steam whistle in the distance and dashed down to the bottom of the garden. I was treated to the sight of a rare Britannia Pacific no. 70054 *Dornoch Firth* heading north at the head of the *City of Birmingham Holiday Express*. Proudly announcing this at school the next day, nobody believed me despite my fervent protestations. It probably wasn't worth falling out over but recently, by pure accident, I actually found a written record confirming what I had seen. The following week I saw the same train with an English Electric type 4 no. D320 whistling away as she accelerated to dig in for the long climb up Filton Bank. A very rare cop indeed for the Bristol area at that time.

At the end of the day, your records were personal to you. You might occasionally compare notes with you mates but apart from the abiding memories of a bygone era, they had no material value. Over the course of time involving a number of house moves, the Abc's appear to have been disposed of. The important cops, like the ones just mentioned are fixed in the memory hopefully never to be forgotten. It isn't necessary for those to be written down. Luckily, many of the books from that era were reprinted in recent years. I did buy copies for nostalgia's sake. If nothing else, they are very useful references to help you complete the *Railway Magazine* crossword when you are stuck for a loco name or an obscure sub-depot.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

The Abc books were more than just the place you recorded your spottings. The contents were very educational, almost encyclopaedic in content. The WR 4-6-0's covered a lot of famous and not so famous buildings such as castles, halls, granges and manors as well as the counties of England and Wales in their catchment area and famous aircraft which had taken part in a recent conflict. Only a few months ago while scanning an Ordnance Survey map of the Gloucestershire area I spotted the name of a hall which I had never come across before. My immediate thought was that it had probably had a loco named after it and I was absolutely correct. Monarchs and other nobility such as earls and duchesses were covered by numerous classes of loco. If anyone asks how many King Georges there have been you would immediately be able to say at least five and if you consulted your Abc you would see that it is actually six following the renaming of King class no.6028. The LMR Jubilees were a very mixed bag of Commonwealth countries, Canadian Provinces, naval commanders and famous sea battles as well as reusing the names of early locomotives. Sport got a look in with locos being named after football clubs and racehorses. Army regiments were widely covered by the Royal Scots and Patriots. The Southern had a different take, naming locos after shipping lines plus towns and cities generally within their sphere of operation. And of course, half of the light pacific fleet paid tribute to the Royal Air Force and the debt owed to it following the Battle of Britain.

It is interesting to me that there was a loco named *245 Squadron*. Research shows that as an RAF squadron it had a very mixed role during its existence, flying a mixture of light bombers and fighter aircraft at home and abroad before finally being disbanded. I would love to have owned one of the nameplates because I actually served in a 245 Squadron during my time as a forces reservist. However, it was by then an army squadron of the Royal Corps of Transport, part of 155 Wessex Regiment covering an area bounded by Bristol, Plymouth and Portsmouth. I served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers workshop attached to the squadron looking after their fleet of Bedford four-tonners. We spent some time in Germany where I took an interest in their remaining steam locos, mainly big black 2-10-0 tender engines with red running gear which looked very impressive working hard at the head of long freight trains. They reminded me a lot of our own BR Standards, austere and functional with the working parts easy to access for maintenance. As part of one of the army's regular reorganisations we were reallocated to 8 Field Force. We were trained to NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) standard and our principal role during a major conflict would have been the collection and disposal of dead bodies. A chillingly poignant thought at the current time.

So what did all those years of spotting and the subsequent years of being a railway enthusiast achieve? The lists of numbers had no material value but the time spent collecting them forged long lasting friendships with like-minded individuals. The camaraderie of sitting together on an old barrow at the end of a cold, damp and windy platform waiting for that special cop was priceless. In between trains we would dig into our duffle bags and haversacks to pull out our Abc's to compare notes while we tucked into the cheese or marmite sandwiches and the fruit pie (the one where you sucked the fruit up through the hole in the middle) which your mum had packed you off with for the day. There was the thrill of successfully outwitting the foreman to bunk a shed with your heart in your mouth while you rapidly jotted down numbers before deciding to chance your arm and do a bit of cabbing, as well as the disappointment at being shouted at and told to clear off. Photographs were taken with great enthusiasm using an old Box Brownie, the results frequently proving to be somewhat disappointing when the prints came back from the chemist.

MY ABC OF TRAINS - continued

While there are still youngsters out there these days who take an interest in steam, sadly they will not enjoy the experience that my generation did. They will never witness the loud clanking noise and distinctive smell of a heavy passenger train working hard to slowly climb the Lickey incline with as many as four pannier tanks pushing equally hard from behind. Nor the sight of the driver on a Bulleid pacific using all his skill and experience to get a heavy Waterloo express away from Bournemouth Central amongst a cacophony of noise, smoke and slipping, or a lowly pannier tank fussing around a goods yard with the sound of clashing buffers as it shunted wagons around. While there are plenty of heritage railways in existence today giving a flavour of what went beforehand, sadly to those of us who experienced it first-hand there is something lacking in the overall atmosphere which can never be recreated – except in our memories of that bygone era and nostalgically browsing through those old Abc's if only they hadn't been disposed of!

CYCLING BY TRAIN – by Colin Price

Cycling by Train, a phrase that really means you can put your bike on the train, varies a lot from company to company. As there are 20 different franchises, facilities can be quite different. Some providers may want to book your bike in at the time you buy your ticket, with some it's hit or miss whether there is room available and some won't carry bikes on certain services at peak times. If you want to use this facility then do your homework and make sure it can do what you want.

My first encounter with cycling by train was in the summer of 2005. I had a free weekend and decided to combine my two interests of cycling and railways. I left home at lunchtime on a Friday and cycled to Taunton where I purchased a Devon and Cornwall 3 in 8 Day Rover. I expect you have spotted that Taunton is neither in Devon or Cornwall but Network Rail didn't seem to know. Some years later someone must have told them as from then it started at Tiverton Parkway. With a Rover I could catch any train after 09.30 so the first trip was on the then Virgin Voyager. The bike compartment was at the front of the train with access to the seating area. In general, the station staff do not want you to be messing around loading and taking too much time, so I got on as quick as possible. Unfortunately, the bike accommodation comprised a series of hooks on which to hang your front wheel. This is not very practical with loaded panniers on the back and they duly fell off. The following journey was on a class 150 two coach unit where the bike shared a space with baby buggies and three fold-down seats. Then onto an Intercity 125 where bikes travel in the former mail area of the power car. Some had racks and straps. When I returned from my Lands End to John O' Groats tour, the train that brought me back from Wick to Inverness was well appointed with racks and straps to keep the bike upright, a facility not available on most trains, which can mean bicycles easily fall over with a bit of swaying. I often wondered what would happen if the bicycle compartment were full before you got on with the appropriate bike ticket. Do they throw the unbooked bikes off? I hope I don't get in that situation.

One of my next adventures was to cycle from the smallest city in Britain, St David's, to the smallest city in England, my home town of Wells. I booked tickets for myself and my bike, most important. From Bristol I caught a DMU to Newport, no trouble, where I had to change for a service for Milford Haven. Getting off at Newport I made my way to the appropriate platform and watched as my connection was shown as running late. Just as the train was about to arrive, they decided to change platforms whereupon everyone ran for the lift. Unfortunately, with my bike, I was the last to get in and arrived on the correct platform to see the train full to bursting and no room for me, let alone a fully loaded bike.

CYCLING BY TRAIN - continued

The guard told me to take it up with station staff which I did. This illustrates how vitally important it is to book the bike on. I was then directed to the next train as far as Cardiff, met by a porter and told to get on the next train to Carmarthen. The ticket collector was expecting me and offered a form to get compensation. On arrival at Carmarthen a taxi was waiting and took me to Haverfordwest, my final destination, at such speed I doubt if I lost any time. I have to say that they could not have done more to help, but only because my bike had a ticket. I never did ask for any compensation.

My latest trip was from Basingstoke to Dover via Waterloo East. Neither journey would take bookings so we had to make sure we got on quickly but, being early in the morning, there was no trouble. Our tour included a trip from Amsterdam to Mastreich. We had looked at prices on-line but when we went to pay there it was double. A quick call on the mobile phone and my son booked it at the original price, same ticket, and same train.

Although the Dutch cycle much more than we do in this country, the accommodation for bikes hardly differed and the train was rough riding. We returned home from Brussels via Eurostar. The bikes had to be booked in first and sent by a courier. Great trip and the collection at the courier's office was efficient. It works well but only on certain timings. This year the arrangement is on hold and like the whole country we do not know what or when. However, when we do get the green light we hope to go somewhere in Europe.

2020 - 2021 PROGRAMME

2020

14 April	Cancelled	
12 May	Cancelled	
8-9 August	Railwells - Cancelled	
8 September	The Midland & South Western Junction Railway	Steph Gillett
13 October	Organising Special Trains in the 1950s	Hugh Davies
10 November	My Life in Transport	Jonathan Jones-Pratt
8 December	A.G.M. <i>followed by</i> Quiz, set by last year's winner, Andrew Ball	

2021

12 January	Developments at Midsomer Norton <i>followed by</i> Big Coal	Roy Kethro & Matt Cornborough Robin Harding
9 February	Freightliner	Speaker to be confirmed by the company
9 March	The Railway Navvy <i>and</i> The Crimea Railway	Chris & Judy Rouse
13 April	The Railways of Portland 1865 - 1965	Brian Jackson
11 May	To Scotland for Steam – Part 2	Brian Arman

All meetings are held at Wells Town Hall, 7.00pm onwards for 7.30 start.

AND FINALLY :

Did you know that the Glasgow Subway, opened in 1896, is the world's third oldest underground metro system, after London Underground and the Budapest Metro. It is the only metro system never to have expanded from its original route. At its deepest point it is 155 feet below the surface, and only seven feet below at its shallowest. Nowadays it takes just 24 minutes to complete a circuit of its 15 stations.