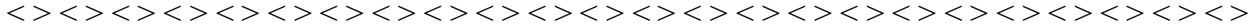




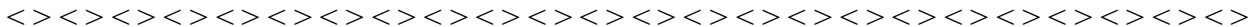
WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

Newsletter No.215 - April 2026

www.railwells.com



Andrew Tucker and Colin Price at the Fraternity stand at the Community Day in Wells Cathedral on 17 January. More information on page 2.



2025 QUIZ

Compiled by last year's winner, Jim Allwood, whose decisions regarding the answers are final!

Four possible answers are given for each question. Choose the one which you think is correct and write the appropriate letter in the box

HISTORICAL

Q1 In which town or city is George Jackson Churchward buried?
(a) Stoke Gabriel (b) Crewe (c) Swindon (d) London

Q2 Which steam locomotive officially became the first to reach 100 miles an hour?
(a) City of Truro (b) Flying Scotsman (c) Mallard (d) Rocket

Q3 Which is Britain's worst railway disaster (in terms of lives lost) ever?
(a) Lewisham (b) Quintinshill (c) Abermule (d) Harrow & Wealdstone

Q4 In which year was the London & Birmingham Railway from Euston to Curzon Street fully opened?
(a) 1841 (b) 1838 (c) 1836 (d) 1840

Q5 The short story "The Signalman" was partly derived from whose personal experiences of the 1865 Staplehurst rail crash?
(a) Queen Victoria (b) Benjamin Disraeli (c) Charles Dickens (d) Enid Blyton

TOPICAL

Q6 The BBC Documentary "Great British Railway Journeys" often refers to an 1840's copy of which guide?
(a) Bradshaw (b) Collins (c) TV Times (d) Wisden

Q7 The photo below (by Alex Dasi-Sutton) shows Class 99s at Tonbridge in late October. What type of loco are they?



- (a) Electric (b) Electric and Diesel (c) Battery (d) Diesel

Q8 Which is the next TOC to be absorbed into Great British Railways (on 1/2/26)?

- (a) Chiltern (b) West Midlands (c) Greater Anglia (d) Great Western

Q9 Who is the current Secretary of State for Transport?

- (a) Rachel Reeves (b) Kier Starmer (c) Michael Portillo (d) Heidi Alexander

Q10 What is the name of the locomotive featured in the picture below?



- (a) Rocket (b) Flying Scotsman (c) Locomotion (d) Coronation

LOCAL INTEREST

Q11 On what date did the last train run between Taunton and Yeovil?

(a) 1 Jan 1963 (b) 25 Dec 1964 (c) 13 Jun 1964 (d) 5 Mar 1965

Q12 Which two S&D 7F 2-8-0s are preserved? (1/2 point for each)

(a) 53808 (b) 53800 (c) 53802 (d) 53809

Q13 Which was the first railway company to reach Wells?

(a) GWR (b) S&DJR (c) Bristol & Exeter (d) Somerset Central

Q14 The "Night Riviera" sleeper train, one of only two sleeper services in the UK, runs six nights a week between London and which town?

(a) Bristol (b) Penzance (c) Fishguard (d) Plymouth

Q15 Until recently, the UK's longest direct rail service ran between which two locations? (1/2 point each)

(a) Aberdeen (b) Edinburgh (c) Penzance (d) Exeter

TECHNICAL MATTERS

Q16 What is the standard pressure of vacuum braked rolling stock (in inches of Mercury)?

(a) 21 (b) 15 (c) 100 (d) 35

Q17 What colour are the levers that operate distant signals?

(a) Red (b) Black (c) Yellow (d) Blue

Q18 What is the area between two running rails on the same sleepers colloquially called?

(a) The Cess (b) The Four Foot (c) The Six Foot (d) The Platform

Q19 Where is the “signal box” that now covers London Paddington?

- (a) Reading (b) Didcot (c) Old Oak Common (d) Raneleigh Bridge

Q20 What is the telegraphic code word for a GWR brake van?

- (a) Toad (b) Frog (c) Newt (d) Crocodile

Q21 How many BR standard “Britannia” class 4-6-2 locomotives were built?

- (a) One (b) 25 (c) 55 (d) 100

INTERNATIONAL

Q22 “Track 61” is a private railway platform underneath which New York landmark, linking it to Grand Central Station?

- (a) Statue of Liberty (b) Waldorf Astoria Hotel (c) The Empire State Building
(d) World Trade Centre

Q23 Luas is a tram and light rail system in which European city?

- (a) Paris (b) Dublin (c) Brussels (d) Rome

Q24 How long is the Channel Tunnel (to the nearest mile)?

- (a) 26 (b) 30 (c) 31 (d) 35

Q25 The “Red Arrow” is a famous overnight train. Name the two cities it connects (1/2 pt each)

- (a) Moscow (b) Istanbul (c) St. Petersburg (d) Peking

THE END

Answers on page 16.

Modelling Our Local Station – by Andrew Tucker

As is customary the January meeting featured presentations from two Fraternity members. The first being titled “Modelling Our Local Station” by Andrew Tucker. The talk described the process of designing and constructing a model railway ready for exhibition in a year’s time at the Shepton Mallet model railway show by Andrew and his son, who fortuitously was also a railway enthusiast.

The station chosen was Castle Cary on the GWR main line from Reading to Taunton and the west. Available space dictated that to get a model with as near to scale length scenic section, N gauge with a scale of 2mm to the foot would have to be used to fit into the available space. The scenic section being the distance between the station foot bridge and the A371 road bridge.

The station area was comprehensively researched including with reference to the 1:2500 ordnance survey sheet and photographed to get an accurate representation of the infrastructure including the station buildings, goods shed and the adjacent creamery. The model was built on three Sundeala topped 4-foot by 3-foot base boards with a track bed of cork flooring tiles, a standard method of the time and supported on a combination of wooden and metal legs. The latter having been obtained from the National Westminster Bank. Super-elevation of the track where required being achieved by using pieces of card to raise the rail height on the outer side of the curves. Trackwork was Peco Code 55 with Peco points and point motors.

The station building was a Ratio kit with added parts while the associated creamery, which still exists today and is now a café/restaurant, was built using plain and textured plasticard. The dimensions of the creamery were determined by the method of counting bricks and then using the brick size, with an allowance for mortar courses, to calculate the building dimensions. The goods shed which had been rebuilt after it was hit by bombs in WWII had been featured in the Railway Modeller Magazine. The radio mast at the west end of the station was of triangular section, the three sides of which were soldered up in brass, which were then glued together. The model was notionally complete by 1993.

The trains themselves were also researched so that the model trains were appropriate to both the line and the period being modelled. They included Graham Farish HSTs, including one with buffers which had been fitted when it was used as a driving trailer on the ECML while the coaching stock for the IC225 trains was awaited. Five Graham Farish Class 47 diesel engines in appropriate liveries and Class 37s provided motive power. Coaching stock was by Graham Farish suitably re-modelled to be appropriate for the Weymouth line trains as were diesel multiple units used on that line. The model featured in the August 1993 edition of the Railway Modeller, which was followed by a feature in the May 1994 edition on the “Bucket and Spade” seaside special locomotive hauled trains to Weymouth.

Having been largely completed in the required time the model was subsequently exhibited thirty-five times between 1991 and 2015 before being retired and sold on before his next project of Bevois Park in Southampton was started.

The presentation demonstrated how much initial research and subsequent work was involved in reproducing a fine model of Castle Cary station in small scale.

*** see photos on pages 10 and 16 ***

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Update – by David Edwards

The second talk by David Edwards was an up-date on the progress made in re-building the narrow-gauge Lynton and Barnstaple Railway in North Devon which was closed and dismantled by the Southern Railway in 1935. The first stage of the re-opened line runs for one mile from Woody Bay Station to Killington Lane.

Although the Exmoor National Park Authority are broadly in favour of the extension of the railway, largely on the original track bed, much of the talk covered the various plans and planning permission problems associated with extending the railway along its historical track bed. The membership of the L&BR has been consulted and have voted for the submission of a new planning application for the extension of the railway southwards to Parracombe Halt on land already owned by the railway.

On the positive side the replica L&BR Baldwin 2-4-2 tank engine, 762 Lyn, funded by the 762 club has been a great success and the club are now focussing on the construction of two replica L&BR Manning Wardle 2-6-2 tank engines which will become 759 Yeo and 760 Exe which are currently under construction. Some of the engineering work for these projects is being carried out at the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Boston Lodge works. All the original L&BR locomotives were named after Devon rivers with three letter names. The boiler certificate of Kerr Stewart 0-4-0WT Axe has now expired with the locomotive now at the Gartell Railway in Templecombe for an overhaul costing £50k. Bagnall 0-4-2ST Isaac has left the railway and now resides at the Statfold Barn Railway while a second Bagnall is now named Sir George Newnes, after the founder of the railway, and sports maroon livery.

The L&B now has five rebuilt heritage carriages in service, with number 6 on its way to completion and number 7 back at the carriage works at Friary Wood farm in Essex for repairs which are almost complete. When number 7 returns to the railway the van 23 underframe will be the return load on the delivery lorry. This van will feature a steel underframe with Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway bogies.

The Carriage Shed at Woody Bay is almost complete with the associated trackwork realigned and relaid. The cladding is underway and will be completed in the next 4 to 6 weeks. The Old station Inn owned by the railway at Blackmoor Gate is now running as restaurant.

The presentation showed some of the difficulties in re-opening a long-closed railway in the modern world, but also highlighted the successes of a delightful narrow-gauge railway.

The audience at the February meeting of the Wells Railway Fraternity were treated to a presentation by Fraternity member and retired professional railwayman Roy Kethro. The subject of which was HSTs at 50, the story of operating High Speed Trains from Paddington to the West Country from the nineteen seventies up until 2025. The following is a necessarily abbreviated summary of his talk.

The HST design was based on the Blue Pullman trains of the 1960s, a fixed formation train with a driving cab and power unit at each end. It was conceived as a stop gap to be used on frontline passenger trains for a period of 10 years until the Advanced Passenger Train was rolled out for 140mph running over Britain's mainlines. In the event the latter never happened for political rather than technical reasons and the HSTs remained in frontline use for 50 years before being replaced by the Hitachi 800 series trains now in service.

The HSTs, marketed as Inter City 125, transformed intercity travel in Britain. 4500hp was necessary for the desired speed, acceleration and hill climbing ability, but at the time this could not be accommodated in a single locomotive conforming to the British loading gauge, hence the need for two power cars. The distinctive fibre glass cabs were designed by Sir Kenneth Grange who was a designer rather than an engineer. However, the steel structural elements provided good protection in the event of accident. On a personal level The HSTs paid for a roof over Roy's head for 36 years and now pays his pension!

Roy's lavishly illustrated talk, with images courtesy of former colleagues Colin Marsden and Terry Nichols, concentrated on the vicissitudes of maintaining the services from the technical and operational perspectives. Examples of which were that the introduction of the new trains required new maintenance facilities for fixed rake formations, initially at Bristol St Phillips Marsh, where Roy worked, and Old Oak Common, and later Plymouth Laira and Penzance. With no previous experience a degree of guesswork was needed when designing the depots, for example the need for heavy cranes for engine replacement and side pits to gain access to the bogies and underfloor equipment and on a more mundane level, but no less important, the provision of toilet facilities in the depots for female catering managers. The first engine change at St Phillips Marsh was performed using the steam crane from Bristol Bath Road depot, but thereafter this was performed at Bath Road using their overhead crane.

In service Control had to be able to deal with situations such as where one of the two power cars on each train failed. This halved the available horsepower to maintain the schedules high speed running. Rules as to where one engine operation was permitted and when locomotive assistance was required were written into Sectional Appendix. This was especially important on the line to Devon and Cornwall where steep gradients would tax one power car to the limit, to the extent that on occasion a train could stall. However, one power car was allowed to ascent the famous Lickey Bank, provided it got a run at it! The Paxman Valenta diesel engines were initially designed for use in motor torpedo boats where they were very successful, but in a railway environment the repeated cycling of the engine between full power and idling caused major reliability problems with coolant loss, fuel pipe failures and piston rod bearing failures. These were only fully resolved by the eventual replacement of the original Paxman Valentas by MTU 16cylinder 4000 Series engines.

HSTs at Fifty - *continued*

Other issues included fractures of the power car disc brake pads caused by overheating, but once the fracture had relieved the stress the crack ceased growing. It should be noted that there were also tread brakes. The Mk3 carriage bogies suffered from axle box spring casting failures which was solved by thickening the casting but meant that the situation had to be monitored with any defective carriage being taken from service. This problem cost £4M to rectify. Spurious warnings from infra- red hot axle box detectors were found to be tripped by heat from the compressor pipe adjacent to axles 3 and 35, solved by lagging the pipe. Eventually the repair shop at Plymouth Laira became the main depot for HSTs, having eight berths, lifting jacks, a wheel lathe and an overhead crane amongst its plentiful facilities. Almost inevitably the stereotypical “wrong type of snow” entering an electrical junction box which caused an earth fault relay trip and hence no power was another problem which had to be resolved.

As no conventional buffers were fitted power car failures required assistance from locomotives with conventional drawgear which required each power car carried an emergency tow bar. As time moved on the availability of locomotives for rescue became an issue so on occasion a pair of power cars coupled back-to-back were used with an even longer tow bar. During one engine operation in snowy conditions or during the autumn leaf fall season it was better for the leading rather than the trailing power car to fail. This was because the passage of the leading power car and trailer wheels dried the rail head which improved the adhesion of powered wheels.

The advent of privatisation saw the application of many different liveries for the different railway companies and the introduction of vinyl stick on sheets.

Despite the challenges, some of which have been summarised above, the HST was undoubtedly one of the most successful trains to run in Britain. After their eventual redundancy, and replacement by Hitachi class 800 family IEPs, from frontline service a number are still to be seen on charters and rail tours, hauling the Network Rail High Speed Inspection Train and on domestic services in Scotland. Additionally, HSTs have now been exported to Mexico and Nigeria for further service.

The well attended audience gave an enthusiastic show of appreciation at the conclusion of the presentation.



HSTs on Andrew Tucker’s N gauge model of Castle Cary station, as described on page 7.

More photos on page 16.

Railway Publishing and the Titfield Thunderbolt - by Simon Castens

Tuesday 10 March

Simon Castens, the speaker at the March meeting of the Wells Railway Fraternity entertained a packed room at the Town Hall with a presentation titled "Railway Publishing and the Titfield Thunderbolt".

In the event it covered much more, starting with the previous generations of his family and his young life in Chatham. A move to Bath via Chippenham saw him attend the City of Bath Boys School which later became Beechen Cliff school. An engineering degree was attained at Coventry Polytechnic. His interest in publishing was born when working in Wightmans Book Shop in Bath. After several different jobs he worked for Smallbone Kitchens of Devizes as the Bristol showroom manager, paid on commission only, until the financial crash. He opened his own bookshop called the "Titfield Thunderbolt" named after the well-known film of 1953 which was shot locally on the closed Camerton branch about the village community of Titfield initially campaigning against the closure of their local branch line and subsequently taking it over and running it as a public service. He first saw the film in 1971 when it obviously made a strong impression on him.

The bookshop has been in several places over time, including the closed Limpley Stoke station building which he renovated and is still leased from Arch Properties, Larkhall, Bath from 2010 to 2020 and currently in the Tollbridge Studios, Tollbridge Road, Bath.

His move into publishing came in 2015 when Paul Karau the owner of the well renowned Wild Swan Books decided to concentrate on his magazine publishing and offered him the chance to take over the railway books side of the business. So, Simon became a publisher of railway books covering both full size and modelling aspects of the subject. Simon's most recent publications include an update of a book about the Titfield Thunderbolt film which starred, amongst others, Stanley Holloway, Sid James, John Gregson, Sam Kydd, and Gabrelle Brune, and has now sold out, and Diesels Southwest by Michael Messenger covering the early years of Diesel Hydraulic locomotives in the West country.

Previously he has published "In search of a Dream" which covered the life and work at the Pendon Model Railway of the renowned modeller Roye England. Other volumes include a re-issue of Great Western Siphons by John Lewis, Milk on the Rails by Matt Pinto which sold 1000 copies and is now in re-print, and Modelling Buildings by Pete Goss which covered buildings and landscapes and is currently sold out.

As an unashamed railway enthusiast his whole life, he has been a volunteer at the Avon Valley Railway involved in track laying and at the aborted Radstock Project. As a railway modeller he built a "cardboard" Midford which went around his room when he was a student in Coventry, and when living in Limpley Stoke station, a model of Monkton Combe. He now has a garden railway.

The presentation which covered a more unusual area of railways was well received and applauded by the Fraternity audience.

When I took over the role of Speakers' Secretary in 2005 my predecessor, the late John Uncles (who was also the Fraternity's Secretary at that time), gave me a list of the topics and speakers from 2001 to 2005. In due course I also received more information from another former Speakers' Secretary, the late Derek Lampard. Derek's lists covered the periods 1983 to 1997 and 1990 to 2002. There was some overlap with these lists but strangely there were also some inconsistencies. This started me off on a quest to establish a definitive list detailing all of the meetings since the first one in 1968.

I had no idea how long a journey this was going to be. I have only recently completed the 23 page document that I have titled *Wells Railway Fraternity Meetings – 1968 to 2018 Topics and Speakers*. I settled on 2018 as a good place to end the document as that year we celebrated the Fraternity's 50th Anniversary. Our meetings have, of course, continued and the programme produced for each season provide an ongoing record, albeit with some changes during the Covid emergency. In the document I have not listed outings to preserved railways etc. and visits to members model railway layouts and garden railways are not included.

The first exploratory meeting was held on 5 March 1968 at the home of Mr E K 'Jock' Ferguson in West Horrington. Seven founding members attended. This information and much of the details about the early years is from a handwritten notebook apparently kept by successive Chairmen or Secretaries. The next meeting was just a month later in Wells at the home of Mr Maurice Shaw. Horrington Vicarage was the venue on 9 May for a Film Show by the BR Publicity Department. There then followed a period when meetings were held at the Old Deanery in Wells. The next, and last meeting in 1968, was held at this venue on 12 December. It was a member's slideshow sub-titled 'British and Continental'.

The first meeting of 1969 was on 18 March and is described as 'General Meeting with officers elected'. The annual subscription was set at 10/- (ten shillings = 50p). Further meetings in this year were in May, (members talks), September (BR Publicity Department again) and November (film show by Andrew Linham who was later the Fraternity's Secretary). Remarkably Andrew was back with a film show on local railways at our January 2009 and March 2013 meetings. There were six meetings in 1970: mainly slides and film shows but including a 'Rummage Sale' in May and a dinner and a film show at the Sherston Hotel in September. Rummage Sales were held quite often in the early years. For me this conjures up a picture of a village hall with trestle tables stacked high with unwanted clothes but apparently for the Fraternity it was an auction of railway memorabilia and modelling items. At this time meetings did not seem to be on any particular day of the week.

There were five meetings in 1971 but 1972 was busier with eight meetings, almost on a monthly basis. In addition to the Old Deanery other venues were used including the United Church Rooms, the St John Ambulance Hall and the East Room at the Town Hall. Meetings were now most commonly arranged for Thursday evenings with the dinner on 27 October at the Crown Hotel being on a Friday.

Annual General Meetings continued to be held in March usually followed by a presentation or Rummage Sale. In March 1974 the presentation after the AGM was by Peter Edmonds and he used Viewmaster stereo slides and included the Wells Branch and the Atlantic Coast Express. I have only ever seen commercial Viewmaster slides of well-known subjects. Presumably Mr Edmonds had one of the special twin lens cameras. I wonder where those discs (officially reels) are now? The film show on 12 December 1974 was also a little different, being presented by Hunting Lambert Travel Agents and featuring Tallylyn Holiday, Elizabethan Holiday, etc.

WELLS RAILWAY FRATERNITY

NEWSLETTER No 1.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED:

At our last meeting, held in Preb.Franklin's room at the Old Deanery on March 18, our Fraternity was put on a somewhat more businesslike footing by the appointment of the following officers:-
Chairman:- Revd.Peter Haynes.
Secretary:- Mr.E.K.Ferguson.
Treasurer:- Mr.David Milton.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: The post of Hon.Treasurer is significant, for it was agreed that an annual subscription of 10/- would be appropriate. Mr.Shaw made a quick calculation to point out that one member's sub. would just about cover the cost of a meeting; so our new Hon. Treas. got down to business immediately and pronounced himself well satisfied with the evening's haul! Members who were not present when this momentous decision was taken now know what is expected of them. Refreshments are to be paid for by on-the-spot contributions.

.....
After some general chit-chat and the showing of some interesting slides we got down to business and the following ideas emerged:-

BLUEBELL LINE TOUR:- David Milton informed us that the S & D Circle are organising a rail tour to Sheffield Park on July 27th. The chartered Diesel M.U. starts at Temple Meads, picks up at Bath and is then routed through the 'back street' goods lines round London, seldom seen from more conventional trains. The fare of 45/- includes a trip - behind steam of course - from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes and back; very good value.

We are very grateful to Mr Milton for inviting us to join the S & D Circle in this venture and it is hoped that many members will take advantage of the opportunity. Those interested should contact Mr Milton direct. Further details later.

LONGMOOR MILITARY RAILWAY:- Mr Maurice Shaw offered to arrange a special Sunday 'open day' at the L.M.R. for members of the Fraternity. Date and time to be arranged at our next meeting.

MAURICE DEANE'S LAYOUTS:- Mr.Shaw suggested that a Summer visit by not more than eight members would be an attraction. A fine evening would be necessary, as one of the layouts is outdoor, and internal accommodation is limited.

PART VALLEY RAILWAY:- This will be open to the public in the Spring, and a trip behind G.W. steam would probably be good for our morale. Details to be arranged.

FIIMS:- B.R.Public Relations Dept.(who gave us a film show on a previous occasion) are very ready to come again. Mr.Linham also has some 8mm film which he is willing to show us, but the problems of black-out during the Summer decided us to postpone film shows until the Autumn.

VISITS:- Mr.Shaw extended an invitation to members to visit his Gauge 1 layout on Thursday, March 27. A party was arranged on the spot. I should like to extend a similar invitation to anyone who would like to look at progress (or lack of) on my layout. Week-end daylight hours are best, but please 'phone me first so that I have a chance to wipe the cobwebs off the track!

NEXT MEETING:- will be on THURSDAY, MAY 22, again in Preb.Franklin's room at the OLD DEANERY, starting at 7.30 p.m. Please come prepared to talk briefly on "Why I chose my particular scale". (This subject stems from Mr Smith, who professes himself to be mystified as to why people are so enthusiastic about their tiny 'toy' trains - it is rumoured that he is himself gradually working towards a scale of 12" to the foot!)

A LIST OF MEMBERS is enclosed. Please inform me of any errors or omissions. Any further suggestions or ideas will be welcome.

E.K.Ferguson.
Hon.Secretary.

24.3.69

Newsletter No.1 appeared in March 1969 a year after the first meeting. It was accompanied by a list of 34 members (with their addresses - no Data Protection then). One of the members listed was Mr T Fowler. Terry is still a member today.

MODEL RAILWAY OPEN DAY

Nethercreech Junction and Lyme Regis

at Lower Farm, Kingweston TA11 6BA



**OPEN
10AM
UNTIL
4PM**

**SATURDAY
25th
APRIL**

**TEA
AND CAKE
AVAILABLE**

Model Railway Open Day

Come along and see a working copy of the Lyme Regis branch line taking in all the scenery and buildings of the late 1950's and early 1960's with period rolling stock, signalling and sidings.

and after that walk through into the working world of Nethercreech Junction based on the late lamented Evercreech Somerset and Dorset Railway showing multi rail workings, rolling stock, buildings, railway lines.

Enjoy an historic step back into the railways of the past.

- want to see something different ✓
- ask questions and learn about Nethercreech Junction ✓
- tea and cake available ✓
- meet the station master and the chief engineer ✓

for more information call **David Sedgman 07860 350382**

