

BRANCH LINE NEWS

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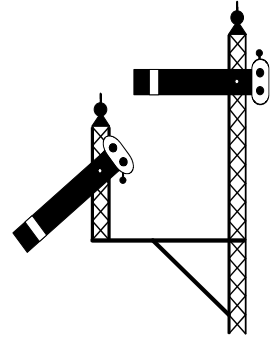
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This newsletter covers the British Isles from information supplied by members.

An international section is also available

Worldwide short-notice news can be heard on *BranchLine* ☎ 020 8556 9697.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Compilers or of the Society.



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Record of Openings and Closures

1009] Thames Haven Branch: Amend BLN 1097.732 with note that trains traverse rest of line to Thames Haven Yard to run round after unloading.

1010] Clonsilla - M3 Parkway (BLN 1122.846, 1124.920) ROP to regular services was 3rd September 2010 but ceremonial opening with a special train was on Thursday 2nd September.

1011] South Wexford Line closure (BLN 1122.847, 1124.964) was also CA Rosslare Strand - Belview Port on the same date.

1012] Workington North station day of closure (BLN 1124.921) was, of course, a Friday.

1013] Bathgate, new station - old station CP on Saturday 16th October, and new station OP on Monday 18th October 2010 (BLN 1123.887, 1125.1004). (Airdrie line opening (BLN 1111.364) remains on target for second weekend of December).

1014] LUAS Dublin Tram System, Green Line, extension (BLN 1124.922) is OP/ROP, with two sections on former Harcourt Street - Bray formation, and new terminus, beyond Cherrywood itself, is at Bride's Glen (apostrophe added soon after 16th October opening). Free travel that weekend, so revenue traffic commenced Monday 18th October 2010.

1015] Milton Regis - Kemsley Down (S & K Lt Rly) (BLN 1124.924) ROP on 24th October 2010 to public services, with members special on Saturday 23rd (to seasonal heritage services, with regular timetable operation from Spring 2011).

Statutory Procedures Progress

1016] Manchester Metrolink. Notice given on 10th November 2010 by GMPTE of proposal to cease passenger services at Mosley Street with effect from 28th February 2011, with representations to be made by 9th February.

GREATER LONDON

1017] North London Lines: (BLN 1115.609) SE-Gen reports that the North London Lines resignalling blocks will be as follows. The first over Christmas and New Year will see the commissioning of signalling between Primrose Hill/Camden West Jct. and Stratford. This will see the closure of the Stratford North London panel at Liverpool Street IECC and Dalston Western Junction and Camden Road signal boxes. TfL have announced that their services will be suspended between Gospel Oak and Stratford from the evening of 18th December until 24th December. London Overground shuts down on the 25th and 26th and then Richmond to Stratford and Shepherd's Bush to Willesden Jct. will be suspended from 27th December until 3rd January 2011. Freight trains will be diverted but, due to the works including the Channelsea Jct. area, trains from the Great Eastern main line cannot be diverted via Temple Mills after Stratford station as they were earlier this year.

The second closure will be between Camden West Jct. and Willesden High Level Jct. during the February half term week. This will see the closure of Gospel Oak and Willesden Jct. High Level signal boxes. This closure will affect the Gospel Oak to Barking service as well as the North and West London Lines. Freight trains will be diverted via Primrose Hill and Willesden West London Jct.

When this is all finished the line from Stratford platforms 1/2 and Channelsea/High Meads/Lea Jcts. to Willesden High Level will all be controlled from a new North London panel in Upminster IECC, with all signals prefixed NL. Acton Wells and Wembley at Willesden, Upper Holloway on the T&H line and Liverpool Street boxes at Stratford will be the boundaries. TfL warn that weekend closures will continue until mid-2011.

1018] Barons Court Siding: (BLN 1112.412) On 6th November Piccadilly Line trains were again reversing in the eastbound platform at Hammersmith.

1019] Crossrail: (BLN 1125.973) Crossrail is about to submit a planning application for the Western Ticket Hall at Tottenham Court Road. It will be constructed on a site bound by Oxford Street, Great Chapel Street, Dean Street and Diadem Court. The station will be constructed with five levels, with the ticket hall at street level. The press release quotes the Crossrail Chief Executive as saying that the station will be one of the most important on the Crossrail route and will be constructed on a scale similar to those on the Jubilee Line Extension.

1020] Gospel Oak-Barking: On Sunday 7th November a member made two trips on the line and encountered trains with virtually all seats taken and some passengers standing. This mirrors your sub-editor's experience on other days of the week. The line now looks very different compared with Silverlink days, with staffed and refurbished stations and new Class 172 units providing the service. Monday-Saturday services are due to increase to every 15 minutes for most of the day from January. However this will effectively create a "walk on" service and no doubt attract more passengers. It could well be that the 2-car Class 172s will ultimately prove insufficient to handle the traffic on offer and full electrification could be on the agenda again.

1021] Paddington: (BLN 1117.637) *Transport Briefing* reports that Carillion has been awarded the first of Crossrail's major station contracts, the Paddington Integrated Project. This follows on from the work carried out in August during the closure of the Hammersmith & City Line. PIP works include building a new gateline and concourse above the H&C platforms with views across the throat of Paddington station. A new taxi turnround will be constructed on the redundant London Street/Red Star deck, currently used by Morgan Sindall as a site compound while it carries out work on the Brunel station shed's fourth roof span. Lifts and escalators from this taxi deck will be installed to provide access to and from Paddington station concourse. A new taxi ramp will be built

to link the turnround with Bishop's Bridge Road. The scheme also includes provision for a future commercial development above the upgraded H&C station. Separate contracts will be let to build Paddington Crossrail station.

1022] Stratford: (BLN 1121.814) A notice dated 8th November states that new trailing points, secured out of use and detected in the normal position, will be installed on the Down Main Line at approximately 4m 31ch in preparation for future works – this being for the new Angel Lane Loop. A new trailing crossover (No 2159) between the Up and Down Main lines has been installed and commissioned between 4m 25ch and 4m 30ch (London end of Maryland Station). The permissible speed for diverging routes over the new crossover is 50mph. This crossover will be blocked to electric trains until further notice. The route from the Down Main (Stratford Platform 10) to Down Main (Maryland platform 4) via the Up Main (signal L273 A2(M) via points 2152, 2153 reverse and 2159 reverse) will remain disconnected until further notice.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

1023] Durham Coast Resignalling: (BLN1116.605) A member has recently advised that Stranton Signalbox at Hartlepool was demolished on 13th November 2010. Clarence Road the other side of the station behind Tesco, and Dawdon were due to be demolished the following day Sunday 14 November. Seaham is staying to work the wicket gates and the signalling will now be between Greatham and Ryhope Grange. Cliff House was demolished last year.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND

1024] Moor Row (BLN 1122.855): Moor Row station was located four Bradshaw miles from Whitehaven Bransty on the Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont Joint lines east of the Furness Railway coastal main line. The station closed to passengers from 16th June 1947, but not until 2nd March 1964 for freight. At Moor Row, the lines diverged, south via Egremont to join the coast route north of Sellafield (Service withdrawn from 16th June 1947), or east to Workington via Cleator Moor East, Lamplugh and Bridgefoot (Service withdrawn from passengers 13th April 1931, but the coal depot at Rowrah survived until 21st August 1967). In 1878 the WC&E Joint was acquired jointly by the LNWR and FR. The four road MPD appeared circa 1884, replacing an earlier structure. In 1950, the allocation of 12E totalled twelve locomotives, two “Derby 4’s”, four “Jintys”, and six 0-6-0 tender engines, including as reported, three Pettigrew Furness Railway 0-6-0 3F, introduced in 1913, 52494 (FR Number one), 52499 (FR 28) and 52510 (FR 33). As late as 1953 the shed still had a passenger turn, possibly the evening workmans’ train from Sellafield to Barrow and Workington. Allegedly, in spite of the efforts of the “Cumberland County Council”, the shed closed on Saturday 31st July 1954. 52494 and 52510 survived until the last day, then finished their working lives at Workington, Barrow and Carnforth depots.

1025] Brunthill: Members might be interested in the fact that the Brunthill branch (Carlisle) has just lost its last regular traffic. The cement traffic to Kingstown Whittall's Warehouses stopped running over 18 months ago leaving just the twice weekly flow of ferry vans conveying tin coils as well for Metal Box Co. in Carlisle. This traffic finished abruptly on 20th October after Metal Box announced a switch in production from traditional cans to aluminium ones. The last booked train ran from Kingmoor Yard on the 20th as trip 6T04 at 08.00. There was however a final run on Friday 5th November as a single van loaded with coils had remained in South Wales possibly due to a wagon defect. It had come north on 6M75 20.28 Margam to Kingmoor on the 4th being tripped to Kingstown on the morning of the 5th. With no word of any new traffic the line is now out of use having been covered by the BLS 'Route 66 Railtour' barely a month earlier on the 9th October.

1026] Rochdale: The details of the Rochdale re-signalling have recently been slightly altered/amended. During Stage 1 commencing 29/08/2011 Smithy Bridge signal box will be reduced from a block post to a crossing box, Rochdale signal box will close and Rochdale West signal box will open.

1027] Metrolink: It was reported in the Manchester Evening News on 8th November that trams to MediaCityUK were suspended again because of problems with a new signalling system. The article stated “The gradual switch from the old railway signalling system on the Eccles line to the modern way of controlling trams is now on hold while bosses investigate an ‘anomaly’ on the newly-opened spur. Services were suspended last week when a driver ‘saw something he didn’t expect to’ on his signalling controls. Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority’s Metrolink director Phil Purdy refused to say what the driver had reported but insisted: ‘There were no safety implications whatsoever.’ The new system, which will allow drivers to use their line of sight rather than only allowing one tram on a section of track at a time, is slowly being rolled out and will eventually cover the whole network. The new system will lead to much more flexibility – allowing trams to queue up at a safe distance at busy times rather than having to wait in a separate section of track, possibly miles away. It will also mean ‘real-time’ electronic information screens will tell passengers how near their tram is”. Trams were reported to have re-commenced on the branch shortly after the report.

1028] Metrolink: Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority (GMITA) is proposing to close the Mosley Street Metrolink stop in Manchester city centre. The closure of the stop will offer passengers faster journey times for outbound services, improve access and visibility to retailers at the rear of the stop and will enable tram traffic to be managed more effectively through the city centre particularly as the network is extended. Earlier this year, GMITA granted approval to proceed with the formal closure procedure with the Department for Transport. As part of the closure process, the Department for Transport will be launching the public consultation on the proposals this week (10th November). Notices will be published in the regional press this week and next week to announce the consultation. Anyone wishing to respond will have until 9 February 2011 to do so, after which the Department for Transport will collate the responses to allow ministers to make their decision in conjunction with the Office of Rail Regulation.

1029] Metrolink: The Oldham News recently reported that foundations for platforms at four new Oldham Metrolink stops have been completed as the drive to bring trams into the town centre continues. With the opening of the first section of the Oldham and Rochdale line now only months away — to Manchester’s Central Park next spring — engineers are forging ahead on work in Oldham and its surrounding districts. Platform foundations are now finished at Freehold, South Chadderton, Hollinwood and Failsworth. Major bridge refurbishments in Chadderton and Freehold are continuing after contractors M-Pact Thales decided they needed extra strengthening. New tracks have been laid in Hollinwood. Trams are not due in the town centre until 2014, but progress has been guaranteed by the acquisition of Network Rail land around Thorp Road and Dean Lane in Newton Heath for Metrolink works. In Rochdale, piling for the foundations of the Rochdale East Viaduct next to the Calder Valley lines, is under way. The installation of the main bridge beams will be carried out on New Year’s Day.

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND – NORTH

1030] Bletchley: *Transport Briefing* for 10 November reports that Signalling Solutions Ltd, a 50-50 joint venture between Alstom Transport and Balfour Beatty Rail, has won a £22 million contract for Network Rail’s Bletchley remodelling project. SSL will be responsible for the detailed design, construction, testing and commissioning for the signalling and signalling power-related elements of

the Bletchley remodelling project on the West Coast Main Line. Works will start shortly with final commissioning scheduled for December 2012. Network Rail will take advantage of the need to replace life-expired signalling equipment and power distribution systems in the area to upgrade the Bletchley track layout. This project will raise the current speed from 110mph to 125mph on one of the fast lines through Bletchley station and provides greater flexibility for train operations, including supporting the extension of Bedford-Bletchley local trains to Milton Keynes and East West Rail Link proposals to run trains between Reading and Bedford. The Bletchley remodelling project will also provide longer platforms, enhanced stabling facilities and carriage sidings which can be accessed without obstructing through running lines. All infrastructure upgraded is due to be in use by June 2013 with snagging completed in September 2013.

1031] Croxley: *Transport Briefing* for 27 October reports that survival of the Croxley rail link and Watford Junction interchange schemes hangs in the balance after the coalition government said their value for money was not clear. The projects are among 34 which were granted Programme Entry under the previous government's Regional Funding Allocation system and which have now been assigned to a new Pre-Qualification Pool of major local transport schemes. A small number are expected to be promoted in January 2011 to a Development Pool of schemes that may go ahead should funding be available. The remaining projects will not receive central government funding for the rest of the spending review period to 2015 and will effectively be scrapped.

1032] Theale: A temporary modular steel passenger platform has been constructed on the upside of the Up / Down Goods Loop adjacent to the Up Main line platform at Theale. The platform is 140 metres (153 yards) long and will be numbered '3'. An HST reversing board will also be provided at the London end of the Goods Loop. Use of the platform must be specially authorised and special working arrangements will apply. Your compiler speculates that this is to permit scheduled east to west reversals of trains from the Newbury direction during works at Reading which may reduce capacity at the time. The Up Westbury at Theale is also signalled for bi-directional running and both this and the Up / Down Goods are within the bounds of crossovers permitting access to and from the Down Westbury (but not necessarily with signalled moves). The platform numbering at Theale will have become 3, 1, 2, joining the small group of stations with non-sequential numbers which includes Portsmouth and Southsea (2, 1, 3, 4) and Baker Street (6, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4).

1033] St Ives (Cambs): Writing in *Transport Times* for October on what is described as the ambitious but troubled busway between Cambridge and St Ives, Christian Wolmar reports that campaigners are restating the argument that it would have been better to reopen the rail line instead. The root of the problem seems to be that laying a concrete guideway over the wet terrain of the Fens has proved troublesome. Reference is made to the difficulties constructing the Liverpool & Manchester railway over the marshy land of Chat Moss and a view is given on the procurement process "don't be a pioneer and if possible stick to tried and tested methods". It is also pointed out that the buses will have to travel further by using the trackbed in order not to add to the congestion on the A14 and thus be longer, both in distance and time, than the current conventional service.

1034] First Group Club 55 Promotion: (BLN 1122 Others' Doings) On two occasions a correspondent tried to make use of this promotion on First Great Western but was unable to obtain these tickets at Banbury or on FGW trains from there, and only with great difficulty at Oxford. Have any other members experienced similar problems? If so have they contacted the train operating company or trading standards?

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND – SOUTH

1035] Newhaven Marine - Ghost trains: On Wednesday, 27th October, BBC Radio 4 broadcast a programme called *The Ghost Trains of Old England*. Amongst the topics were the Stockport – Stalybridge service, including Reddish South and Denton stations; Teesside Airport; the Ealing Broadway to Wandsworth Road bus service and Newhaven Marine. The last named was bizarre. The presenter attempted to follow the instructions on the poster displayed at the (non) station by being in possession of a valid ticket and summoning a taxi via Southern. However, he was unable to buy a ticket at the nearest staffed station which, at the time he tried, was Seaford. The clerk told him that there was no such station as Newhaven Marine, this being confirmed by a phone call she made. He then went to Newhaven Marine, being let through the security gate when he said he wanted to use the station, and phoned Southern for a taxi, even though he didn't actually have a valid ticket because he couldn't get one. After some delay, he was told to get his own taxi and submit the bill. This caused some confusion, because the taxi company didn't know that Newhaven Marine existed! However, he got his taxi, also allowed through the security gate. We did not find out whether he got his fare refunded by Southern. Apparently, the poster tells prospective travellers what readers of past BLNs already know, that the station is unsafe for use. We were told by the radio presenter that there is no glass in the canopy and your correspondent understands that port staff happily park their cars on the platform.

1036] Epsom: *Transport Briefing* for 10 November reports that work at Epsom on Network Rail's first joint property development with Kier has got underway, two and a half years after a deal was signed with the contractor. The £31 million mixed-use scheme will provide 54 mixed tenure, affordable apartments for developer Orbit Homes, 63 private apartments, a 64-bedroom hotel and local convenience store as well as a revamped railway station, car parking and increased cycle parking facilities for passengers and residents. Developing new homes on the site will fully fund improvements to Epsom station, including a new ticket hall, car park and additional canopy coverage with new toilets on both platforms.

1037] Marchwood: Just after the defence review was announced, a local paper said that the Marchwood Military port was up for sale. A few years ago it had quite an extensive rail system, visited by a BLS tour hauled by a standard class 4 for a short run through the port. The current Quail shows the layout.

SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

1038] Brown Queen Tunnel: Torrential rain overnight on 16th/17th November caused a landslip to occur here. The Class 57 hauled Down sleeper subsequently ran into the landslip, leading to the closure of all lines west of Bodmin Parkway whilst the blockage was cleared.

1039] Comprehensive Spending Review: The South West region has fared poorly in terms of transport spending in the recent review. No rail schemes in the area appear to be funded at all, with little road spending south of the M4/M5 interchange north of Bristol. Electrification of the line from London to Bristol remains under consideration as part of the broader programme of works announced prior to the election, but certainly extensions further west or into South Wales now seem unlikely. In the meantime, the region is expected to lose around 81,000 jobs as a result of government cuts.

1040] Newquay Branch: The weather conditions also caused a further landslip in the vicinity of 'The Blacksmith's Hut' and also washed a large boulder onto the track near the south end of Luxulyan Tunnel. The 06.52 Par-Newquay service was north of the tunnel when this occurred and after arriving at Newquay, ran to Goonbarrow Junction where it was stabled. A small bus provided

an all-stations link between Par and Newquay, with an express coach service running Par to Newquay via St. Austell during the blockage.

1041] Plymouth area engineering works: Commencing on 16th October, the section of line between Plymouth and Liskeard was closed to traffic from 16.30 on Saturdays and all day on Sundays for engineering works. Buses replaced trains on the Great Western mainline, with Gunnislake trains operating to and from St. Budeaux Victoria Road. At the start of works on 16th October, arrangements did not work smoothly with no bus arriving to meet the 18.08 service from Gunnislake. A hasty re-arrangement resulted in a duplicate bus stationed at Liskeard being despatched to St. Budeaux at 18.35. Customer information systems also displayed the 18.23 service to Gunnislake as a train rather than a bus, resulting in passengers remaining on the platform and missing the replacement service. Taxis were arranged to convey passengers to intermediate stations. This too became a complex arrangement, as station staff are no longer permitted to arrange taxis locally – resulting in a Liverpool call-centre requiring spelling out of unfamiliar locations such as Bere Ferrers and Bere Alston. Saltash station also fared poorly with its replacement bus services unable to access the station and thus operating from Fore Street. Unfortunately publicity had not been updated to reflect this, causing further difficulty for passengers. Several correspondents have expressed a concern that generally, arrangements during this blockade have been poor, with ‘agency’ staff at stations very unfamiliar with the local area and connections missed by replacement buses because drivers were not familiar with routes, or had not been provided with information on where to call.

EAST MIDLANDS

1042] Whitwell: Lafarge Aggregates, who operate Whitwell Quarry next to the Robin Hood Line between Nottingham and Worksop, have applied for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to divert a 3/4 mile section of the line including 544 yards within Whitwell tunnel. The company wish to extract the limestone surrounding the tunnel and planning consent for the extraction was granted by Derbyshire County Council in 2006.

The order would allow construction of a new section of railway in a cutting within the quarry roughly parallel with and south east of the existing formation. An underpass would be constructed for quarry traffic and a bridge built to carry the line across it to allow access to quarry areas north and south of the line. Public footpaths currently crossing the tunnel portal would be diverted and a footbridge built to allow pedestrians to cross the new line.

A scheme has been agreed with Network Rail to ensure normal operation of the line whilst the diverted section is built and the connection of the new line and commissioning of the signalling is expected to be completed during two short weekend closures from Saturday night to Monday morning.

WEST MIDLANDS

1043] Stourbridge: More than half a million passenger journeys have been made on the Stourbridge Junction-Stourbridge Town Parry People Mover shuttle since it launched in mid 2009. Two lightweight Class 139 rail cars replaced conventional trains on the route last year and the 500,000th passenger trip was made on Tuesday 17 August. The vehicles are operated by sub-contractor Pre Metro Operations Ltd under the London Midland franchise.

Introducing the rail cars has enabled an increase in service frequency and now there are departures in each direction every 10 minutes for most of the day from Monday to Saturday with a lower frequency on Sunday. Comparison of passenger numbers show that for the period end-June to mid-August patronage has risen by 20% between 2009 and 2010. Services on the line have operated at over 99% service reliability since the start of 2010 and a new maintenance depot - now at the planning stage - should help improve reliability still further.

The proposed depot site is on Network Rail land at Stourbridge Junction to the rear of the current Chiltern Railways sidings. London Midland is seeking a turnkey solution for the £1m contract which will comprise all M&E, civils and structural works including trackwork. Expressions of interest are due in by 8 September.

The branch has been slightly shortened recently. Work continues gradually to reduce the rail joint 'dips' which are not well tolerated by the lightweight Parry People Movers. As part of this the current extremity of the branch has just been re-laid, the original stop block put back and a second much smaller lower example (which matches the end profile of the trains better) positioned slightly further down the Town platform, extending the passengers walk there.

The correspondent was surprised when arriving on a terminating packed 4 coach train from Birmingham at Stourbridge Junction during the rush hour to find that only 12 passengers went forward to Stourbridge Town, everyone having a seat.

1044] Bromsgrove: A scheme to relocate Bromsgrove station as part of a rail electrification package is hanging in the balance following cuts to the budget of the soon-to-be-abolished West Midlands regional development agency.

Network Rail says the project remains unsecured and is now in doubt after being told third party funding for the scheme is no longer available. The relocation of Bromsgrove station is a prerequisite for electrification and the extension of Cross City line services.

Plans to rebuild Bromsgrove station on a brownfield site next to the existing station were announced in May 2007 when an estimated completion date of December 2008 was given for the £12m project. In the previous 12 years a 400% increase in passenger numbers was recorded at the station.

According to the Bromsgrove Rail Users Group the project, which would see one of Network Rail's modular station buildings erected, faces a £5m shortfall - money previously pledged by Advantage West Midlands. The regional development agency has been required by central government to cut expenditure by £40m during 2010-11 and is due to be abolished by March 2012.

1045] Shirley to Stratford-upon-Avon (BLN 1121.833): The introduction of the new signalling will result in the demolition of Bearley, Henley in Arden and Shirley signal boxes despite opposition from local residents particularly in Shirley. The boxes were built in 1908 when the North Warwickshire line was constructed. Demolition of Henley Box was scheduled for Friday 29th October with Bearley Box on Saturday 30th October.

1046] Kenilworth to Berkswell: Maps issued by the DfT earlier this year showed that the proposed line HS2 will use a short length of the Kenilworth to Berkswell trackbed at Burton Green and then run very close to it (but not actually on it) to Berkswell.

The correspondent questions if Warwickshire County Council, who have just given the go-ahead for Sustrans Connect2 scheme to convert this line into a cycleway, are aware of this plan. A bridge over the A429 (was A46) at Kenilworth will also be built as part of the full proposal.

1047] Birmingham Moor Street (BLN's 1121.830, 1124.956, 1125.nnn): During the weekend of 13th and 14th November the Chiltern Railways Services will also be impacted by the engineering works. On the Saturday the services will terminate at Solihull. On the Sunday there will be no service with passengers being advised to travel to Oxford and then onward to Paddington.

1048] Birmingham Midland Metro: Work to extend the Midland Metro in Birmingham and build facilities for a new tram fleet will begin next year following the comprehensive spending review.

The route extension will see trams follow a route from the existing Metro terminus at Snow Hill, along a £9m viaduct already built, down Bull Street and Corporation Street and on to

Stephenson Street, stopping outside a new entrance at New Street station. Work is due for completion in 2014 ahead of the Birmingham New Street upgrade, currently scheduled for completion in 2016.

Further schemes to extend the line to Wolverhampton railway station and provide tram or bus links to the proposed new HS2 Curzon Street station are being considered.

1049] Cotswold Line: Rail Services company Amey has secured two contracts for the £67m Cotswold line redoubling project. Network Rail has appointed the company to deliver a package of station upgrades, power and communications works and renewals of signalling and level crossings. This forms part of the North Cotswold line upgrade between Worcester and Oxford.

Under the £13m contract Amey will modernise level crossings at Littleton & Badsey, Chipping Campden, Blockley and Ascott, installing new barriers and lights. The current token exchange signalling systems along the route will be upgraded with new axle counter technology and signalling control panels at Evesham and Ascott-under-Wychwood will be modernised with digital equipment.

Charlbury, Ascott-under-Wychwood and Honeybourne stations will have improved facilities, including new platforms and footbridges with step-free access, new lighting and real-time digital passenger information systems.

Meanwhile the joint venture between Amey and Colas Rail has been chosen to lay new track as part of the project. A production line system to lay new track will cover about a mile a week with the whole process lasting until May 2011.

1050] Birmingham Moor Street (BLN's 1121.830, 1124.956, 1125.999): The signalling work for the new bay platforms was commissioned on schedule over the weekend of 12th to 13th November. An editorial visit on 14th November found that work on the bay platforms had not yet been fully completed with new platform edging stones still to be laid. Presumably this is due to the fact that Chiltern Railways services for which the bay platforms have been refurbished will not start until the new timetable in December.

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

1051] York: A member stayed at the Cedar Court Grand Hotel in York during May. This was formerly the 1906 NER Headquarters building, and now a seriously upmarket hotel. It had opened for business the Friday prior to our member staying there and our member was the first guest to book over the counter (i.e. Not via a call centre). A BLS First perhaps? It is, of course, a listed structure inside and out, so there are strict limits as to what they can do with the "restrained Art Nouveau" interior. Our member reported it is very nice.....

1052] Doncaster: Public consultation on the proposed £54m North Doncaster flyover (now known as the North Doncaster Chord) that will take freight trains from Stainforth Jn over the ECML at Joan Croft Junction has raised concerns that barrier down times will cause delays to road traffic. As a result the level crossing is to be replaced by a road bridge carrying Joan Croft Lane over the ECML.

1053] Keighley: The new car park for 66 vehicles at Keighley Station opened in early September with the opening of the new college in Dalton Lane. The old car park will now be closed for refurbishment. There is also a new (gated) entrance from the Dalton Lane car park to the platforms at Keighley station.

IRELAND

1054] Clonsilla – M3 Parkway: (BLN 1124.920) The *Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society* for October gives the following commissioning information on the branch from Clonsilla to M3 Parkway. On Monday 19th July a recording car was noted passing Drumcondra for its first run to M3 Parkway; on Friday night 30th July a loco was used to test signals and points; at 07.36 on Sunday 1st August signalling was commissioned; on Tuesday 3rd August driver training began on the line; on Thursday 2nd September the line was officially opened by the Minister for Transport using a special train and on the following morning, Friday 3rd September, the first commercial service operated, being the 06.50 M3 Parkway to Docklands.

1055] Midleton: (BLN 1096.694) The *Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society* for October records that *The Evening Echo* reported that Iarnród Éireann were very happy with usage of the new service on the Midleton branch since July 2009, more than 200,000 passengers having used it in twelve months. However, car parks remain virtually empty as people park their cars on nearby roads rather than pay the charge. Car park capacity is 340 spaces at Midleton, 180 at Carrigtwohill, 46 at Glounthaune and 110 at Little Island.

1056] Ballina: The *Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society* for October records that container loading at Ballina has moved to the Crossmolina siding accessed through the level crossing. Loading and unloading was previously done on the two loops parallel to the loco run round at the station. Quail records the station as five chains short of the level crossing and the gate over (or beyond) Crossmolina siding as 17 chains beyond the level crossing and line end nine chains further.

1057] Oranmore: The *Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society* for October records agreement between Iarnród Éireann and Galway County Council on acquisition of a site for the new station, without stating which option has been selected.

SCOTLAND

1058] Scotland RUS predicts 115% passenger increase: Network Rail has published its draft second Scottish route utilisation strategy, building on the RUS of May 2007, and setting out plans to accommodate a predicted doubling of passenger numbers on some Scottish lines during the next 20 years; rail freight is expected to grow by about 11% by 2030. Consultation is due to conclude on 13th January 2011, with the final document being published during that summer. Recommendations to be considered to deal with this include new or strengthened services on a number of lines from Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire into Glasgow Central, further electrification of routes in the Strathclyde area and the introduction of additional services or stops on routes between Fife and North Berwick and Edinburgh. Network Rail also proposes earlier trains in the morning between Glasgow and Edinburgh, introducing additional morning and evening peak services between Aberdeen and Stonehaven and reinstating a platform at Aberdeen to increase capacity. New passing loops could be installed on the Highland Main Line to deliver faster journey times.

1059] Quintinshill accident memorial: The *Annandale Observer* of 1st October reports a ceremony on Sunday 26th September at Blacksike bridge, to mark the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the multiple train collision which occurred there on the morning (the *Observer* incorrectly has 6.50 pm – the collisions are reckoned to have happened at 6.46 and 6.50 am) of 22nd May 1915, and in which 226 people lost their lives (the frequently-seen figure of 227 was rounded down after later checks carried out by the regiment of the Royal Scots, whose troop train from Larbert, heading for Liverpool for embarkation to Gallipoli, incurred the vast majority of dead and injured). Some media have misreported the location of the plaque as Quintinshill bridge, which is south of the location; Blacksike is the overbridge at the north end of the loops. In his book “*The*

Caledonian Railway”, the railway historian O.S. Nock writes of noting from a footplate run that from a long way north of this bridge there was a view to the signalbox; however, with the line starting to curve southward from the bridge, the presence of a freight train on the Down loop would cut the line of sight of the troop train Driver, who would consequently be unable to observe the local train from Carlisle, which, both loops now being occupied by freight trains, was shunted to the Up Main to allow the first of two late-running Down sleeper trains to pass; this was the first collision. Despite the efforts of surviving railwaymen on the ground to warn it, the oncoming sleeper was unable to stop and ran, fatally, into the wreckage.

1060] Edinburgh (no) Trams: (BLN 1113.522, 1114.596, 1123.912) *Transport Briefing* of 3rd November recorded the immediately effective resignation of the Edinburgh Trams chairman; that of the following week advised that Edinburgh Trams has stated that it will pursue recovery of costs from the contractor Bilfinger Berger following the latter’s filing of a defamation action against the former chairman, only to drop it when it reached court.

1061] Class 380 problems: (BLN 1118.710, 1125.1003) The software problem affecting Class 380 has been resolved; the first introduction of the units to service is expected before the end of November (refer Bathgate line item).

1062] Borders Rail: (BLN109.259, 1123.914) *Transport Briefing* of 3rd November also records that work to demolish the Cowbraehill bridge, located 8km south of the proposed Gorebridge station, as part of enabling works for the reopening project, started during the previous week, being expected to take a week to complete. The bridge, stated as crossing the old **and** planned railway alignments, had fallen into disrepair and a new permanent bridge will be constructed. Facing stone removed from Cowbraehill will be stored and provided to the main contractor, when appointed, to be used for repair and refurbishment of other bridges along the route. Other materials will be recycled and used by Scottish Borders Council on other projects. Steve Milligan, Borders Railway project director at Transport Scotland said: "We are making good progress on the Borders Railway project with this and other advance works well under way, all land needed for the project purchased, and the procurement of a contractor moving forward." However, *Transport Briefing* of the following week stated that the American construction giant Fluor, part of one of the three consortia bidding for the £240 million pound contract, was pulling out; no information could be given by either party as to why.

1063] Bathgate line: (BLN 1124.966, 1125.1004) Apology from your sub-editor for producing a “set of points” at the west end of the new Bathgate station; one of our members has advised that, during the changeover weekend, the platform line of the former station was slued into the new Up line from Airdrie. During the construction phase of the new station, trains between Edinburgh and Bathgate worked as single line between points east of the new station and the 1986 station, through what was to become the new station's Up platform 1. Insofar as the overhead line problems were concerned, besides the fault at Livingston North, the word on the street (OK, platform) is that the fault at Plains was due to a lack of tension in the overhead line equipment (OHLE); another source states that there was no test movement over the line prior to the start of the Traincrew route-learning program; it is alleged that one had been due to take place on Tuesday 19th October.

On Wednesday 17th November First ScotRail announced details of the introductory timetable for the through Bathgate line service commencing on 12th December: four trains an hour between Edinburgh and Bathgate during weekday peak times; at all other times there will be a half-hourly service, including what it states will be the first-ever direct services from Helensburgh to Edinburgh. The service frequency will increase over time between Edinburgh and Glasgow Queen Street Low Level, with trains every 15 minutes to be launched next Spring. The four trains an hour

frequency will apply from early morning until 19.00, then revert to half-hourly. The introductory timetable, involving a mix of electric and diesel trains, is to be enhanced as more new Class 380 trains (refer Class 380 item) are introduced on Ayrshire and Renfrewshire routes to and from Glasgow Central. Full details of the timetable - and subsequent enhancements as the new fleet is commissioned and all drivers are trained - will be posted on the First ScotRail website www.scotrail.co.uk.

WALES

1064] Network developments: Network Rail is continuing to work up an ambitious programme of Welsh rail schemes which have the support of the Assembly Government and qualify for European Regional Development aid. These include a new turnback platform at Pontypridd, and reopening part of the Anglesey Central Railway to provide an alternative to driving over the Britannia Bridge. The company is expected to advertise a tender for the long-delayed new station at Energlyn, north Caerphilly, by the end of this year, and is also progressing schemes to extend from Ebbw Vale Parkway to the town centre, and to allow trains to run between the Ebbw Valley and Newport. The next schemes to secure funding are expected to be infrastructure improvements allowing a reduction in train journey times between north and south Wales, and the redoubling of the South Wales Main Line between Cockett West and Duffryn West Junctions to allow an increase in train frequencies west of Swansea. Invitations to tender for both these schemes are expected soon. Meanwhile, Arriva Trains Wales is continuing to develop plans for station upgrades, to be funded through a combination of grants from the Welsh Assembly's National Station Improvements stream - which must be spent by 2015 - and European Regional Development money. Improvement of Swansea station is set to be followed by investment at Llandudno, with upgrades also planned for Port Talbot Parkway and Rhyl, and potentially Hereford and Shrewsbury. Arriva is project managing the Swansea upgrade, and is volunteering to oversee other station investment, although Network Rail is expected to appoint the main contractor for Llandudno works, with an invitation to tender said to be imminent.

1065] Swansea District Line: (BLN1125.1005) It should be stressed that the four weekday trains shown as booked by this route in PSUL cannot be wholly relied upon. With such a limited service, it is not possible to guarantee that all ATW drivers and conductors retain the necessary route knowledge, and when service disruption or staff absence result in such a situation, ATW Control is usually able to negotiate an alternative train path via Landore Loop. Whilst this has no booked passenger service at all, it is understood that, as the "third side of a triangle", no specific route knowledge of it is deemed necessary.

1066] Industrial unrest: With negotiations regarding drivers' pay and conditions still unresolved, 92% of ASLEF members in ATW recently voted in favour of industrial action. Whilst it may be an optimistic sign that a one day strike planned for 19 November has been called off pending further talks, there remains the threat of a strike affecting ATW services on 27 November, when a Wales vs New Zealand rugby union international at the Millennium Stadium will likely maximise the inconvenience.

MINOR RAILWAYS

MR244] Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, Derbyshire (MR p7): On 21st September 2010, 25 volunteers gathered a few hundred yards south of Hazelwood station to witness the laying of the "Golden Sleeper", the final sleeper to be changed in the restoration of the line between Wirksworth and Duffield. Clearance of what had become a completely overgrown railway commenced just under ten years ago in November 2000 and the ceremony marked the conclusion of an exercise that has resulted in the replacement of nearly 5,000 sleepers, the construction or reconstruction of six

station platforms, repair of 20 miles of fencing and the digging of innumerable drainage ditches and culverts. The replacement of the Golden Sleeper represents the completion of the hardest and most time-consuming part of the railway's restoration. Although several other tasks remain to be completed, the railway is on track towards its full re-opening in the spring of 2011. Neil Ferguson-Lee, the railway's spokesman remarked: "The countdown has started. We are now making preparations to reopen the remainder of the railway for the spring of next year. This now involves far more than construction work: we have to build a timetable to connect with main line services, organise through ticketing, publicity and, of greatest importance, some exciting and welcoming trains for our visitors to experience. The next railway to reopen in Derbyshire will be next spring and it will be from Duffield to Wirksworth!".

MR245] Epping Ongar Railway, Essex (MR p8): The railway remains closed, as work continues to upgrade track and stations. However, it now has a steam locomotive - this is "*Isabel*" an 0-6-0ST built by Hawthorn Leslie & Company in 1919. Built for industrial use, it will be quite capable of hauling two or three coach trains on low season days. "*Isabel*" has a current boiler certificate and is ready to be delivered to the railway as soon as the restoration of the infrastructure is completed. The station at Ongar continues to take shape in its gradual restoration back to its original Great Eastern Railway guise. The former Parcels Office is nearing complete restoration and will be used to house the museum and educational facility.

MR246] Royal Deeside Railway, Aberdeenshire (MR p9) (BLN 1121.MR194): Reference to the railway's web site would indicate the extension opened on Saturday 5th December 2009. It reports "*The week-end of the 5th December saw the first of the Santa Specials which are again being run by the railway this year. In spite of the rather wet weather on the Saturday there was a good number who braved the conditions to visit the railway, travel on the special and of course, meet Santa*".

MR247] Sausmarez Manor Miniature Railway, Guernsey (MR p12) (BLNs1018.MR76, 1054.MR195, 1100.MR192): It was noted in September 2010, that this 7¼" gauge railway is still only operating at weekends due to there being no permanent driver.

MR248] Southend Pier Railway, Essex (MR p16) (BLNs 1039.MR48, 1092.MR101, 1111.MR83): A member has been "after bagging" the halfway passing loop on this 3ft gauge railway for sometime. It is only used when a two train service is in operation, otherwise trains run past both ways on the "through" line at the loop (the western most of the two tracks). His plan was to combine a stab at the loop along with two "aquabashes" on the "*Waverley*" - to Clacton and Whitstable. In these regards the former was entirely successful and the latter not. He duly arrived on Saturday 25th September 2010 for the 13.00 sailing to Clacton, only to be greeted by signs saying it was cancelled due to high winds around Clacton. During obtaining his refund he enquired if they had two train working the next day and was told "yes and soon today too!" Apparently it was required to transport 800 people off the "*Waverley*" terminating ex Tower Bridge. So after a trip (with a one-train service in operation) out of the right-hand platform at the shore station and back, he did the required loop out of the left-hand platform at the shore station on the alternate train - after they had moved the battery electric single car unit out of the way to the other platform road, this of course altered the platform usage until one train operation was restored. The two train operation only lasted about an hour - so used just to clear the crowds. During the evening, there was another hour of two train working to get passengers back to the "*Waverley*" for its 19.00 sailing to Tower Bridge. These sailings appear to be the only really predictable two train operation now, as usage of the pier is limited by its almost complete lack of facilities/entertainment at the far end! On the Sunday, he presented himself for the 13.15 sailing to Whitstable. On this day trains started in the left-hand platform at the shore station and after the battery electric unit swap, ran from the right-

hand platform - again via the loop (which is only used southbound towards the pier head). At the pier head, on both days, the straight right-hand platform (as approaching) was used. Possibly, only the stabling of a "shelter train" there changes this, and of course might not yield an opportunity to do it either - thankfully this was (the approximate as the station is new post 2005 fire) the platform normally used previously. The "*Waverley*" departed late and after a lively hour thrashing Whitstable way it was announced due to 1.5m swells in the harbour, the visit was cancelled and a return to Southend was being made. 200 people crammed onto the train upon return (their booked crush load) and our reporter departed the scene, one very odd bit of track up and having gone nowhere by sea!

MR249] Belton House Miniature Railway, Lincolnshire (MR p19) (BLNs 885.MR227, 960.MR294, 1019.MR96): This 7¼" gauge railway is located in the grounds of Belton House - a property owned by the National Trust. A visit was made on Sunday 3rd October 2010. Admission to the grounds was £7.65, with a fare on the railway of £1.00. Locomotives 3 & 4 were on site. They were no other passengers on this, a wet afternoon, so the driver allowed our reporter to ride out of the shed on the train.

MR250] Postland Miniature Railway, Lincolnshire (MR p20) (BLNs 1065.MR78, 1073.MR65): This 7¼" gauge line runs in the grounds of the Wyevale Garden Centre at Crowland. Starting from the front of the garden centre, alongside the road, it runs to the rear of the site, where a return loop is located with a bridge over a lake. On Bank Holiday Sunday 29th August 2010, petrol-hydraulic (formerly battery electric) class 50 locomotive 50031 "*Hood*" was working the service, which ran from 11.00 to 16.00. Another member reports this same locomotive at work on Sunday 17th October 2010, with a fare of 80p.

MR251] Cutteslowe Park Miniature Railway, Oxfordshire (MR p22) (BLNs 760.MR126, 855.MR124): A visit was made to this railway, operated by the City of Oxford Model Engineers, on Bank Holiday Monday, 30th August 2010. The main station is now named "Cutteslowe Park". There do not appear to be any platforms as such, passengers alighting on a paved area within a fenced compound, access to which is controlled by ticket inspectors. There is no public access to the inner loop line, which is separated from the main circuit by a metal fence. Direction of travel is clockwise. Within the circuit is a smaller elevated circuit that can only be accessed via the footbridge. Direction of travel is also clockwise and before passengers can alight a railwayman has to straddle the "carriage" to prevent it toppling over. The railway was very busy on a sunny afternoon - tickets are issued only at the booking office at £1.00 per ride or a book of 10 for £8.00. Very young children are free.

MR252] Llanberis Lake Railway, Gwynedd (MR p29) (BLNs 984.MR278, 1018.MR79, 1029.MR212): This 1ft 11½in gauge railway was travelled on Tuesday 24th August 2010. The weather conditions were extreme, heavy rain and wind gusting 40-50 mph at this line's Llanberis station, but strangely at the far end of the line, at Penllyn, the rain had ceased, the wind stopped and the sky to the north was brightening. However, by return to Llanberis both elements were back in full force! The train used was the 10.40 delayed by 10 minutes, behind blue "Thomas" liveried 0-4-0ST No.2 "*Thomas Bach*" (HE849 of 1904). Our correspondent felt quite sorry for the driver of this cab-less locomotive in the prevailing conditions, buttoned-up to the chin in waterproofs, the frequent lot of the former Penrhyn Quarries drivers (*according to Sir Arthur Heywood, the father of the 15" gauge railway, a driver never needed a cab - just a stout Mackintosh! MR Ed*). The other locomotive in use was 0-4-0ST No.3 "*Dolbadarn*" (HE1430 of 1922). Our correspondent was informed No.1 "*Elidir*" (HE493 of 1889) was in the shed at the Welsh Slate Museum complex at Gilfach Ddu.

MR253] Poppleton Nursery Railway, North Yorkshire (BLN1025.MR174): This 2ft gauge railway, serves Britain's last surviving Railway Nursery. The Nursery has now reopened after a charitable group was set up to get it back into business. The Poppleton Community Railway Nursery (PCRN) was set up after Jarvis informed Network Rail they no longer had any need for the old nursery. Jarvis provided funding for fencing the site from the operational railway to allow safe access for non-railway staff and Network Rail has granted a tenancy to PCRN. Still owned by Network Rail, the nursery is now run by a volunteer group, currently a not-for-profit company, but working towards charitable status. Poppleton Nurseries were built during the Second World War to grow vegetables for railway canteens. After the war it served railway hotels and the hundreds of station gardens across Yorkshire and the North East. It had a 2ft gauge railway, which brought the plants from the greenhouses to the mainline. Later, a petrol-engine locomotive would shunt wagons along a short stretch of track, although often the trucks were pushed by hand. In 1991 the greenhouses were connected to electricity after nearly half a century of gaslight. More recently, the nursery and railway were abandoned and its locomotive and stock sold off. Having been unoccupied for a few years the site has needed, and still needs a lot of work to get it up and running again. PCRN has a partnership with the NHS in the York area, which has long found horticultural skills training to be therapeutic to adults recovering from mental health crises. Paul Botting, NHS Technical Instructor, said "The NHS Trust needed additional dedicated space to consolidate on one site and to expand its nursery training operation. Our partnership with PCRN is absolutely ideal". Other partnerships and community projects will be added from time to time as the complex again becomes fully operational, and volunteers and funding permit.

MR254] Friuet Garden Centre, Guernsey (BLN1100.MR192): As of September 2010, there were no signs of the railway being built here, but staff seem to think that a small railway will still be built where the old garden centre stood.

MR255] Government Legislation: The Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Networks) Exemption Order 2010 (Statutory Instruments 2010, No. 904 Disabled Persons Transport) was made on 22nd March 2010 and came into force on 6th April 2010. It can be viewed at www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/904/contents/made. Here there is also an interesting list of railways headed "Heritage or Tourist Networks". It contains a couple of private railways and appears to list the South Cliff Railway at Scarborough twice (once as "Spa Cliff Lift"). There are a number of railways that are not yet open to passengers. Only railways 15" gauge or greater are listed, of course.

PSUL UPDATE

Previous updates were in *BLN* 1108, 1118 and 1121; those details are *not* repeated below. Minor retimings of a few minutes either way are ignored but can be found in the up-dated on-line version at www.psul4all.free-online.co.uk/intro.htm

Page 6: Barking Station Jn - Barking platforms 7/8 (via T&H Lines): from 29 May add 0940 SO and 1010 SO Gospel Oak – Barking

Page 7: Warrington Bank Quay - ... - Acton Grange Jn: from 24 October SuO services apply only from 1100

Page 8: add: Salford Harbour City - Broadway: MediaCityUK avoiding line [*Manchester Metrolink*]: with the opening of the MediaCityUK branch on 20 September 2010, most weekday trams on the Eccles line run into and out of MediaCity UK, so the direct Eccles line is used only before 0700 SSuX/0915 SO; after 1830 SO/2015 SSuX; and all day SuO (this may later be subject

to alteration). *Note:* services over the new branch were suspended from ca.1730 21 September until 3 October 2010, with all services via the direct line.

Page 8: Heald Green North Jn - South Jn: from 24 October add (as engineering diversions) 0920 SuO and hourly until 1220 SuO Birmingham New Street - Edinburgh *or* Glasgow Central ; 1052 SuO Edinburgh - Birmingham New Street; 1210 SuO Lancaster - Birmingham New Street

Page 13: Hatton West Jn - North Jn: use by *Shakespeare Express* ceased on 5 September

Page 14: Gascoigne Wood - Sherburn Jn and Page 15: Hambleton South Jn - West Jn: from 27 September delete 0818 SuX Kings Cross – Sunderland

Page 17: Downpatrick Loop Platform [*Downpatrick & County Down Railway*]: the Christmas service ("*The Lapland Express*") operates only about every 45 minutes

SOCIETY MATTERS

FIXTURE SECRETARY'S REPORT

Brake Van Rail Tours of Tata Steel system at Scunthorpe by Appleby Frodingham RPS

Three tours are now being run, on 27th November, 4th December and 15th January 2011, and a waiting list already has seven names for a fourth one on a date later in the New Year to be decided. Please write to N J Hill, 73 Norfolk Park Avenue, Sheffield S2 2RB if you wish your name to be added. There may be one vacancy on the 4th December tour, so please phone Mr Hill on 0114 2752303 if interested.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Annual General Meeting was held on 20th November at Woking. Officers reports were received, the accounts for the year to 30/04/10 adopted, and subscription rates for 2011 agreed and approved as recommended by the Treasurer. The nomination of Mr J J J Holmes for Chairmanship having been withdrawn, Mr W J Graveson was re-elected, and the other nominated officers and Committee members elected.

SALES OFFICER'S NOTE

Further to BLN1125: The new (2nd edition) Indian Railway Atlas was paid for in American dollars and it has been found that due to the poor exchange rates the previously quoted price of £19.00 is too low and the price will now be £20.00, however for all orders received before December 1st the £19.00 price will still apply. The RRP is £23.99/\$34.99.

Also don't forget that 2011 Calendars (Modern Traction, Steam Traction and Light Rail) are still available at only £6.00 (RRP £6.95).

Will any member requiring items from the recently issued Bargain Sales list please check with the Sales Officer first or enclose an open cheque - with upper limit in writing - as a lot of these items have now sold out.

A new edition of the Schweers & Wall Austrian atlas is expected to be available by the time you read this, the BLS price is £28.00 with a RRP of £28.95.

BLS Sales: 37 Osberton Place, Hunters Bar, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. S11 8XL
(01142631094/07767-787645) BLS.Sales@Hotmail.com