



# Great Western Society



## TAUNTON GROUP JOURNAL 2025 Edition



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## **GROUP COMMITTEE FOR 2025 as elected at the GROUP ANNUAL MEETING 2025**

Francis Lewis	Chairman
Barry Atkinson	Vice Chairman
David Hartland	Secretary
David Whatley	Treasurer
Peter Triggs	Programme and Welfare Officer
Lynn Triggs	Assistant to Mr Triggs
Philip Izzard	Email Newsletter & Catering
Roger Hagley	Publicity Stand and Membership
David Barge	Co-opted Member

## **Data Protection Act**

The Taunton Group maintains a postal list on computer file of names and addresses of members and certain other persons who have in the past requested communications from the Group or to whom the Group needs, from time to time, to send details of working days and who are not contained within the Group List in the Society's computer file. This is used solely for the purpose of producing labels for addressing these communications when applicable. If any such person does not wish his/her details to be included will they please advise the Group Membership Secretary in writing so that their name can be removed. This applies to some members and other persons domiciled outside the Group's geographical boundary.

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## **NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

After a gap of last year I am pleased to present a Bumper issue this year. John Sparkes continues his tour on an all-line rover ticket, while Melvyn Baker, Richard Antliff and David Hartland share their reminiscences of the local Taunton scene over many years. As Richard has pointed out—this journal is an opportunity for members to present their articles, particularly related to the local area, in a format which is itself local. Without 83B these stories will be lost. Keep those articles, however long or short, coming in! David Hartland.

### **Cover Photograph:**

**Saddle Tank locomotive 1363 with two GWS coaches between Bodmin Road and Bodmin.  
For the full story see Tony Gosling's article in this issue, page 9.**

***Photo: Peter Gray***

# **Chairman's Report**

## **of the Group activities in 2024.**

In 2024 the weather caused many difficulties. The country experienced a sequence of named storms. Rain and high winds caused flooding and significant damage to transport infrastructure. Sunshine was in short supply for long periods and this limited good photographic opportunities. Many Group members, supporters and planned speakers suffered ill health or mobility issues during the year. On four occasions, a substitute speaker from the Membership stood in at short notice. I am most indebted to those members who came forward with alternative presentations. This emphasises the need for people to be available when the need arises.

We had a fine array of talks during the year. Following our GAM in February Richard Antliff paid tribute to Graham Perry, a founding member and former Chairman of the Society, who had died a week previously. Richard then updated the meeting, with photographic illustrations, on the progress of projects at Didcot. In March the audience assisted presenter Ian Bennett to identify mystery locations on uncatalogued slides in 'where and what is it'. The following month Peter showed coloured slides from the Tony Whitby collection. These included views in the West Country, elsewhere on former GW lines in England and Wales and on other regions. There were some trams and, also, large mammals in Africa.

John Sparkes's travels to the North and East were highlighted in May. He visited locations on main and branch lines and visited the museums at York and Durham plus the North Yorks railway. York Minster, Durham Cathedral and the famous bridges at Newcastle also featured. This was followed in June by a very interesting study by Amyas Crump of former L.S.W.R. lines in North Devon and Cornwall. There were rare views of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and a search for remnants of the Bideford, Appledore and Westward Ho! Railway. Also of interest were old bus and shipping services. In 'A trip down memory lane', Ian Boskett showed old photographs of his native Tewkesbury and included Healings Flour Mill, stations and railway connections with the branch line from Ashchurch – Malvern. Recent photographs showed views from Tewkesbury Abbey of extensive flooding. Other locations were Gloucester Warwickshire Railway, Severn Valley Railway, the railway network in the Midlands and further afield.

Peter presented 'Railways North of the Thames' in August. Starting at Cheltenham, he visited a variety of main lines, branches, preserved lines and museums in the Midlands, Wales, and Northern England ending up in Scotland. There were a variety of freight and passenger workings and non-railway items. Philip Bisatt's 'Grand Days out' featured journeys by rail and of vintage bus rallies at locations from South Devon to the South Coast and Isle of Wight. He visited the Wye Valley and Midland locations. There were also views of ferries, canal boats and railway archaeology.

In October, Alan Randle's subject was 'Multi-coloured Railways' showing the variety of liveries carried by locomotives and units in BR days and since Privatisation. My subject in early November was a review of 1999, the year of the eclipse. Also, in November David Hartland presented the 'Roal Duchy', an examination of railways in Cornwall mainly in the late 20th Century. He then toured other railways and re-created his POTY award entry 'the Taunton - Westbury re-signalling project in 1986'.

In December, David Brabner showed a Rail Advent DVD of the 'Snowdonian' Weekend in 2024. This was a special train that ran on the Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. David and Rosemary were passengers on the train. In January 2025 Don Bishop presented Steam Recreations, Wales, Midlands and East. This featured mainly charter trains on the Llangollen Railway, narrow gauge lines in Wales, the Dean Forest Railway, Gloucester and Warwick Railway, Didcot Railway Centre (some drone footage), and Chinnor.

Attendances at meetings in the year were largely between 20-25 and donations have been good. I am indebted to those who set up the hall and projector for meetings; to Philip, Lynn and helpers who provide refreshments; to Roger and helpers for the raffle; and to Dave Whatley for collecting and counting the donations. Thank you to everyone for helping to clear the chairs etc. afterwards.

Last March members and friends enjoyed a meal at The Maypole Inn, Thurloxton. Thank you very much to David Barge, who organised the event. The Group had a good attendance at the Taunton Model Engineer's railway at West Buckland in July. It was great to traverse the completed layout and to see other work in progress. Thank you very much to David Hartland and T.M.E. for making the group so welcome and providing refreshments. Thanks also to Dave Whatley who organised a trip in October to the Culm Valley Model Railway at Wishing Well Garden Centre Waterloo Cross. A small group attended and were given a very warm welcome by members of the club to view the scale layout of Tiverton Junction as it was in 1960. We also had an opportunity to operate a small simple layout that involved shunting manoeuvres.



I am very grateful to my fellow committee members for their support and work. A special thank you to Peter, who, despite a difficult year, arranged and maintained the programme of meetings and secured substitute speakers at short notice. He and Lynn also tried to maintain contact with members who are unable to attend meetings. Thank you to Dave Whatley for keeping our finances healthy and to David Brabner for auditing the Group's Accounts and arranging publicity. Thank you to Group Secretary, David Hartland, for the programme card and Newsletter.

I stressed that, with committee members suffering significant health problems, the strength of the committee and the work that individuals do was much weakened. Indeed, while all members were prepared to stand for another year, Peter indicated that he would no longer act as Vice Chairman and was considering standing down as Programme Organiser, a job that he had been doing for many years! It was, therefore, vital that additional people come forward and stand for election so that these roles may be fulfilled. Peter offered to provide guidance to anyone who takes on the role of Programme organiser. I reported that former committee member, Richard Studley, is now residing in a care home near Wellington. We offer him and his wife Olivia best wishes for the future. Sadly, member Peter Beck died shortly before the GAM. Finally, I offered everyone best wishes for this year and looked forward to seeing them at meetings.

Francis Lewis, Group Chairman

## **GREAT WESTERN SOCIETY (TAUNTON GROUP)**

### **TREASURERS REPORT 2024 – 2025**

**Last year's report showed an improvement in the group's finances, and this success has continued during the last twelve months.**

**This report shows a bank balance rising from £1258.11 to £1758.11, an increase of £500.00. Cash in hand was £4.32. Total available is £1762.43.**

**Financial support for GWS Didcot has always been one of the reasons our group was founded, providing we could afford to do so without putting our Group in financial jeopardy. Your committee has decided that this year we will donate £500 to the Engine Shed Roof Appeal. This will leave us with £1258.11 in the bank, sufficient to operate next year.**

**Hall hire has risen by £1.00 to £8.00 per hour, making the cost £24.00 per meeting.**

**A fee of £10.00 will be offered to our 'own speakers' to compensate them for any additional expenses in preparing their talk.**

**There was one visit by group members this year to the Culm Valley Model Railway. Tiverton Junction was on display with 'steam in abundance'. A wonderful evening was had by all, and we left a donation to their funds.**

**Now the bad news! Our bank, Lloyds, have changed our Treasurers Business Account to a Community Account. It means they will impose a monthly fee of £4.50, plus some smaller charges, i.e. 42p per cash deposit over £100.00. I raised an official complaint with Lloyds, quoting our charitable status, unfortunately to no avail. This change was effective from 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.**

**Finally, can I again thank David Brabner for his help, and for auditing our accounts this year.**

**David Whatley, Hon.Treasurer**

**4<sup>th</sup> February, 2025**

# GREAT WESTERN SOCIETY LTD., TAUNTON GROUP

## Accounts – 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2025

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2024/25</u>
Monthly meetings	1145.37	1111.70
Meetings (Raffle profit)	210.00	158.00
VAT returned	2.75	0.00
	<u>1358.12</u>	<u>1269.70</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Meeting expenses - Speakers (295)	498.00	225.00
Hall Hire (203)	203.00	425.00
83B Journal Postage	199.60	43.35
GWS Didcot Project	200.00	0.00
Sundry expenses	46.89	50.00
	<u>944.49</u>	<u>743.35</u>

### BALANCE SHEET

Brought forward – January, 2024	1235.99	Expenditure 2024/2025	743.35
Income 2024	1269.70	Lloyds Bank at 31st Jan, 2025	1758.11
		Cash in hand	4.23
	<u>2505.69</u>		<u>2505.69</u>
Total	2505.69		

D. Whatley, Hon Treasurer

D. Brabner, Auditor

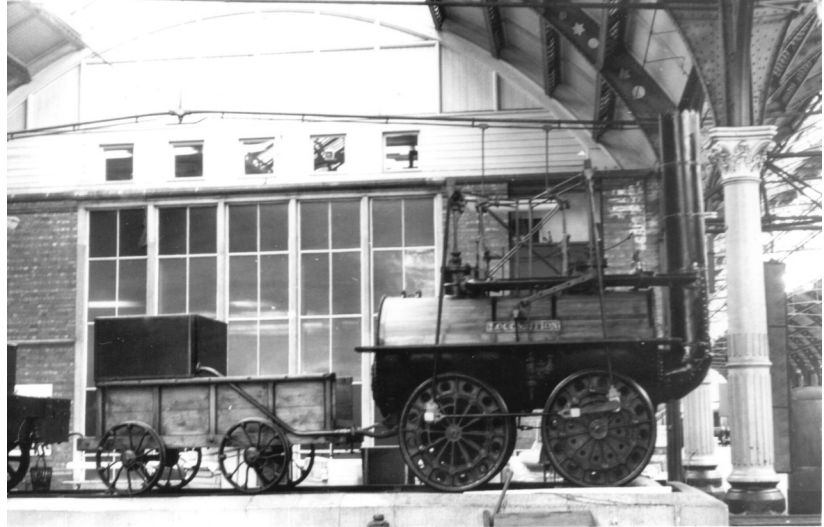
## ALL BRITAIN ROVER - PART 2

### by John Sparkes

John continues his story from the last issue of 83B.

I left Glasgow Central on the 10.00 to Euston "The Royal Scot" behind D1832 with 13 on (incl RC & BRC), having noted emus 100, 035 & 101, D428 on the ECS, D35 1S78 LE & D307. Passing Polmadie shed D401 & D1839 were noted, at Hall-craig Junction D8563 on a PWay train, D7554, D5207, D5407, D222, D1960 & D207 at Carlisle Eterby Road shed, and D3171/2/3, D215, D5701 & D6854 at Carlisle Kingmoor Shed.

At Carlisle D1964 was added as pilot to, I think, Crewe. Quite why this was necessary, I do not know, although the route was via the Settle and Carlisle Line, Hellifield, Blackburn, Manchester Victoria and Ashton Moss Junctions to Stockport. The climb to the summit at Sough tunnel was quite stiff as was Miles Platting bank too. Incidentally, the West to South curve at Ashton Moss has now been removed. Anyway, en route I noted D1945 & D5280 on PWay trains at Garsdale, D4114 & D3846 at Blackburn, D3686, D352, D3542 & D292 at Bolton Diesel Sidings, 45104, 48652 & 48319 at Bolton Steam Shed, and at Manchester Victoria, where I left the train, taking advantage of the then absence of central locking, noting D318, D7595, D429 & D7548, also D1623 & D420 on the 11.00 Glasgow/10.50 Edinburgh – Euston. I then left for York on the 17.00 to Newcastle – D280 with 10 on at 17.05. At Leeds I noted D5099, D5383, D5101, D1108 on 1N20, 1620 from King's Cross, which continued to Bradford behind



**Photo: Locomotion No.1 on display at Darlington Bank Top station. John Sparkes**

D7526. At Challoners Whin Junction D5291 was on an engineers train. At York I noted D139 on 1G11, 11 car to Sheffield at 19.00, D2051, D252, a 3car dmu, D6866 on 1G06 with 9 on through non-stop to Sheffield (from Scarborough?), D1543 on 1A42 15.50 King's Cross – Newcastle at 1910/15, D1653 1D96 5 car portion of the 15.50 King's Cross to Newcastle via Sunderland at 1928 and D9018 on 1830 Newcastle-King's Cross with 11 on (RC & BRC) through non-stop at 1940. I then went to York Shed, noting D393, D79, D237, D8307, D240, D240, SC79190/189, D277, D274, D7537,



**Photo: 61306 at Steamtown, Carnforth. John Sparkes**



D2273, D2324, D8309, 60019 'Bittern' store, D8306, D8305, D8304, D8302, D8308, D2101, D3076, D3238, D3319, D2113, D2054, D3239, D1111, D110, D8300, D234. Total mileage for the day was 350 miles.

On the next day, Monday 29th July I noted D3239, Station Pilot before leaving on the 8.25 to Cardiff behind D29 with 7 on (inc BRC), which ran via the Swinton & Knottingly Joint Line (NER & Midland), which never ran to either of those points, noting D1893 on hopper wagons at Moorthorpe, D5814 at Frickley

Colliery on coal wagons,, D5573, D3530 & D3356 at Rotherham. At Sheffield, where I changed on to the 8.33 Leeds – St Pancras behind D50 with 10 on (inc BRC), I noted D5547, D5686, D17 & D118. At Chesterfield we passed D1611 on the 5.35 Bristol – Sheffield & D6875 on freight. We then ran via the Erewash Valley to Nottingham and I noted D8037 at Pye Bridge, D8192, D1832, D48 & D1753 on freight. We ran via Trowell, missing



**Photo: Class 47 at York on a Scottish Express. John Sparkes**

Toton unfortunately. At Nottingham we reversed and D123 took over. Noted at Nottingham were D3997, D8062, D3514, D3025, D5298, D7531, then at Trent D193 on freight and D72 LE and at Leicester D7527. Briefly at St Pancras were D130, D5220, D112, D74 & D7655. I walked to Euston for the 14.00 to Manchester via Stoke (E3006). There were 13 Electric locos present and 2 AM10 units 078 & 079.



**Photo: D9017 at Doncaster on a Kings Cross – Newcastle working in September 1975. John Sparkes.**

At Nuneaton D1960 & D7657 were noted, at Stoke D5034, D5013, D3113 & D5037 at Stockport, E3133, E3031, 45027, 48045, E3078, E3003 & E3163 and at Manchester Piccadilly M50458/59134E26026 & E3005. I then walked to Manchester Victoria noting D230 on a Manchester-Glasgow/Edinburgh train at 1748 also D7631, D12081, & D378 before going to Patricroft noting 73143 & D7596, then returning to Piccadilly for the 19.10 for Sheffield Victoria (a packed 5 coach train headed by E26029). Unfortunately a passenger found my recording of performance rather unusual and was rather unpleasant. As it happens there was little interest in the recording anyway because of the overall 60 mph limit. At Sheffield I walked to Midland station and caught 'The Cornishman' 11.25 Penzance – Bradford. D158 with only 6 on. At Leeds D5181 took over the train for the continuation to Bradford. I then repaired to my hotel. Total mileage for the day was 373.

On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> July, the last day, I left Leeds on the 7.25 to Kings cross behind D9003 'Meld' with 8 on incl RC, noting D3484 & D5691 at Doncaster, D4074 at Peterborough, D1577 at Hitchin and D1986, D1969, D9008, D1543, D5651, D590004, D9001 and Pullman cars 349,336 etc on the 'Tees-Tyne Pullman' at King's Cross. I then went to Liverpool Street, where I noted D1772, D8234, D6745, D5679, D8408 on a freight and EMU sets 159,148 & 441, before leaving on the 11.30 to Norwich behind D1527 with 9 on incl RC. En route I noted 18 emu sets in the Shenfield area, D5668, D3680, D5514 & D8214 at Colchester, E79266, D5392, D5512 & D8222 at Ipswich and D5872, D2037, SC50341, D6812, D5540 & D5668 at Norwich. I then left for Liverpool Street on the 13.40 behind D1566 with 11 on inc RC.

At Ipswich I noted D5692, D6744, & E78054/79275 and at Colchester D3494, D4186 & D5668. In the Shenfield area there were 17 emu sets and at Liverpool Street D1563 & D8234. I then took the underground to Euston, where I noted E3077/83 E32001/3191 3031/3164/3064/3193/3047 & emu sets 049 & 065. before leaving on the 15.15 for Birmingham New St behind E3194 with 11 on incl BRC. There I noted D7611, E3093 on the 16.27 Manchester - Euston emu 039 to Wolverhampton, a 3 car dmu to Derby, D1593 on the 16.30 from Sheffield – Bristol with 7 on + BG., E3191 on the 16.45 Euston – Shrewsbury and E3020 on 3P12 ECS, leaving behind D1749 on the 18.40 to Paddington with 9 on incl RC & BRC.(one of the few remaining trains to & from Paddington following the electrification. At Banbury I noted 2 Pressed Steel dmus, D3840 & D853.



**Photo: A class 40 diesel pulls a class 26xx and Electric 86214 Sans Pareil at the run past at the Rainhill celebrations to commemorate 150 years since the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway in 1880. John Sparkes.**



I then travelled from Paddington to Bath, where I spent the early hours in the waiting room, getting little sleep, but seeing much of the activity – D1007 on the 12-20 Paddington- Penzance Postal at 12.10/20, D7100 on 3V00 parcels at 12.23/8, D70xx Vans incl 'Enparts' on 00.03 Bristol – Birmingham parcels at 12.30/41, D10xx on the 21.35 Paddington- Plymouth Newspapers at 12.34/44, D1049 on the 22.45 Paddington- Bristol at 1.07/13, D6515 with 60 freight on the 23.04 – Eastleigh- Bristol West Depot at 1.53, D839 on 1A27 19.00 Penzance – Paddington Postal at 2.04/16, 50 minutes late – Engine failure?, D1610 IC14 23.45 Paddington- Penzance at 2.11/22 D10xx 4.08 21.47 Tavistock Jct – Paddington at 3.18 , D7050 6V01 0035 Eastleigh – Severn tunnel Junction fitted freight at 3.50, D1928 IB61 2.15 Paddington-Bristol Newspapers at 4.06/7 D10xx on the 21.00 Penzance- Paddington at 4.12/23, D7031 1V22 car+ vans 1.50 Eastleigh- Bristol Passenger & Mail at 4.23/34, D10xx down LE at 5.03, D7042 47 freight 4.05 Stoke Gifford – Eastleigh at 5.15, D1928 3C93 Parcels & ECS 5.15 Bristol TM – Westbury at 5.30 & D6583 on 47 47 freight 3.35 Severn Tunnel Junction –Eastleigh at 5.53. total mileage for the day was 652.

I think I returned to Trowbridge with the newspapers on a van but cannot remember if this was the case. Seeing the variety on this holiday makes one realise just how lacking of variety the modern scene is. Anyway I do not think I would have the stamina to undertake such an itinerary now.

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## Early Days, by Tony Gosling

Back in January 1965, my wife and I moved house from Truro to Torquay - I worked in a Bank and it was a part of the usual career pattern at that time for young staff to be moved from branch to branch to further their experience. It was a day to remember as the day that we moved house it was very cold and snowy and my wife and I were dealing with a new baby. On arrival we found the Builders of the new house had badly let us down as they had promised that the house would be cleaned right through and ready for occupation on the removal day. We had followed the Remover's lorry with all of our furniture in it from Cornwall and were shocked to find on arrival that had our new house had no seats on the toilets and more than 20 bags of cement had been left piled up in the lounge and the place was filthy. It was late evening and dark when we arrived and the builders had gone home for the day - the central heating had been left on for us but the front door had been left wide open. A huge disappointment for us but we had to cope.

Straight to my new job the very next day and one of the first customers I met on that day was a certain "Peter Lemar" who I had not met before and who said that he wanted to open another account with us which was to be styled "7808 Account" and that was with a cheque for something like £3,000. I did not know Peter before but, me being a Railway Enthusiast, my ears pricked up and I said to him, "That sounds like a Railway Engine - a Manor?" He said that it was and that the money that he paid in was the agreed full purchase price for the Manor, in full working order from B.R. This was the start of my friendship with Peter over the following years.

After I arrived in Torquay I became very involved with the SW Group of the GWS - which then encompassed the Taunton area in those early years before Taunton became a separate Group in its own right. One of the jobs that I took on was looking and researching for anything GWR with which to fill the holes in the Society's collection. At that time, there were some obvious gaps - in locos a "Hall" and a "57" Pannier tank which were obvious "must haves" - and which later came along. Much later on, the arrival of 6998 at Totnes in the Staverton's private siding was exciting - it had steamed light engine from Oxford when it was handed over to us later in 1965 or early in 1966. Much squealing as it rounded the very tight radius to get into the private siding. The BR Driver and Firemen then packed up their kit and went home leaving us to drop the fire and put 6998 away - as far as they were concerned it was "job done". 1466 was already ours - there was talk at the time of the GWS joining up with DVR as a combined preservation society and I think that 1466 spent some of its early days in GWS ownership at Buckfastleigh awaiting developments.

As far as I remember, BR initially quoted £2800 for the Hall but came back later to say that they had mis-calculated the price as the loco had a copper fire box and not steel one and the price should be slightly more. We found after the deal was done that the loco did in fact have a steel firebox!



Steve Gosling writes: Just for your interest, here are two pictures of Dad taken 55 years apart. I saw in the Echo, a request for old members to come forward and be recorded for their early memories of the Society. Dad joined in 1966 and was heavily involved for a while, working on 1363 and starting the 5572 fund so I arranged that we would take him to Didcot for a day out. Tim turned up as a surprise so we all sat in on the interview with John O'Hagan and then had a wander. We didn't see an awful lot but it really was a superb day out.



**Photo: Left to right: Steve, Tony and Tim Gosling in front of 1363 undergoing restoration at Didcot.**

Again at that time, withdrawn locos were being assembled into groups at Laira for such groups then to be towed away to be scrapped and this was the salvation of 1363. It was badly damaged in a heavy shunt at Laira and it was deemed to be unsuitable to be included in such a towing group and was finally left at Laira on its own until its future could be decided. As far as I can remember, Peter and Joan Lemar saw it there on its own, felt compassion for it and decided to raise the money to buy it. I was never told how it arrived at Totnes from Laira but I did recently hear that it was dispatched from Laira with instructions to deliver it to the Lemars' home address in Torquay!

At that time passenger services on the Bodmin Branch had already ceased and the only trains on it were occasional short china clay trains to and from Wenford Bridge and the Branch looked attractive as a possible preservation site for the GWS SW Group with the Engine Shed at Bodmin still there and intact. The Group obtained a lease on the shed, the adjacent siding and the Signal Box. There was some running latterly in the Shed area and on a couple occasions out onto the Branch line with BR permission. A film company wanted to make a feature film on the line and initially two unrestored coaches from the Society's collection elsewhere were delivered to Bodmin to be first of all to be restored by the Film Company for them to use in the Film. *(These were known as the Glyncorrwg coaches as they had been recovered from a colliery in South Wales of that name. They were actually Churchward suburban coaches from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and are now at Didcot being restored.)*

The Film never happened and the two coaches only reached as far as Bodmin Road in a siding there and remained there initially waiting transfer to the Bodmin GWS depot. Fortuitously, BR had an Open Day at St. Blazey planned in 1969 and they arranged for 1363 to be taken there behind the China Clay 08 and its train - I travelled in the Guards Van of that train. On the return to Bodmin General after the open day, the driver of the 08 wanted to go home and left 1363 to take the two coaches on its own up to Bodmin as a purely steam hauled short train! That train was driven by a retired St Blazey driver for us who lived nearby in Bodmin. The picture shows it arriving at Bodmin General after a spirited run up the bank with its tiny load.

It was hoped that 1363 would remain with the SW Group at Bodmin but this was not to be. The SW Group vacated Bodmin and ultimately, 1363 moved to Didcot and Bodmin but that is another story for another day!

## **Scottish weekend aboard the Midland Pullman by David Brabner**

You may have realised that Locomotive Services Ltd based in Crewe have reconfigured a full length HST train, painted it in Nanking blue, and are operating it across the UK as the 'Midland Pullman'. Last year we travelled aboard this booking the 'Pullman Dining' option for a day trip from Exeter to Carlisle, outward via the Settle and Carlisle, returning via the West Coast main line. The higher top speed of the HST allows such long journeys as this to be completed in a day and gave us a couple of hours at Carlisle with a full English breakfast on the outward journey and an extended 5/6 course meal on the return. In 2025 there is a day trip from the south west planned to York and Scarborough with three classes of travel available.

This year LSL advertised weekend trips to Fort William aboard the Midland Pullman from a series of starting points across the UK, the Exeter departure being towards the end of October. It was only a few days beforehand that I read in the railway press that a 2+5 version of the former HSTs had been produced for these popular charters to Scotland and sure enough this version pulled into Exeter St Davids at 6.15am having stabled overnight at Paignton. Breakfast was soon served as we proceeded to pick up passengers as we headed north until we came to an unplanned halt at Yate where we stayed for over an hour - it appeared that a possible problem had been reported at an overbridge ahead of us. We eventually continued north making our final stops at Worcestershire Parkway and Barnt Green before proceeding non-stop through Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton and arriving in Crewe on time! A break was taken here in platform 12 whilst the rear power car was changed before the train continued north making easy work of Shap and Beattock before passing through the Glasgow suburbs and heading for the West Highland line. There was a twenty minute halt at Craigendoran Junction as the sun set before access to the route to Fort William was authorised and we continued in the dark, arriving at Fort William on time at 9pm. A short walk to the Premier Inn led to a long queue to check in to our accommodation for the next two nights.

**Continued on page 15**



## TWO AM ENGINE PREP by Melvyn Baker

Two am engine prep, the worst duty at any shed and any region. You ask why we have a prep turn – the answer is some duties don't allow enough time for the crew to prepare their own engine within the eight hour shift.

1962, the glory year of western traction - Kings, Castles, Counties, 47xx, 9F, 8F, Warships, Westerns, Hymeks and our own steam fleet. Who would have thought that within 2 years, Taunton 83B would be closed to steam. Taunton/Chard/Yeovil Minehead and Barnstaple were an oasis for steam; no steam left in Cornwall and very little in Devon; but like the S & D, we carried on with steam on all our branch lines. Great for lovers of steam and I was lucky enough to be part of it.

Romance to reality. Seniority is the watchword of the railways of Britain. I started on the railway 10 minutes before my classmate from school, Roger; so I would always be the senior cleaner/fireman. This could be advantageous, or sometimes work against you. At the age of 16 I became a passed cleaner (able to step up to fireman) to cover holidays/sickness. As senior I would be given the first rostered position of the day, which was as it should be, to get me to the magic 251 turns to be made up to fireman; but if there was more than one rostered position to cover the next and the next senior passed cleaners would get a firing job that day, so I would be stuck with the worst job in the depot and my junior mates would get the more enjoyable jobs - Yeovil passenger, Chard goods. That was the system.



**Photo: Taunton Shed in 1964. The roof has already been removed prior to demolition. Pannier 9663 stands proudly with a class 08 diesel shunter alongside. *Photographer unknown, courtesy Taunton Model Engineers***

Most of you would have read books written by drivers/firemen. The normal procedure was to Book on, go to the stores to collect the tools you require for the day, or going back to GWR days, the keys to the locked tool boxes on the loco; but this is 1962 reality, the rundown of steam, you had to rob the tools off incoming engines which took a lot of extra time going from loco to loco. By this time your driver would have found the first engine to prepare. The next problem, after finding the correct tools which you had to guard against other firemen trying to steal what you had acquired, was what type of coal was in the bunker/tender. If it was lump coal, great, no problem building a fire, but if you had eggs (the size of cricket balls, made of coal dust and cement) and if you had a bunker of the smaller eggs (coal, dust and tar) the size of Ping-Pong balls (I think they are called stove nuts today), you really were in big trouble. You had to find lump coal to build a fire. The best place was off engines on the coal road for some Welsh lump coal.

The first loco to prep was the 4.20 to Woodford Halse, which would be one of the three 28xx class – 2822, 2871 and 2882 were shedded at 83B. For this job, double home for the loco, the men only worked it to Swindon. (You see many of the pictures of Woodford shed with our 28xx under their coal stage). Prep completed, move on to the turntable to face north onto the outgoing road and fill the tank.

The next engine, a large prairie for the 5.5 Tiverton goods (4103, 4110, 4128, 4143), prepare turn to face down line (Exeter), take water, leave on the outgoing road. Next, 6.20 Yeovil goods; always one of our good 8750 class panniers (7436, 3669, 9670), prepare turn to face north leave on the outgoing road.

Time for breakfast. Next on the list, 8.5 Barnstaple passenger - always a mogul (6327, 6372, 7304, 7333, 7326, 7337); prepare, turn to face Barnstaple, fill the tank, take out and couple up to the Barnstaple coaches to preheat and wait for relief.

Back to the shed, quick cup of tea, prepare our last engine of the day - 9.45 Yeovil passenger - should be a large or small prairie (4593) but could be one of our 82xxx (82008 (black) 82030, 82042, (both green) or 82044 in black, or, if pushed, a trusty old pannier. Book off, look at the roster for the next day, home, wash and up to bed.

Saturdays were different as there were very few goods trains running. We would have a lie in, coming on at 7.00 to prep/loco relief, a far easier day in the summer. My driver and I would walk up to the station and relieve an Old Oak crew off the 10.22 arrival from Paddington to Minehead/Ilfracombe which would be split at Taunton for smaller engines, either Castle or a King, take to shed, coal, clean the fire, turn, and take out for the 12.25 combined Minehead/Ilfracombe to Paddington.

Next job, relieve another Old Oak crew off the 1.15 arrival from Paddington to Minehead/Ilfracombe, take to shed, service turn engine, take out, put on the combined 2.25 Minehead/Ilfracombe to Paddington. It could be a nice job, when you have done the hard work and were sitting on the footplate of a King in the sun, waiting for relief.

Other work we young firemen loved to do was to go onto platform 5, sit on a barrow, normally two of us, wait for any down summer Saturday extra express to stop for water. We would climb into the tender and pull coal forward for the exhausted Old Oak fireman. We would keep pulling coal forward as fast as we could as the train pulled out, increasing speed, when one of us would be the last to jump before we ran out of platform. No health & safety in 1962 - just sixteen year old lads working hard and having a bit of fun!



## Each a Glimpse – by Richard Antliff

Our local GWS Taunton newsletter seems to be a good place to record brief personal memories of the steam railway, particularly at Taunton – nothing elaborate, just bare notes for fellow members and future generations to savour. My own recollections are few, and from earlier childhood, as I did not start to appreciate the railway at Taunton until just after steam had ended there in 1964. However here are my little gems, 'Each a Glimpse' as Mike Esau portrayed his evocative album 'Steam Into Wessex'. I hope they will encourage you to let our 83B editor have some notes too.

### **Pre Taunton - Newport Bridge, Barnstaple**

No, not South Wales, but a glimpse, when only 2 years old, from my pram as we crossed the A361 bridge over the Barnstaple Victoria Road/ Barnstaple Junction link line. Just this curved cab roof – was it a 43xx, and perhaps, as George Behrend mentioned in 'Gone With Regret', "...with steps cut down to 8ft 4 to run through to Ilfracombe...".

### **Taunton – the engine shed from the Barnstaple train**

Waiting to leave Taunton in the Barnstaple train – "Mummy, how do they put the coal in the engines that are over there?" "With a very long shovel." Only years later did I learn about coal stages (not coaling stages, which they had on other regions).

### **The Vale of Taunton Deane from Stonegallows Hill**

An afternoon family walk at Stonegallows looking across to the Brendon and Quantock Hills. A trail of steam in the distance between Norton Fitzwarren and Victory Siding (from a Hall or a Castle ?) - a train starting the climb to Whiteball.

### **The Chard Bay**

Waiting with my father on the Down Relief platform to meet my mother off a train from Bristol; the Chard train had arrived in its bay. An inquisitive but shy peep 'up' at the footplate was followed by an invitation to come into the cab. The fire hole was very hot and excess steam drowned all hope of finding out what that thing higher up with all those pipes and wheels was (yes the steam fountain was much more interesting than the regulator handle).

### **Down Main platform**

Another occasion being taken to meet mother off a Bristol train. The train engine was definitely a Hall, green and with a long name, perhaps beginning with 'W', but I was only just learning to read. Scrutiny of 'GWR Engines – names, numbers, types and classes' and later Ian Allan lists has not narrowed the possibilities much.

### **Up Relief platform**

A pannier tank passing stealthily, the foot plating at just the right height for a little boy to see all those levers between the wheels. Did they make the engine go?

And the faintest memory of something in the Up Relief viewed from the Up Main platform – the bunker end of a Prairie?

### **West Yard from Staplegrove Road**

What a remarkable collection of fittings on the top of that pannier tank, under the Staplegrove Road wall, shunting the Taunton West Yard. No time to spot the number. Later walks along Chip Lane yielded glimpses, through the panels of unclimbable iron fencing, of a fascinating collection of wagon parts. Only in more recent times did I find out that this was the lair of Wagon Repairs (shown as sidings 18 and 19 in 'Cooke's Book' - 'Track Layout Diagrams of the Great Western Railway and B.R. Western Region, Section 16, Taunton and West Somerset' if you must). You can peep through those very same fence panels at Didcot Railway Centre today.

### **Back on the Down Main platform**

20 years later (it is 1985) a 3am visit to the station to see Dryslwyn and Clun Castles waiting, light engine, for time before heading west. Sharp exhaust from each upon departure woke up both their fires and the residents of Railway Street.



### **And two more but a long way away**

A 56xx glimpsed from a car window when crossing the road bridge at Penarth after going down to the fascinating docks to drop off some paperwork at my uncle's office. I'm sure that part of the route through the docks involved one of those dual use bridges where it was wise to give way to trains coming the other way.

Steam had gone from Taunton but it still came on trains from the north to Bristol Temple Meads, to be replaced by a diesel for the journey west. Oh that my last glimpse of a steam engine in normal service was one of those alien railway's engines, a Jubilee or Black Five.



**Photo: 5051 Dryslwyn Castle and 7029 Clun Castle working a special train at Taunton on 2nd September 1985 at 02.55. *David Hartland***

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### **Midland Pullman—Continued from Page 11**

Day two saw us back at the station for the morning return journey to Mallaig, the route of the 'Jacobite' - this popular steam service had just finished for the season and was to become our saviour the following day. Our short break at Mallaig coincided with deterioration in the weather leading to a wet and windy afternoon. For the return journey to Exeter start was scheduled for 9.05am - as no trains normally run on Sunday mornings the station was closed and we had to access the platform through the 'back door'! Departure on time led to a brief stop at Spean Bridge to gain access to the section up to the summit at Corroir before we continued through the Monessie Gorge getting slower and slower and eventually coming to a halt - 'leaves on the line' was the problem. After several attempts to continue we reversed back to Spean Bridge only to find the 'Jacobite stock' in the other platform - a '37', Black 5 45407, 8 coaches and a '57' at the rear, waiting to head back to Carnforth! They then proceeded up to Corroir clearing the line for us to proceed almost 90 minutes late. Were HSTs fitted with sanding gear? This is a problem that has come to light with class 158 dmus at Talerddig recently. We eventually continued enjoying the West Highland in daylight, eventually passing the Jacobite stock near Helensborough, before a 'water' stop at Lockerbie to replenish the water in the coaches (there had been a similar stop at Penrith on the northbound journey). The home journey in the dark took an unusual route from Crewe to Birmingham New Street via Alsager, Stoke on Trent, Rugeley, Walsall and Soho Junction; also stopping at Worcester Shrub Hill instead of Worcestershire Parkway, eventually arriving back in Exeter exactly on time at 12.10am where our taxi was waiting to take us back to Exmouth.

Not a cheap weekend but an enjoyable and memorable one - if you are considering making a similar journey I suggest trying to travel earlier in the year, although note that you have to arrange your own accommodation.

# **A Lever Too Far**

## **by David Hartland**

*The events described here occurred 51 years ago, but although the day is engraved on my memory I have not seen a detailed account of what happened anywhere else. I was working at the station, in the Upside Refreshment room (then called the Hillside Buffet) and finished my turn just as the events were unfolding. I spent the rest of the afternoon watching and photographing the recovery process and trying to understand the train movements which followed, but like everyone else (including the other railwaymen) it was difficult to follow the exact sequence of events. I have made one or two assumptions based on subsequent verbal anecdotes and of course I have consulted carefully the timetables of the day. I have also studied photographs by Paul Conibeare and John Cornelius for extra details. I hope therefore it is an accurate story. If anyone has any amendments please let me know.*

*As an aside, I have copies of all the relevant timetables – the working timetables (Mandatory and Conditional) the Special Traffic Notice for that week, and the 1974 Public Timetable which was the first example of a National Public timetable with all regions in one volume – a weighty tome of 832 pages.*

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 1977 was a typical summer Thursday at Taunton. Thursdays were the calm before the impending storm – there was a frequent service of goods and passenger trains through the station but there was always the anticipation of the increased train service on Fridays and the intense Summer Saturday traffic to come.

Up the line in Weston Super Mare, an advertised day excursion (ADEX) coded 1Z28 was arriving behind a class 47 with 11 mk1 coaches including a buffet car. The train had originated at Derby and was one of many excursions that used to run during that year, using surplus rolling stock and tucked into pathways available between the service trains. It arrived at Weston on time at 12.40 and disgorged its load of passengers who walked to the beach with their bath towels, buckets and spades. Now it was (and still is) very difficult to run around a train at Weston and there is nowhere to store such a train so the procedure was that excursions would run on empty stock to Taunton, to run round, sit in a siding and depart back for Weston Super Mare at the appointed time to collect their happy passengers. The class 47 made good time to Taunton, arriving on time at 13.15 and sat in the down relief platform awaiting other trains.

The next train, on the Down Main, was the down Cornish Riviera Limited, the 11.30 Paddington to Penzance. The down line signals came off one by one and then there were those two or three minutes of lull period when everyone knew something stirring was about to happen. The service had lost its real aura of former years but there was still some excitement as the train roared through dead on time at 13.29 at the maximum speed of 80mph.

Following it, off the Bristol line, was the 6V53 04.27 Stoke on Trent to St Blazey empty china clays, which ran through at 13.37.

While the excursion train was sitting in the Down Relief platform, 1V76 the 9.20 Liverpool – Penzance had left Bristol and was due in at Taunton at 13.46, on the same platform. The excursion would have to be out of the way to clear this train so now was the moment that the excursion train had to run round. The procedure for running round was well established. The locomotive would be uncoupled from the coaches then run forward across the crossover to the Down Main. Then the locomotive would set back along the Down Main towards East Junction, then back over the crossover onto the rear of the coaches. The locomotive would then propel the whole train out towards Silk Mill on the down relief line and stop. At this moment the train would be blocking the down relief line but normally nothing was signalled out on this line. At another gap in the traffic the train would be signalled across all the lines to the Up Relief and finally back into the Up carriage sidings. The excursion class 47 ran around as planned, and pushed the coaches out onto the down relief to wait.

The Liverpool – Penzance arrived and left on time at 13.48.

Two o'clock arrived and the late turn staff came on Duty, including the Movements Supervisor, Mr Jim Lidon, working from his office on the downside platform (formerly known as the Station Master's office). From just outside his office he had a clear view of the trains coming and going, including those in East Yard. It was to be a useful point in the hours ahead.

Now was the chance for the West Station signalman to cross the excursion over. The crossing movement meant reversing three crossovers, Down Relief to Down Main, Down Main to Up Main and Up Main to Up relief. The signalman released the locks by pushing back levers 71 and 74 then pulled levers 75, 70 and 69 and the lock lever 71. He then released the shunting signal (dummy) by pulling lever 76. The train started across the pointwork.

The west station signalman watched the excursion train carefully as it threaded its way over the crossovers. There was no rush as the next down train was not for a while. As the excursion crossed he set the dummy (lever 76) back to normal and then pushed lever 75 over. Sadly he was a moment too soon, for the back bogie of the last coach was beyond the points and continued to follow the down relief line. The front bogie of the coach was on the crossovers, correctly following the pointwork, and the result was the coach slewed broadside across all the tracks. The coach swept all before it – lineside switch boxes, point rodding, and more. This last coach was by now making a sharp angle with the penultimate coach and both were tipping over, with the buckeye coupling under great strain. The leading bogie of the last



**Photo: The view west a few minutes after the derailment. Note the two coaches both leaning severely. *David Hartland***

coach derailed as the movement continued. At that moment the vacuum pipe broke and the train came to a shuddering halt. (It is worth noting that had this vacuum pipe not parted, the coach movement would have continued along the line and might well have swept the West Station box away.)

After a short moment of quiet, everything happened at once. The West station signalman sent 6 bells (Obstruction Danger) to East Junction and to Silk Mill Crossing boxes and alerted Bristol Control calling for the breakdown services. (*I believe the incident occurred at 14.10 approximately*). In the Movement Supervisor's office, Mr Liddon called his staff together to decide what to do and rang Bristol Control. The first thing was to open the centre platform.

The centre platform at Taunton had been out of general use for some years. The steps from the subway remained, but these were closed off by a pair of doors in the subway and a huge sliding shutter across the tops at platform level. It was clear that platform 2 as it was designated, would need to be used so this was opened up. There was a limitation on the centre platform however – there were no loudspeakers for train announcements, so to make an announcement the only thing the train announcer could do was to switch on the speakers for both up and down lines and speak loudly into his microphone. That way passengers on the centre platform could hear train information (as could much of the surrounding district). Having platform 2 in operation allowed trains terminating at Taunton to arrive and not block the passage of trains into and out of the down relief.



The down lines west of the station were obviously out of use, but if the remains of the excursion train could be moved, then the Up Relief platform could be cleared for Up trains. The excursion was uncoupled from the two stricken coaches and moved out of the station. (It worked its way back to Weston later on (due away at 18.20) and departed for Derby with two fewer coaches than earlier in the day).



A class 08 was brought from East Yard and coupled up to the penultimate coach M4477 to stabilise it and prevent it moving in the next operation, which was to cut the coupling between it and the last (derailed) coach. There was a small Carriage and Wagon maintenance team at Taunton, and they gathered their tools including oxy acetylene and moved to Railway Street. The cutting torch was brought into play and after a few minutes the coupling parted to a great cracking sound. The penultimate coach M4477 attached to the 08 moved violently but regained its upright position on the rails and the 08 was able to draw it out of the way to East Yard. This cleared the Up Relief line and from then Up trains could run as normal by inching past the derailed coach, although with long delays. The derailed coach remained blocking the Down lines and the Up Main and nothing more

**Photo: Loco 25052 has been brought from the loco shed area to couple up to the rear coach once it is rerailed. In the middle of the picture are the flattened signalling cabinets and damaged point rodding, while on the left can be seen the derailed bogie. *David Hartland***

could be done until the breakdown crane arrived.

On the down line, however, traffic was building up. In Mr Liddon's office the phone lines had been busy working out what to do with the stream of trains arriving from Bristol and London. Trains north of Bristol or east of Castle Cary could be diverted via Yeovil and the Southern Region, but there were already trains beyond these points which would arrive at Taunton shortly. They could be terminated, with the passengers transferred into other trains; or buses could be brought to carry passengers onwards; but there was one other option, and that was to use the Goods avoiding lines. Now in the period before the Second World War, these lines had been used occasionally for summer express trains not stopping at Taunton, and the trackwork allowed such movements even if the signalling did not. (Facing point locks were installed every summer and removed every autumn in a bizarre arrangement between the Traffic and Signal Departments). To gain access to the Goods lines, trains arriving at Taunton would have to set back to East Junction then proceed carefully on the Goods lines to Fairwater and then to Silk Mill. Any facing points would be clipped and the trains signalled past by hand. The arrangements were made.



**Staff are beginning to assemble at the derailment to offer advice, or just to observe. *David Hartland***

The 6B36 12.25 Avonmouth – Exeter City Basin oil tanks arrived and ran into the Goods Loop at 14.35 and was put into a siding out of the way.

Next on the scene was the 12.30 Paddington – Paignton, due to depart at 14.44. This arrived in No.1 Platform, the down relief, and after station duties, set back to East Junction before proceeding down the Goods Loop. The coaches were tinted window air cons and it was difficult from where I was standing to see whether the passengers were taking much interest in the incident.

Then there was the 10.23 Manchester – Plymouth due away at 14.53. Again, it arrived and then set back to East Junction and down the Goods Loop. The train was full and passengers were leaning out of every window to have a look at the derailment as the train crawled past.

The next train was the Thursdays only (unadvertised) 1V84 08.29 Newcastle – Newquay SAGA train. This was a regular train run for the benefit of older customers on holiday in Newquay and was due to change crews at Taunton on the down main at 15.13. In the event it did not enter the station but was signalled directly onto the Goods Loop and the driver and second man had to walk over to the Goods Yard to change crews.

Shortly afterwards the 14.15 Bristol – Taunton arrived at 15.26 at the centre platform.

From this point on, I believe all trains had been cleared west of Castle Cary and south of Bristol. Down Trains that were timetabled for the rest of the afternoon were as follows:

13.30 Paddington – Penzance non-stop due through at 15.43.

10.40 Leeds – Paignton 'The Devonian' due away at 15.48.

14.30 Paddington – Paignton due 16.49 (also called at Tiverton Junction)

16.10 Temple Meads – Plymouth Parcels due at 16.56

16.15 Temple Meads – Taunton arrive 17.23.

15.30 Paddington – Penzance 17.37

17.20 Bridgwater – Taunton Goods arrive 17.45

13.20 Liverpool – Plymouth 17.55

I believe these (except for the stoppers) were all diverted away from the area.



**Photo: The steam breakdown crane has arrived from Bristol with more staff. The crane operator is adjusting the controls while everyone else looks on. Note the HiVi jackets of the time – just short vests of a rather more yellow colour than today's bright orange. In the background can be seen the GWS Auto Trailer 92 undergoing restoration. David Hartland.**

**The jib has been raised to full height before turning around to tackle the derailed coach. David Hartland**





At around 16.00 the breakdown train arrived from Bristol with the steam crane in readiness, the fire having been lit at Bristol and steam raised by the time it arrived at Taunton. It was run round and propelled to the derailment via the Down Main and set up the outriggers and blocks ready for a slew lift. The photographs show the lift underway and it was a delightful scene, seeing the massive breakdown crane lifting the coach with minimum fuss and virtually silent – the merest of chuffs the only evidence of the great forces at work. It was so quiet that the verbal instructions of the crane supervisor could be heard by the onlookers in Railway Street. Before long the coach was standing on the down relief track on its bogies and the line was clear. *(I am not sure of the exact time but it would have been around 19.00. It was not the last time I saw a railway steam crane in action, but it was one of the last duties of the Bristol crane before being replaced by a diesel version a few years later).*

The next day there was some clearing up to do – signalling equipment to be repaired, some rails to straighten, the damaged coaches sent to Swindon – but within three or four days the whole railway operation was back to normal.

*The use of the Goods avoiding lines was, as far as I know, the first time that regular scheduled passenger trains had been allowed on them since the 1930's and the last, for by 1986 they were severed as through lines as part of the resignalling project. For me, I have travelled on a large proportion of the lines in this country, including many little loops and avoiding lines, but never did I travel on those lines so close to my home station – the Taunton Goods Avoiding line.*



**Photo: The lift is about to start. The crane will lift the coach at the derailed end, then slew to the left and place the derailed bogie back onto the down relief line where 25052 is ready to take it away and clear the line. David Hartland**

## **EVENING MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2026**

Meetings are held on the third Friday of each month, throughout the year, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall, near Taunton. TA3 5DE (unless otherwise indicated) commencing at 19.30, and members and visitors are all welcome.

- 16 Jan** 'Steam Recreations' by Don Bishop
- 20 Feb** **GROUP ANNUAL MEETING** and 'Update from Didcot'
- 20 Mar** 'Locomotives on the WSR' by Alan Randle
- 17 Apr** 'Steam in the Sixties' by Alan Reeve
- 22 May** 'Travels with a Dorset Man' by Simon Foote
- 19 Jun** 'A Cornish Boy Goes Home' by Peter Triggs
- 17 Jul** 'Here There and Everywhere' by Jack Boskett
- 21 Aug** 'A Cornish Boy in Somerset' by Peter Triggs
- 18 Sep** 'Where and What is it' by Ian Bennett
- 16 Oct** 'Diesels in Devon' by Amyas Crump
- 20 Nov** 'More Railway Tales' by David Hartland
- 18 Dec** 'Video Transport Highlights 2016' by David Brabner

