

BRANCH LINE NEWS

Published twice monthly by the Branch Line Society (founded 1955)

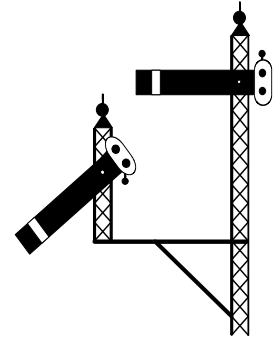
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British Isles news from members, an international section is also available

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



The next edition is due on Saturday 6th September, all contributions must reach the compilers by 27th August.

Date	Event	Visit Type	BLN	Lead	Notes
Sat 23/8/14	Scunthorpe AFRPS	10.00 Brake Van tour	1210	PS	RING*
Sun 31/8/14	Rushden station Northamptonshire	09.30/10.00 arrival visit & railtour - SEE BELOW	1214	TW	Open
Sun 14/9/14 CONFIRMED	Barrow Hill BLS Roundabout tour	14.00 motorised trolley roundhouse railtours	1215	MB	Open
Sun 21/09/14	Ticknall Tramway	13.00 circular walk	1211	PS	Open
Sat 4/10/14	Signal Box Visits	Keadby Canal eastward	TBA	NG	Claimed
Sat 11/10/14 OPEN FOR BOOKINGS	BLS Chord & Quay Tracker mainline loco hauled railtour	Railtour to Hull Docks, Doncaster North Chord Foreign Ore Branch etc.	1215	KA	<u>Booking form enclosed</u>
Sat 25/10/14	L&BR Woody Bay	15.00 railtour	1213	RG	Enquire
Sun 26/10/14	W. Somerset Rly.	11.00 & 14.00 tours	1210	RG	Full
Thu 30/10/14	SVR Signal Boxes	09.30 visits by train**	1214	PS	Open
Fri 31/10/14	SVR DMU Charter	08.20 extensive railtour	1214	PS	Open
Sat 1/11/14	AGM & SVR events	Coalyard Rly., AGM & evening presentation	1214	PS	Claimed
Sun 2/11/14	Telford Steam Rly.	08.30 tours (3 railways)	1212	KA	Full
Sun 2/11/14	SVR Diner Special	12.55 1 st class diner etc	1214	PS	Enquire
Tue 11/11/14	London walk etc.	Rail memorials event	TBA	DK	Claimed
Wed 19/11/14 NEW	Signal Box Visits	10.00 Stafford, Saltley & Wolverhampton	1215	PS	OPEN
Fri 28/11/14	Industrial Visits	09.00 Imerys road tour	1211	MD	Open
Sat 29/11/14	Bodmin & W. Rly.	Comprehensive Tour	TBA	KA	Claimed
Thu 29/01/15	Keighley & WV Rly.	Comprehensive Tour	TBA	KA	Enquire
Sat 7/3/15	Nene Valley Rly.	Repeat railtour	TBA	GW	Claimed
Fri 1/05/15	Bluebell Railway	Very extensive railtour	TBA	PS	Claimed
8-10/05/15	Channel Islands	Railway weekend	1213	KA	Full

DK-Don Kennedy, GJ-Graeme Jolley, GW-Glen Wells, JW-John Williamson, KA-Kev Adlam, MB-Martyn Brailsford, MD- Maurice Dart, NG- Nick Garnham, PS-Paul Stewart, RG-Robert Green, TW-Tim Wallis. (**Others' Doings BLN 1211)

* For last minute bookings ring Paul Stewart 01684 562862 or 077906 52351, starts at 10.00.

IMPORTANT SPECIAL NOTICE: Due to the sudden unexpected temporary indisposition of our printer we apologise for the non-appearance of BLN on paper this week, it is hoped it will be posted a week later than scheduled. To assist in reducing the large number of queries expected about non-receipt of BLN on paper it would be very helpful if you could advise anyone you know who **only** has paper BLN about this (and possibly let them see a copy!). Please also publicise the forthcoming Society railtour on 11th October to those who will not receive details in the post this week - all members who apply promptly after the paper booking form is posted out will be accommodated. It is important to open bookings now to ensure the viability of this tour (and the future of such Society railtours). Some members particularly request locomotive hauled tours so we hope it will fill well.

Rushden Station, Sunday 31st August: Space is still available on this comprehensive morning tour of the former Midland Railway Higham Ferrers branch line, details as in BLN 1214 p309. The railway only operates once or twice a month and this visit has been planned to coincide with the very rare passenger footplate rides at the nearby **Irchester Railway** (BLN 1213 p307). Queries, bookings and request for lifts to: tim.wallis@branchline.org.uk.

BLS Barrow Hill Roundhouse Roundabout, Sunday 14th September: A unique and unlikely to be repeatable opportunity. With thanks to our committee member Martyn Brailsford there will be a 14.00 Society fixture by 4-wheel motorised trolley. Due to circumstances there this is the **only** available date for this unusual event, turntable roads 12 to 24 inclusive will be covered (except 21) and possibly some between 7 and 11 inclusive (but not 1 to 6). For queries and bookings email: martyn.brailsford@branchline.org.uk or ring Paul Stewart on 01684 562862 or 07790652351; please supply an email address or contact phone number. Expected cost is a minimum of £5 for up to five roads then £1 a road after according to availability and demand - pay on the day but **pre-notification is essential.**

BLS Chord and Quay Tracker, Saturday 11th October: A booking form should be enclosed for our next mainline **loco hauled** railtour with WCRC from Carnforth including a number of anticipated highlights. These are: the Up to Down main crossover at Lancaster North Jct. to call at P3 from the north and the opposite crossover at South Jct., the new 1.9 mile Doncaster North Chord in both directions, the west side of King George Dock at Hull (the opposite side to that covered by the recent UKRT railtour), Skellow Jct. - Carcroft Jct., Hexthorpe Jct. - Bentley Jct., Tata Santon Foreign Ore Terminal branch and other loops and freight lines. **Important:** Those who take only e-BLN will need to find and print the booking form. Prompt booking is advised but please allow a reasonable time for an acknowledgement before chasing up your booking with the organiser!

****AGM Fixtures:** On Thursday 30th October the run along the Severn Valley Railway to Bridgnorth by normal service train visiting all the signal boxes now includes Wrangaton box which has recently been restored to working order at Kidderminster Railway Museum. Plenty of places are available this day. To clarify, the Friday DMU railtour starts and finishes at Kidderminster and the Valley Suite is the SVR refreshment facility there. At the time of writing a good number of places remain but it is filling quickly.

BLS Signal Box Visits, Wed 19th Nov: 10.00 at Stafford station for No.4 & 5 signal boxes followed by Wolverhampton PSB and the possibility of Saltley PSB; limited numbers. A charity donation applies. Bookings and queries to Paul Stewart (see back page contact details). Please advise availability of High-Visibility vest and spares. Priority will be given to those who kindly volunteered not to go on the 20th July visits to reduce the party size, followed by others who have not been before. Subject to space being available, requests for repeat visits will be accepted.

BLS Scunthorpe Steelworks Railway Map: With thanks to members Alan Sheppard and our Society cartographer Martyn Brailsford, the new updated August 2014 fine scale version is now available. Added detail includes the track inside the buildings, major tarmac roads and the names of many lines and sidings. It is available in a scalable PDF version (which benefits from magnification) by email request or as a free A4 colour print if a suitable SAE is supplied to Paul Stewart. (See Others' Doings too.)

BLN GENERAL

1229] Rail Accident Investigation Branch: This was created in 2005 following Lord Cullen's investigation and report into the Ladbroke Grove 1999 accident and has been credited with a major part in achieving the improved safety record of the UK's railways in recent years. Although part of the DfT, RAIB is an entirely independent organization for investigation of UK railway accidents and incidents focused only on improving future rail safety and not to establish blame or liability. It covers NR, the Channel Tunnel (with its French equivalent body), London and Glasgow Undergrounds and other Metros, also tramways, heritage railways, narrow gauge railways (over 350mm gauge) and cable-hauled systems one km or longer. The RAIB does not enforce law or carry out prosecutions; it aims is to identify the cause and any factors leading up to accidents and other aspects that made the outcome worse or reduced the impact. As far as possible it operates in an open and transparent manner. Certain accidents and incidents have to be notified to it and RAIB will then determine if there is any merit in carrying out a full investigation. Detailed, analytical reports including (if necessary) recommendations to improve future rail safety are produced (22 in 2013). The aim is to maintain a close liaison with railway operators and circulate findings to the right people as soon as possible and long before the final report is published. The reports are impressive in their breadth and depth of (appropriate) meticulous detail and would generally interest most Society members because of the detailed information about railways and their operation. They are available free to anyone by email on release by signing up at:

http://www.raib.gov.uk/publications/newsletter_subscription.cfm. For more information see:
<http://www.raib.gov.uk/home/index.cfm>.

ENGLAND EAST MIDLANDS

1230] Beartey Fen: (BLN 1214.1151) The WON detailing the Spalding re-signalling references the fact that Beartey Fen is being renamed Burtey Fen LC, hence the name on the notice. It is alleged that this is due to an administrative mistake not identified at an early stage and now, just before commissioning, it would cost too much to change the plans, diagrams and items on site so a decision was taken to rename the crossing!

1231] Nottingham NET: On the weekend of 9th and 10th August planned testing took place of an enhanced timetable on Nottingham's tram network, with double the number of services from Hucknall and Phoenix Park into the city centre on the Sunday. This gave an opportunity for the public to be amongst the first to ride on one of the city's new Citadis trams before they enter service generally. Previous Sunday trials proved successful, with positive feedback on the new trams. A special Group Ticket enables one or two adults and up to three children to enjoy a day of unlimited travel on the network for just £6 during the school holidays. There is also free parking at five Nottingham park and ride sites.

GREATER LONDON

1232] London Map: <http://carto.metro.free.fr/cartes/metro-tram-london/> This is an amazingly detailed scalable transport rail map of London, including future developments such as the Northern Line extension to Battersea, Crossrail and the consequential new bay platform at West Ealing. A

station index brings up the appropriate area of the map. There is some historic content; NR lines are shown in detail outside the central area. The site has 40 similar Metro maps throughout the world (mostly France).

1233] Brent Cross: *Transport Briefing* reports that Barnet Council has granted planning permission for a revamped Brent Cross shopping centre which is conditional on major transport improvements. The expanded shopping centre will form part of the wider Brent Cross Cricklewood redevelopment. Phase 1 does not involve any rail service changes, but later phases involve a new Brent Cross station on the Midland Main Line served by Thameslink trains.

1234] Crossrail: (BLN 1214.1155)

(1): WCML Link: The Transport Secretary has announced an enquiry to investigate the possibility of a new connection to the WCML at Old Oak Common and extension to Tring of services currently intended to terminate at Paddington. If implemented, additional rolling stock would have to be ordered and the extension could be in operation by the early 2020s. Additional benefits would be a reduction in the number of domestic services using Euston during construction of the HS2 station and a reduction in the number of passengers interchanging with the Underground there.

(2): Connaught Tunnel: The rebuilding of this tunnel is now complete.

(3): Tunnelling: TBM *Jessica* has completed the boring of the first tunnel between the Limmo Peninsular site and the Victoria Dock portal.

1235] Deep Level Tube Tunnels: (BLN 1206.505) A report in *Underground News* states that the tunnels at Clapham South are available for rent at £100k pa. This is the only one of the eight sites that is not currently tenanted.

1236] Jubilee Line: (BLN 1197.1588) *Underground News* reports that the proposed extension of services to Harrow-on-the-Hill has now been dropped. However it is looking increasingly likely that the Ealing Broadway branch of the District Line will transfer to the Piccadilly Line when the latter is upgraded.

1237] Lea Bridge: (BLN 1214.1160) This station closed officially on Monday 8th July 1985. It had previously been served by North Woolwich to Tottenham Hale DMU services. However in 1979 these trains were diverted to and from Camden Road with a much increased frequency, referred to at the time as the *Docklands Service*. Stratford to Tottenham Hale became a shuttle although, in practice, whenever there was a shortage of either rolling stock or train crews it was cancelled, which was more often the case than not. Hertfordshire Railtours' *The Broad Street Bandersnatch* of Saturday 21st July 1984, a DMU which covered many London passenger, freight and ECS routes, along with Tilbury Riverside and Southend Central (lunch stop), called at Lea Bridge. This then allegedly open station was waist-high with grass and other foliage and participants had to hack their way to the footbridge! Needless to say it was closed the following year *owing to lack of use*. Your Sub-Editor rode on and photographed the final services on the evening of Friday 5th July 1985 and his photographs show that by then the platforms had been largely cleared of foliage. The shuttle service ran to Stratford via the former Chobham Farm Jct. and returned via High Meads Jct. – the “*tear drop*”.

1238] More DLR Flexibility: (BLN 1214.1157) Our member had more experience of this on the evening of Sunday 10th August. Heading homewards from Custom House it was clear something was amiss, as only Stratford International services were indicated westbound instead of alternating with Tower Gateway services. Once again there was no booked engineering work. So when a Beckton-bound service was terminated after arrival in the eastbound platform and changed to

become a Stratford International service with no chance of reaching that platform before it departed wrong line back towards Canning Town, it was apparent services were definitely not running to schedule. On changing trains at Canning Town low level to the high level DLR platforms to investigate, messages were being displayed of no services from Bank/Tower Gateway to Poplar/Canary Wharf but with no reason given. So plans were changed to take the first train towards Poplar, but by Blackwall its destination had altered to Bank, giving the impression that all was now well. However the Train Captain was radioed and told to terminate at Poplar. He then made an announcement that the train was *going to the depot and would arrive at Poplar P2, the Stratford-bound platform, so anyone wanting stations further west is advised to alight here and wait on the same platform to avoid using the stairs*. There was no chance of your correspondent getting off with two potential rare crossovers, duly traversed on arrival. P4 towards the City was in fact blocked by an eastbound Beckton service which departed to use the crossover at Blackwall. The P2 departure screen surprisingly said *listen for announcements* and not *terminating here*. As your correspondent now wished to get to Stratford via Bow Church, on asking the Train Captain he was advised that the train was in service to All Saints where it would terminate, reversing to access Poplar depot from there. So a through Canning Town to All Saints journey was definitely a first for this East London resident!

1239] Paddington:

1. (BLN 1214.1162): Roof spans 1 to 3 were heavily refurbished in the early 1990s whilst still in the ownership of BR's InterCity sector. The non-glazed roof panels and many of the interior fittings were painted a dull red colour following much consultation with English Heritage and the City of Westminster, as required for a Grade I listed building. This colour was not in the InterCity palette. Shortly after Railtrack took ownership nearly everything was painted green without listed building consent. Neither statutory body seemed to notice!
2. NR posters advise that 300 new cycle racks are being constructed on P10 for season ticket holders use only. They are expected to be completed during August.

1240] Ruislip - Uxbridge: (BLN 1210.860): The Metropolitan Line between Ruislip and Uxbridge reopened as planned on 11th August following service suspension from 19th July (note correct date) for track relaying. The service was actually restored briefly between about 16.00 and 23.00 on 8th August when the main work finished early, but was then suspended as planned between Rayners Lane and Uxbridge on 9th and 10th. It does appear from inspection from the train that almost all remaining bullhead-railed track in this length has been relaid. Interestingly this includes the plain line between Ruislip station and Ruislip siding which was accessible only during engineering hours and the four weekends, as it was in use by trains terminating at Ruislip. Also, disappointingly, the junction-work at the exit from Uxbridge sidings closest to Hillingdon station remains as before, including the single slip on the eastbound track, which might have been expected to be replaced by a more modern layout. None of the junction-work at Uxbridge station was renewed.

NORTHERN ENGLAND (GENERAL)

1241] Northern England: (BLN 1214.116) City leaders have unveiled ambitious plans for road and rail investment as Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne *signalled* that he will commit new money to transport in his Autumn Statement. Amid long-running complaints that London receives a disproportionate share of funding for transport, leaders of Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle are backing a new transport programme which has parallels to the capital's £14.8bn Crossrail scheme. The *One North* plan is a £15bn package focusing on significant rail improvements. Like Crossrail it has a central tunnelled section (under the Pennines) complemented by existing network enhancements including a new stretch of line between

Newcastle and Darlington. The new Pennine link is proposed as a 125mph route so would not be classified as a high speed rail system under EU rules. The new tunnel would have freight terminals at each end and delta junctions to allow trains to continue north, south or straight on. According to the One North report: *We will need to examine the case for purpose-designed terminals so that the corridor can offer a drive-on facility for road freight too, in the style of Eurotunnel. This could offer an all-weather trans-Pennine freight capability and in the longer term help transform the freight functionality of the north.* One North estimates the cost at more than £5bn and suggests a target delivery date of 2030. The One North scheme includes:

By 2019

- Northern Hub, electrification Liverpool - Manchester - Leeds - Hull - Middlesbrough and new rolling stock.
- Midland Main Line electrification.

By 2024

- Electrification of Calder Valley, Hope Valley and to Scarborough, new electric fleets and more rolling stock generally in the north.
- Leeds to Manchester in 40 minutes or less and improved Manchester to Sheffield services.
- Rail or light rail connection to Leeds Bradford Airport.

By 2026

- Additional capacity and capability from HS2 at Crewe to Manchester, Liverpool, Warrington as well as ports and inland freight terminals.
- Accelerated (140mph) more reliable ECML and a new route to Newcastle.
- Cross city services for Leeds, Liverpool (east-west), Manchester, Sheffield, Bradford (north - south link such as a tram-train or similar) and Newcastle with good quality rolling stock.

By 2030

- New tunnelled 125mph trans-Pennine route.
- Direct connection west with Manchester Airport, Liverpool and Manchester.
- Direct connection east with Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle and Hull.
- Leeds to Sheffield section of HS2 expedited in conjunction with the new trans-Pennine route.
- Leeds: integrate HS2 into the existing station.
- Sheffield City Region direct connection with an HS2 station with east-west capability.

1242] Off-Peak Tickets: A significant number of ticket changes have been announced from 8th September covering large swathes of Northern England, summarised as follows:

(1): Off-Peak Day tickets wholly within **South Yorkshire** not valid 16.01 to 18.29 inclusive SSuX*

(2): Off-Peak Day and Duo tickets wholly within **Transport for Greater Manchester** area, GM Rail Rangers and Daysavers not valid 16.01 to 18.29 SSuX*. The same restrictions apply to journeys from Alderley Edge, Burscough Bridge, Buxton, New Mills Central and Warrington (Bank Quay and Central) and intermediate stations to Manchester or Salford stations.

(3): GM Evening Rangers and Cheap Evening Returns are withdrawn.

(4): Off-Peak Day and Duo tickets wholly within **West Yorkshire**, Day, Family and Train-only Rovers not valid from 16.01 to 18.29 SSuX* including to Bradford or Leeds from the Skipton line and to Leeds from the Knaresborough line.

(5): Off-Peak Day and Duo tickets on the **Hexham to Newcastle line** not valid 16.01 to 17.59 SSuX* The Nexus ticketing area is exempted from this.

This is partly a Northern Rail franchise commitment and while there is some overcrowding, it is an area considered to have some of the worst rolling stock, is due to receive units that are approaching

30 years old for the *new* electric services and, in addition, FTP are losing their class 170s to Chiltern. Your prudent Manchester based treasurer was not impressed, and describing the changes as *severe* pointed out that they are too general and will include many services that are not that busy. [They may be even less so with an evening out in town now requiring a peak rate ticket!]

*Bank Holidays excepted.

NORTH EAST

1243] Whitby: (BLN 1213.1074) The opening of P2 was delayed to 12th August by completion work and testing. North Yorkshire Moors Railway services to and from Whitby increased (on 16th August) from three to five daily in the peak season. The first public use on 12th as a test of the new facilities was the 12.00 service from Pickering arriving at 13.54 (booked 13.44) with Thompson B1 61264 carrying 420 passengers. There were 434 for the first P2 departure at 14.00, an impressively tightly booked turn round. On 15th August there was a ceremony with two steam locomotives (one in each platform) present at Whitby at once. These were 45428 Eric Treacey and 61264 masquerading as classmate 61034 Chiru (to mark the 60th anniversary of the last train between Whitby and Stockton-on-Tees through Battersby (Jct.) and Picton) hauled by this engine on 13th June 1954. At Whitby the new rebuilt platform section of P2 will be used by NYMR passengers, and the stub of the existing platform that side has been fenced off to protect crowds leaving the platform. This is the loco *pull forward* area for subsequent reversal over the new centre road for the new P2 round loop which is completely independent of P1 (so trains can still run round when P1 is occupied) and rejoins the P2 line at Whitby Main GF (30m 45ch). The buffer stops end of this loop is controlled by Run Round GF (30m 60ch). The points for P2 are at 30m 42ch - mileage is from the former Rillington Jct. P1 just has a single track, it appears that both platforms will take 9 coaches. Once there were four platforms at Whitby.

1244] Wilton terminal, Teesside: (BLN 1214.1175) With apologies for the missing 's' in that entry. During the recession Wilton Freightliner terminal has become uncompetitive due to a substantial decline in traffic and the requirement for additional road transfer of rival containers using Teesport. Closure of Wilton and moving container operations to Teesport will increase the opportunity for rail traffic after the investment there by PD Ports. A significant section of freight line would then close to Wilton.

1245] Grand Central (GC): ORR has granted this open access train operator a new 10 year track access contract extension to 2026 on both its routes, London King's Cross to (1): Sunderland via York and Hartlepool and (2): Bradford Interchange via Doncaster, Pontefract Monkhill and Wakefield Kirkgate. A further application was made (even though the existing one lasts to 2016) to enable a new train leasing deal with GC expecting to use just Class 180 Adelante trains from 2016/17. It currently operates Cl.180s and HSTs. A uniform fleet is said to allow more flexibility and reduce costs. The HSTs would otherwise need to be fitted with the European Train Control System and are more expensive to run and maintain. Additionally train size and frequency can be better matched to demand. FGW and Hull Trains currently also use Cl. 180s. As part of the agreement Deutsche Bahn owned GC has committed to invest in stations which, subject to agreement with NR and other stakeholders, is expected to include reinstatement of the disused Hartlepool station Down platform and improvements to station car parks.

NORTH WEST

1246] Blackpool Electric Tramway: The English National bus pass ceased to be valid with effect from 1st April, except those issued by Blackpool Council. Out of interest a day tram ticket is £4.50 purchased on a tram or £3.50 in advance (even from a local shop selling them immediately before

boarding!), a three day ticket is £10.50 (advance purchase discount not available) and a seven day ticket £14.00 (£13.50 in advance). The turnouts for the tram extension to Blackpool North station are in place. It is to be a triangular junction, and to cater for this the resited station(s) at North Pier are a considerable distance apart; probably further than Cliffs Hotel and Cabin. Heritage trams run on Bank Holiday weekends from Easter, a heritage day ticket costing £10 and is valid on the modern trams and buses too, a range of cheaper (shorter journey) options are available. The Heritage trams are not compatible with the new stations, and call at their own stops elsewhere.

1247] Reddish South: Within the *Stockport Times* 24th July edition was a comment concerning the possibility of this station (and presumably Denton as well) being closed. Clarification was sought from the franchise holder Northern Rail who confirmed that there is no plan to shut the stations. As the local MP for the area pointed out it would be irresponsible to propose to close the stations when the Chancellor a few days earlier had talked about a *Northern Regional Powerhouse*.

1248] Todmorden: A recent announcement following speculation in various publications has accused NR of *sheer incompetence* after it was admitted that East Lancashire's long-awaited faster train service to Manchester has been delayed by at least another six months to May 2015. NR has confirmed signalling work on Todmorden Curve will not be completed until February. Trains to Manchester will start at Blackburn and take about 45 minutes calling at Accrington and Burnley Manchester Road and are expected to give the local economy a massive boost. Last year no diesel train was available for the new service to start in May and it was put back until December 2014, despite the completion of the track. As BLN readers will know the curve is currently only signalled unidirectionally (towards Burnley). Angry council bosses there have insisted that each month of delay is costing the borough's economy an estimated £1M and they have urged that 'heads must roll'.

1249] Manchester ROC: (BLN 1214.1172) A member has written to point out that the new signalling actually covers about 5 miles on the Chat Moss lines and some four miles on the St. Helens line. The ROC is near Ashburys station.

1250] Preston to Blackpool North. NR has announced plans for *additional* investment for line improvements. These improvements include electrification (in fact already agreed), signalling and track upgrades. Blackpool North will be remodelled for longer trains; it is wondered how many of the platforms and still extensive (but much reduced compared with years ago) sidings will survive (BLN 1214.1171). The unusual layout at Kirkham and Wesham is to be remodelled (BLN 1202.196). The work has been rescheduled for December 2016 and is expected to take three months (avoiding the summer season) which will delay the completion of electrification by twelve months to May 2017 which has not gone down well in the local press. The line currently has an interesting collection of signal boxes and semaphore signals.

SOUTH EAST - NORTH (& EAST ANGLIA)

1251] Chelmsford: (BLN 1202.169) A programme of extensive upgrades to the overhead line equipment has been underway for some time between Liverpool Street and Colchester, involving various mixes of new masts, portals, insulators and support brackets. Interestingly work has now reached the steeply graded access down to Chelmsford's former Royal Mail terminal. This track is electrified part of the way (shown in TRACKmaps as the Incline) towards the terminal but can seldom have seen an electric train. New equipment has been fitted to the masts there and is awaiting connection to the overhead conductor. The now *Chelmsford Lower Yard* has been removed from the proposed itinerary of Charity Railtours' *The Four Triangles* tour as there has been no traffic since

the final outward empty stone wagons on 3rd July 2013 (BLN 1202.169), the lease is due to expire on the sidings and they are on reduced maintenance.

1252] Ipswich: (BLN 1209.804) The referenced item recorded the use by Norwich to Liverpool Street trains of the Down and Up Lowestoft approaching Ipswich P2. On 12th August a train failure in that platform led to the train your Sub-Editor was travelling on using Down P3 in the Up direction. It then continued on the Down track to the Manningtree side of Halifax Jct. to allow a down Freightliner to use the Up track and the non-platform centre road at Ipswich station. The latter would of course have been of no use to the passenger service, but can only be accessed in the Down direction from the Up track. The same Norwich to London train on departing Norwich had earlier used the Down Main as far as the crossover shown as Lakenham in TRACKmaps, somewhat further than crossing from Down track 'D' to the Up at Trowse (Swing Bridge) Jct., which is a quite common manoeuvre on leaving P1 or 2 at Norwich.

1253] Barrington Light Railway: (BLN 1213.1073) The closed Barrington Cement Works near Foxton was visited on 5th August at lunchtime. A locomotive has arrived in connection with the branch refurbishment. Work began on Mon 21st July and the rails from two of the three exchange sidings had been removed. Apparently they have been donated to *the museum*, by which he assumed was meant *Rocks by Rails* (formerly Rutland Railway Museum) near Oakham. Steam locos used to come from there for Barrington open days. Sleepers were being removed from these two tracks, and only a few remained, over half of which were removed during the visit. The exchange sidings layout is slightly incorrectly shown in TRACKmaps (Sept 2006). The middle and easternmost tracks are actually loops off the westernmost track which is actually the *through line* and these two roads also each have a headshunt (omitted from the map) at their northern end. No lifting of the running line had started. Temporary fences across the track at the three level crossings had all been moved clear of the track, except the one nearest the cement works on its side of Haslingfield Road which was only opened for trains to pass. Some vegetation had to be cut back before any trains could run, but other sections remained heavily overgrown. Two diggers were in use, at least one had rail wheels and caterpillar tracks, with fork-lift truck attachments for sleepers. At 14.30 one went down the line to Foxton (on the rails) followed by a loco and wagons. The loco was a four-wheeled Sentinel, painted a *greeny-blue* with red ends and no external identification. The track lifting crew Foreman (with whom our correspondent had a good chat) told him the loco, from the Weardale Railway and originally Eastgate cement works was owned by RMS Locotec. It propelled two small very low flat light trolley wagons with tiny wheels from Barrington, coupled to each other and to the locomotive by a long rigid metal pole. The digger, now off the rails, loaded sleepers onto the wagons with the fork-lift equipment. By 15.30 they had loaded up what they could, and the road digger set off for the cement works site (along the road). It was followed (on the railway) by the locomotive and loaded wagons. The former cement works site was the dismantling base, but it is understood that a compound will be set up at the Foxton end for relaying. Work is only allowed at certain times of the day in this residential area. Track relaying is due to be finished by the end of December, with inward inert waste by rail expected in March to infill part of the former quarry for land reclamation. The line will be extended a short distance nearer the quarry beyond the site of the long demolished coal un-loader with final waste transfer by road. The quarry railway system closed on 25th February 2005, Cemex having taken over Rugby Cement in 2004. The first workings to use the main line connection at Foxton should be incoming ballast trains for the branch soon.

1254] Bicester North: From 18th August both platforms at Bicester North station were to be formally extended at the south end, P1 (the Down Main platform) by 31m and P2 (the Up Main

platform) by 27m. The operational platform lengths will be 222m and 215m respectively. The announcement of these extensions suggests the physical work was done previously and the date is a reference to acceptance or commissioning. On 14th August your Sub-Editor saw engineering staff preparing to remove temporary barriers. Similar work was in progress on both platforms at Haddenham & Thame Parkway and High Wycombe (Up platform).

1255] Slough: Signs at Slough have recently been branded with O₂ logos.

1256] Reading: (BLN 1214.1182) Her Majesty the Queen officially opened the new station on the morning of Thursday 17th July. Arriving by public HST from Paddington at about 11.00 on P9 (suggesting it was a Hereford service) she was welcomed by NR, FGW and both Reading MPs. The monarch proceeded to the north side of the footbridge where she unveiled a plaque (believed to be temporary as it was quickly removed) and then left by car from the newly completed northern entrance after photographs with orange suited staff. The council's contractors had worked until the last minute to get the immediate area into a reasonable state (filling in the holes where trees were due to go), although parts near the multi-storey car park were unfinished. All the shops on the transfer deck (footbridge) were open to the public by the day before the Queen's visit. Gateline staffing hours were extended from Monday 28th July. At the western end of the elevated railway, track has been laid from Scours Lane towards the flyover. The structure is almost complete and waiting track laying - being fenced and with masts from the west end up to the west curve bridge (which awaits fences) and then equally complete up towards Reading station. The London end ramp is rather less advanced, needing fencing and masts at least. The work on the lighting on the entrance floor of the multi-storey car park has been completed and it is now all open again, although an electrical shut down was scheduled on 9th August from 02.00 until around 10.00 to complete the work. Finally, the planned charity walk over the elevated railway has been cancelled.

1257] Didcot: (BLN 1192.1260) Our correspondent believed the work was due to have finished on the station forecourt by 4th August, as the temporary opening of the car park gate from P1 was supposed to finish that day. Although nearly ready by the afternoon, with bus stops erected, it did not look quite complete.

SOUTH EAST – SOUTH

1258] Sittingbourne west curve: The draft South Eastern timetable from January 2015 includes two peak trains between Sheerness and Victoria, non-stop between Kemsley and Rainham and traversing the Middle Jct. to Western Jct. *PSUL* curve. They are 06.22 and 07.00 from Sheerness and 17.03 and 18.24 from Victoria.

1259] Tonbridge: From 28th July, the north car park (just east of the overbridge) was closed to be double-decked and provide more spaces. This has also closed the subway from the Down platform under the road. It is the car park used for planned rail replacement bus services, for which a normally locked double gate is provided off the High Street / Vale Road roundabout. It is not clear where such buses will go in the future.

1260] Folkestone Harbour: (BLN 1211.967) In a letter of 6th August the DfT has confirmed to our correspondent the issue of a ratification notice by the ORR for the proposal to close the Folkestone Harbour Branch and the eponymous station. It is stated that the closure may take place four weeks after the 31st July date of the notice.

1261] Alton: From 11th August the gate across the west end of the P2 line at the NR and Mid Hants Railway (MHR) boundary at 49m 15ch was to be removed as part of the work to upgrade it to a running connection. P1 and P2 lines are electrified and accessible from the Bentley direction, whilst the non-electrified P3 line is accessible only from the Medstead & Four Marks direction. The down direction starting signal from P2 had been installed with a non-operational yellow aspect which was to be commissioned for moves over the connecting crossover in its reverse lie subject to a signed 10mph speed restriction. In the Up direction new position 1 route indicators on signals on both the Main Line and the Meon Loop were to be commissioned for Up trains signalled to Alton station P2. The jointly-governed Alton *Mid-Hants Ground Frame A* at 49m 18ch has its release jointly effected by Woking Area Signalling Centre and the MHR. The MHR also had a part-releasing facility by a key token, which arrangement was due to be replaced by part-release from Alton MHR signal box.

SOUTH WEST

1262] Swindon Panel Box: Thanks to Stuart Hicks there was an interesting and enjoyable RCTS visit on the evening of Thur 24th July with some of our members participating by kind invitation. Swindon PSB was opened in the early 1960s as an original Western Region *turn push* type panel, the staple design of the 1960s. Its area of control is now about 65 route miles of the Great Western centred on Swindon, covering:

- GWR *main line* (ie to Bath) west of Challow to beyond Thingley Jct. (fringing Bristol PSB).
- Badminton line: Wootton Bassett to west of Hullavington (Bristol PSB).
- Gloucester line: Swindon Jct to north of Kemble (MP92) (Gloucester PSB).
- Melksham line to just past Thingley Jct. (Westbury PSB).

Closure of Swindon PSB is due between December this year and Easter 2015 with transfer of control to Didcot, Thames Valley Signalling Centre. It is due to lose the Gloucester line over this August Bank holiday with commissioning of the re-doubled track to Kemble. The panel itself has been bought by the Swindon Panel Society for £1 and will be transferred to Didcot Railway Centre where it will be refurbished in its 1980s form and housed in a new building. It is hoped that it will be available to visitors by 2017.

1263] Bristol Temple Meads: Underneath the station are several miles of tunnels, (visited as part of our 2011 AGM programme there) previously used for storage and as air raid shelters. These are open to the public (as are other locations with railway heritage) during the Bristol Doors Open Day tours on September 13th but numbers are very limited, email booking only see: <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/directory/bristol-temple-meads-tunnels>. There are some fascinating pictures and unusual facts about the historic station at: <http://www.bristol-culture.com/2014/08/08/18-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-bristol-temple-meads/#sthash.KhUa1PCt.dpuf>. From Christmas Eve to 30th December this year, the former Royal Mail conveyer bridge is due to be removed and the subway underneath will be filled in.

1264] Exe Valley Branch: Continuing the exploration of Devon with the very scenic former GWR line Exe Valley line. **Brampford Speke Halt:** Built as a full-blown station on the opposite side of the river from the village it was connected by a footpath across the fields and a footbridge. It never had goods facilities. The original station (subsequently demoted to a Halt) and station house are both private residences, well hidden though the footpath to them remains accessible to the public. There is a GWR carriage body in the garden. **Thorverton:** The station and station house are private residences. **Up Exe Halt:** This was also a station demoted to halt status, presumably due to lack of use. The station and station house are both private residences. **Burn Halt;** Footpath access via a wooden gate is possible, the platform is in situ and in very good condition. **Cadleigh:** The station

survives complete as the Devon Railway Centre with standard gauge track, operational 2' and 7¼" gauge lines and various exhibits. **West Exe Halt:** Totally obliterated by an industrial estate on the edge of Tiverton. **Tiverton:** Station Road but no station having been obliterated by a new road. **Bolham Halt:** At the centre of the village the platform is extant with overgrown footpath access next to a stone underbridge and MP 6¾. **Cove Halt:** The platform, signal cabin and crossing keeper's house impressively and surprisingly (given the location) survive. **Bampton:** The station has been obliterated, there is a car park on the site and a totally filled in cutting to the north. Only one parapet of the over-bridge is left. In the village, the parish church which is normally open during the day, houses a small permanent exhibition of local history including an attractive model of the village station, which was close to the church. The model includes the goods and coal yards and the start of a siding to the local quarries. A short stretch of the trackbed of this siding now forms part of a footpath linking the village centre to some relatively new housing. **Halberton Halt:** The only stop on the onetime Tiverton to Tiverton Jct. line. The former single track wooden platform was beneath and either side of the still intact Lower Town Road stone over-bridge. Either side of the bridge the fields have returned to their pre-railway state. Nearby of interest is the arched aqueduct carrying the GWR owned Grand Western Canal over the branch trackbed.

1265] Weymouth: *Railway Herald* of July 30th reported that plans by West Coast Railway Company (WCRC) to install a turntable at Weymouth are progressing well. The turntable would be on land presently used as a car park, which would be accessed by hand-operated points off the Weymouth Quay branch, roughly 200m from the junction with the main line and just beyond Melcombe Regis level crossing. WCRC hope to have the turntable operational for the 2015 *Dorset Coast Express* season.

WEST MIDLANDS

1266] Baschurch: *Railfuture* recently reported on an outline planning application to Shropshire Council by Shropshire Stone & Granite Ltd (SSG) in respect of a small part of the land adjacent to Baschurch station, for mixed use residential/commercial development with community parking facilities. The owners of SSG which has occupied the old station yard for many years, have not solicited the interest of developers for their land but developers have been approaching them in recent years. If they do ultimately decide to sell the whole yard, a substantial part of the proceeds will in any case be swallowed up by the cost of purchasing a new site and re-locating their heavy machinery. The company has submitted a small application to try to establish exactly what the Council's attitude is towards the area and to establish the potential for getting the station re-opened. They have made it clear that they want any increase in the area's land values as a result of development potential to help with assembling the funding package for the station's re-opening. They are also concerned about the current owner of the Station House who is unable to either give the historic listed building the routine maintenance it urgently requires or begin the process of full restoration. They would be willing to relieve him of the burden by offering him a fair price for it but are unable to commit to this unless they have some positive indication from the Council about the future of the whole area.

1267] Birmingham New Street (1): On the morning of 7th August the station was completely closed to all traffic when two badly injured men were found on the tracks near to the station throat on the Stour side. Many trains were cancelled before the station was eventually re-opened, reportedly around 07:45. The victims were thought by police to have fallen from a bridge [probably Hill Street – Sub-Ed.].

1268] Birmingham New Street (2): *Transport Briefing* reports that NR has withdrawn plans to reduce use of stainless steel cladding during the station redevelopment after criticism of compromising the original design vision. Birmingham City Council is now set to approve changes to the £600M station project. NR now includes additional cladding to minimise the 40 year old soot-stained concrete structures on public view. Furthermore, the most controversial element, retaining and extending the Navigation St. footbridge without stainless steel cladding, now features matching reflective steel panels. NR also agrees to an independent design review for any future changes to that footbridge and Hill St. entrance. NR argued that its changes concerned 'less visible' elements concealed behind highway parapets. However, objectors noted that, whilst not visible from street level directly by the station, the footbridge is visible from the top of Hill St. or buses thereon, from nearby offices and flats, and the station itself. Works to the footbridge may well not be completed in time for scheduled Phase 2 completion in September 2015.

1269] Bromsgrove: On Mon 18th August in connection with Bromsgrove station enabling works, the Up Goods Loop was to have been renamed the Up Goods, re-laid and realigned further from the Up Main line. The signalling arrangements for banking engines were to be modified. The following connections, previously controlled from the GFs indicated, were to be recovered and replaced with plain line: Up Goods line to Up Sidings Bromsgrove No. 1 GF; Up Goods line to Up Spur Bromsgrove No. 3 GF. White buffer stop lights were to be provided at the Birmingham end of the shortened Down siding.

1270] Gnosall: (BLN 1211.980) A local member supplied an interesting article pertaining to the Greenway, a cycle way/footpath which runs along part of the former railway line between Stafford and Newport (Shropshire) as far as Coley Lane, Outwoods. On 22nd July there was a ceremony to dedicate a bench with a plaque near to Lowfield Lane bridge in Gnosall to Prince George. Apparently the line was used by Princes William and Harry who followed it whilst helicopter training at nearby RAF Shawbury and, during the dedication ceremony, attended by the Mayors of Newport, Stafford and Telford plus the Stafford Town Crier, an RAF helicopter performed a low fly-past. It was announced during the ceremony that a £300k grant would be made available to finish the *missing link* of the Greenway from Coley Lane to the Shropshire Border on the outskirts of Newport.

1271] Midland Metro: The proposed date to start the gradual introduction of the new (and phasing out of the old) trams has been reported as 5th September. The new sets are currently at Wednesbury Depot for commissioning with occasional trips on the main line. Old trams numbers 1, 2 and 3 have been decommissioned already and are OOU at the depot whilst set 14 has left the system. The right hand platforms at both Snow Hill and Wolverhampton St. Georges are also OOU and have been for some time. A normal service is reportedly provided by 10 sets as on 4th August where sets 7 and 11 were spare at the depot and the remaining sets were working to an eight minute service interval diagram.

1272] Worcester Shrub Hill: Bay P3 is only signalled for passenger departures, normally NRU and takes a maximum of 3 coaches (which length would need Selective Door Opening as the buffer stop end coach would be off the short platform and behind the station building). There is booked use on Sat 23rd August by the 11.06 Worcester Shrub Hill to Brighton, 12.54 to Weymouth and 19.06 to Bristol Temple Meads departures, due to closure of the Worcester Foregate Street (inclusive) to Hereford (exclusive) line for engineering works with more services using Shrub Hill than normally on a Saturday and the need to accommodate FGW services from the Bristol direction which would normally run to Great Malvern and back.

IRELAND

1273] Belfast: (BLN 1213.1121) *Transport Briefing* for 30th July reports that Belfast's Victoria Street interchange has been awarded a grant by the European Commission. Under the Trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Programme the EC has selected 106 projects across Europe which will receive money set aside in 2013. These are the last TEN-T allocations as a new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) system of grants is due to be introduced this autumn. Belfast intermodal transport hub is to receive £2.8M *to identify the means by which to best implement a programme of works that will deliver a fully integrated cross-border, main-line train and bus and coach facility, with a seamless connection to the proposed rapid transit service - resulting in a thriving and efficiently functioning public amenity within Belfast's central business district.*

1274] Waterford and Ballybrophy: (BLN 1214.1206) An IRRS diesel charter of 19th July provided interesting insight into operating restrictions at Waterford and Ballybrophy. The route was Dublin Connolly, the Glasnevin Jct. to Island Bridge Jct. PSUL route, to Waterford and via Lavistown North to South Jcts. (the PSUL Kilkenny avoiding curve) with a loco change at Waterford. Then it ran to Limerick with various photo stops at wayside stations, for a further loco change and to Dublin Connolly via Nenagh, Ballybrophy and Phoenix Park. The set consisted of seven Cravens carriages and a BR-type brake van which caused problems at Waterford P5, now the only one available and which accommodates four bogies. This meant that there would be at least three carriages off the platform. With an approved risk assessment and safety plan, loco 079 arrived from the yard and hooked up to the rear of the train for departure. At Ballybrophy the run round loop in the bay platform was clipped and scotched OOU long term (as only DMUs operate normally) so the train was propelled out onto the rare main line connection (passengers were fortunately allowed to stay on board) then used the north end crossover to P4 on the Down loop, where the loco ran round. This manoeuvre was performed very swiftly but still delayed a Down Tralee and an Up Train outside the station.

SCOTLAND

1275] Whifflet Electrification: (BLN 1210.913) Although the wiring of Whifflet North Jct. to Rutherglen East Jct. has been progressing, a project update now states that there will be extended bus substitution (after 21.00 SSuX, 20.00 SO, passenger services are SuX) on the line up to 29th September. This is a Monday (albeit a Glasgow holiday) so hopefully electric services will commence then (*Evening Times/Railscot* 11th August); the day after the Ryder Cup golf at Gleneagles is due to finish. An announcement last year by the Transport Minister, regarding the work having been brought forward, had indicated that it was to enable redeployment of DMU stock to support transport arrangements for the Commonwealth Games and the golf!

1276] Banavie Pier: (BLN 1210.913) Our correspondent draws attention to an item in the *LOCHABER NEWS* of 8th August, regarding the site once served by the former Banavie Pier station. Scottish Canals has been granted planning permission and listed building consent by Highland Council to turn the adjacent former Saw Pit into an interpretation centre for the nearby *Neptune's Staircase* on the Caledonian Canal, the string of nine lock gates designed by Thomas Telford, which raises vessels to a height of about 70' above sea level over a distance of about a quarter of a mile. It is hoped to double visitor numbers to 100,000 p.a.; more DMUs required for West Highland operations perhaps? However, Scottish Canals must secure funding before it can start transforming the buildings.

1277] Dundee station: (BLN 1214.1221) Our correspondent observes that the entrance referred to did not open in January 2013. The temporary replacement was newly in use in December 2013 and

is believed to have been commissioned just before Christmas. The former booking office and ticket vending machines were relocated to the temporary office facing onto Riverside Drive. This old booking office was demolished during the Christmas 2013 shutdown (BLN 1200.84); new-style monitors were commissioned and the number of booking office positions reduced - a sign of the times! The entrance block referred to was built by 1971 or a little earlier, and heavily revamped in the 1990s.

1278] Alford again: Until 26th October Grampian Transport Museum is displaying two of the actual road vehicles from the *Great Train Robbery* of 8th October 1963; an Austin Loadstar and a Series 1 Land Rover. There are also examples of a Lotus Cortina and an E-Type Jaguar, which were also used in the crime. (*The Big Issue* 5th August).

1279] Strathpeffer: (BLN 1139.626) The first phase of the scheme to build a railway here has been given planning permission by Highland Council (*The Press and Journal* 12th June); 0.8 miles of track is to be laid on the route of the original branch, (CP 1946 CA 1951). Strathpeffer Community Council hopes eventually to attract around 5,000 visitors p.a. to the line. The project includes building a locomotive shed, office and platform outside the spa village. There will also be improvements to a road junction with the A834 Strathpeffer to Dingwall as part of access arrangements. It is anticipated that the line will operate between 09.00 and 17.00 (21.00 summer evenings) at weekends and some bank holidays, with up to 15 trips daily. There is some disappointment locally that the original gloriously restored station does not feature.

WALES

1280] Aberystwyth: (BLN1214.1226) Whilst there would be a certain logic in allocating the number 1 to the sole remaining operational NR platform at Aberystwyth, NR are in fact using its traditional number 3! At its fullest extent, the station had **5 platforms**, numbered 1-5 from north to south. P1 faced the goods yard which, as noted, has now been redeveloped. P2 is now part of *Yr Hen Orsaf / The Old Station*, the local Wetherspoon pub. P3 remains in use, whilst 4 and 5 were the Carmarthen line platforms, the space between which has, since 1968, been occupied by the Vale of Rheidol Railway.

1281] Harlech to Pwllheli: According to a train driver, the planned first test-cum-training train on 9th August did not run. He understood that some faults in the concrete had been discovered.

MINOR RAILWAYS.

MR130] Swanage Railway, Dorset (MR p6): Statutory Instrument 2014 No.1604 (The Swanage Railway Order 2014) made on 5th June and coming into force on 26th June, transferred the majority of the remainder of the branch to the Swanage Railway from NR. The order defined the transferred section as *A portion (4708 metres in length) of the railway authorised by the Swanage Railway Act 1881(b) in the County of Dorset, District of Purbeck, commencing in the parish of Arne at a point 587 metres from the junction (Worgret Junction) with the Poole to Weymouth line of Network Rail and terminating in the parish of Corfe Castle (Norden) at a junction with the railway authorised by the Swanage Light Railway (Extension) Order 1993, 527 metres west of the bridge carrying the A351 road between Corfe Castle and Stoborough over the said railway, together with all the lands relating to the said railway and lying between the points of commencement and termination.*

MR131] Battlefield Line Railway, Leicestershire (MR p7): A member of the Editorial Team visited the Rail Ale festival at Market Bosworth on Saturday 26th July 2014. He was pleased to see they were operating brake van shuttles on the siding near the goods shed, from the buffers along the

out of use platform road to the end of the platform where a wagon was blocking the exit on to the running line. The cost was 50p per person for two return trips and a raffle ticket was issued. The brake van was a restored SR type vehicle with steam haulage. This involved specially clearing the siding of rolling stock and the same shuttles were provided at the equivalent event in 2013. He also noted services on the running line were hauled alternately by a GWR Tender loco and Class 47 *University of Strathclyde* (47640).

MR132] Middleton Railway, West Yorkshire (MR p9): On Sunday 13th July 2014, the 11.00 departure from Moor Road was a well filled two coach train hauled by *Matthew Murray* (MW1601/1903). One coach was reserved for a children's birthday party. The loco ran-round at Park Halt and formed the 11.15 return working to Moor Road. The Balm Road branch was inspected and has seen recent use. The connection to NR appears intact, although heavily overgrown with large trees. It is shown in the current NR Sectional Appendix. The former branch to Dartmouth Yard was also inspected. The connection to the running line is intact and track is in place for about 3-4 chains. Then it has been severed and a short distance beyond, the track disappears under a large pile of rubble.

MR133] North Tyneside Steam Railway, Tyne & Wear (MR p9): A member has kindly supplied some detailed notes on this railway. The word *Steam* has always been part of the correct, official name for the railway. On 11th May 2014 it was running its usual Sunday (and Bank Holiday) four trips service with two coaches - hauled by a diesel shunter. The timetable allows 10 minutes for running round. Although the railway's website implies that passengers can join/alight at Percy Main, that day the gate in the stockade fencing giving access to/from St. John Street was locked. (If readers find this situation, access/egress can be effected via the track and the un-fenced opposite side of the line, round the stop blocks into St. Stephens Way.) The Museum and Society state that the official title has always been *Percy Main* without the suffix *Village* (although they acknowledge that it did sometimes get added in publicity - apparently to distinguish it from the Metro station) and that the station has never carried a nameboard (because of expectation of vandalism if one were ever provided!). From 3rd September 2007 and through the 2008 season, services were restricted (by bridge works) to the section north of Coast Road (Blue House) A1058 bridge (NTSRA Newsletters Summer 2007, spring, and summer 2008). Working to Percy Main resumed on 3rd December 2008 (NTSRA Newsletter Winter 2008/9) but only for the December Santa services. It closed after Santa workings in Dec 2008 and through the 2009 season because the Regulator refused to allow continued top-and-tail workings (NTSRA Newsletter Spring 2009). During that period a runround loop was installed at Percy Main (second station), so that top and tail working was eliminated. See *before* and *after* photos at Percy Main half way down the page at http://www.weardale-railway.org.uk/snippets_main2009C.htm in update No.22 under heading *Project connect team arrived* (the text would put this work as spring/early summer 2009). Percy Main ROP 26th November 2009 for charter specials, then the Santa service and regular seasonal service from 3rd April 2010 (NTSRA Newsletter Spring 2010). The full document supplied by the member, adding notes and corrections to previous BLN entries on this railway can be obtained by email request or SAE to the MR Ed.

On Sunday 6th July 2014 services were being operated by 0-6-0PT A *No.5* (Kitson 2509/1883) with two BR Outer Suburban coaches. Trains ran between Middle Engine Lane station, adjacent to the Stephenson Railway Museum and Percy Main station, just south of an overbridge for the Metro. The locomotive runs round at each end. A third Outer Suburban coach was in the siding alongside the Museum. Trains run at 11.30 and hourly until 14.30 from the Museum - an adult return ticket was £3.50. At the Percy Main end, the track ends at buffer stops just short of the A187 overline bridge; the planned extension to Royal Quays having been abandoned. Percy Main is a bare concrete platform, devoid of any signage - however the Edmondson card ticket carried its name.

MR134] PRCLT (West Shed), Midland Railway - Butterley, Derbyshire (MR p14) (BLN 1192.MR175): We have been asked by the Princess Royal Class Locomotive Trust to point out the 21" gauge railway at the West Shed at Swanwick Jct. is only a demonstration railway and public passengers rides are not available. This is their statement: *On special event days the 21" gauge locomotive may run a train on the demonstration track outside the West Shed. Whilst rides have been given in the past to PRCLT Patrons and specially invited guests, we do not operate an official passenger carrying railway so, for reasons of insurance and health and safety, rides are not available to the general public and are not advertised as being available.* The railway should therefore be deleted from *Minor Railways*. The MR Ed apologises for any confusion caused by its inclusion.

MR135] Brighouse & Halifax Model Engineers, West Yorkshire (MR p25) (BLN 997.MR126): It is not certain whether the extension formed of an additional balloon loop and use of a second station was ever brought into regular use. However, for the 2014 season the layout has been reconfigured. The additional balloon loop has been modified to provide a figure of 8, off the main circuit. This is covered on the first circuit, the second returns direct to the station - which is used for all departures and arrivals. This revised layout was brought into regular passenger use on Sun 13th April 2014. The track length of the ride is now 450 yds. On Sunday 13th July when two members visited mid afternoon, the site was very busy on a nice sunny warm day. Unusually, there is an admission charge (£3), but then all rides are free, which can cause fairly long queues. Three trains were at work, hauled by steam locomotives 0-4-2 *Merlin* & 2-6-0 *Aroundtoit*, and American diesel 4701 BNSF. Teas and cakes were available from the club house.

MR136] Eddercliffe Spen Miniature Railway, West Yorkshire (MR p25) (BLN 935.MR248): This ground level 5"/7¼" gauge railway is owned and operated by the Spenborough Model Engineers, formerly known as the Eddercliffe Light Railway. An elevated track also features and the whole site is on the trackbed of the former LNWR *Leeds New Line*. Public open days are on the second and fourth Sundays of the month from May to October. Times are 13.00 to 16.30. On 13th July 2014 two locomotives were at work on the ground level line, each with one coach: 0-4-0STs *Sweet Bee* and *Sweet William*. The fare for three circuits was £1 (although our correspondent's train did four circuits!). The station by-pass line was used for passing the other train while it was in the station. The local council wants the Society to enlarge their site further along the trackbed and extend the railway. However, with only limited numbers, the Society has yet to decide whether to take up this offer.

MR137] Rio Grande Miniature Railway, West Yorkshire (MR p25) (BLN 1198.MR238): Despite a report in the July *Railway Magazine* that the Garden Centre closed on 29th June 2014 (and their own web site was still saying it would close on that date when checked on 14th July!) a visit on Saturday 12th July 2014 found the Garden Centre still open, with a large *closing down* sign. It was just shutting for the day, so a check could not be made inside to see if the locomotive was still present, but an inspection of the track on the loop on the west side of the site found it heavily overgrown with grass - it clearly had not run for some time and the rails showed no sign of any use. The door, from which the train emerged from the Garden Centre building, appeared to have been boarded up. The railway had probably not run in 2014. A check of the Garden Centre web site on 29th July found it stating that *the garden centre is now closed. Our plans are to rebuild a brand new garden centre and coffee shop, to open in the future.* Whether the railway returns remains to be seen.

MR138] Waterford & Suir Valley Railway, County Waterford (MR p27) (BLN 1187.MR122): From the 2013 season, trains only cover the Carriganore - Grace Dieu Jct. section (which had reopened 13th July 2010) on Saturdays. At other times all trains terminate at Carriganore. The change was due to feedback the railway received that the 55 minute trip was too long for children (and some adults). The fare is the same on all days. Alas, the connecting bus only runs Mondays to Fridays!

MR139] East Wressle & Brind Railway, Within the private grounds of his East Yorkshire home, engineer Colin Shutt is creating this short standard gauge line [included (BLN 1186 p217/13) in a Society fixture last year] and assembling stock to operate on it, including his replica of a Col. Stephens Model T Ford based railcar. Only very occasional visits can be accepted to this location under the auspices of organisations having corporate public liability insurance cover, but a Railway Ramblers party was able to call in and see the latest developments, plus Mr Shutt's collection of other transport artefacts on Sunday 1st June. Track has now been extended eastwards to the extremity of Mr Shutt's land, so the total length of railway is 222 yards. Supervised cab rides were provided in his Ruston & Hornsby 0-4-0 diesel locomotive *Jane*. The railcar, hitherto off track in a barn after return from the Derwent Valley Light Railway centenary last year, is now back on the rails, but too much transmission band wear during outings means that it can only be driven cautiously in one direction and not at all in the other, so rides are not possible until remedial work is implemented.

Minor Railways: The 2nd supplement to the 2014 (26th) edition is now available. For a copy, send an SAE to the Compiler at: 93 Josephine Court, Southcote Road, Reading, RG30 2DQ. Those members who previously supplied SAEs should have received their copy. Supplement(s) are available as a PDF file from: pe.scott@tesco.net.

OTHERS' DOINGS:

This is provided as a service to members and details must be checked with the organisers.

Edinburgh Trams, Shandwick Place Crossover, Sun 31st Aug: Trams will run until 00.30 (on 1st Sept.) to cater for those attending the final weekend of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and following the Virgin Money Fireworks Concert. During and following the fireworks concert the tram service will operate between West End – Princes Street tram stop and the Airport only via Shandwick Place crossover. See: <http://edinburghtrams.com/news/Extended-tram-timetable-to-be-piloted>.

Hope Cement Works Railway, Saturday 6th September: Pindale Road, Hope, S33 6RP, (SK165826) 10.00 -17.00, public open day at the plant (which can manufacture 1.5M tones of cement per year) for its 85th anniversary. Free steam hauled train rides on the branch and minibus tours of the works and limestone quarry, exhibitions and other attractions. Free park and ride from Hope Village (railway station and the Sports Club half hourly 09.30 to 15.30, so accessible by passenger train) or walk 1½ miles. Parking on site is for blue badge holders only. No advance booking, just turn up on the day. Visitors must wear flat sturdy shoes and sensible clothing for the tours and all children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

GBRF Charity Special, Sunday 7th September: All 1st class single trip only (NB times approx. check nearer the day), Crewe (11.45), Stoke (12.15), Tamworth (13.00), Rugby (13.30), Milton Keynes (14.14), Watford Jct. (14.50), Clapham Jct. (16.15), Feltham (16.45), Woking (17.15) and Basingstoke (17.35). The route is via Northampton, Twickenham and Chertsey. Motive power: 92028 (hoped for) to Willesden Relief Lines, then 2 x Class 73. Pay on the day only, fares £20 from Clapham Jct or after, £30 prior or to Watford Jct., £40 for the full journey or any that includes

Watford to Clapham. A Limited buffet is expected; children half fare. All revenue goes to Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. Please publicise this trip and thereby encourage more such innovation (it would have otherwise been an ECS movement).

The Mendip Sprinter, Saturday 13th September: East Somerset Models with a FGW 2-car class 150 dmu through special train from Bristol Temple Meads and Bath Spa to East Somerset Jct. (Witham), Merehead West Jct. then Cranmore station (break and East Somerset Railway Train service rides) and return. To be confirmed and subject to availability on the day are: Bathampton Loop, a Trowbridge pick up & set down, Westbury Down Reception Line in the Up direction, Frome Avoiding Line (station on return), Westbury Up Reception Line in the down direction, Bath Down Goods Loop and Bristol East Down Goods Loop. Price £38 including unlimited travel on the ESR. Bookings: <http://www.esmodels.co.uk/mendipsprinter.htm> or ring 01749 880651.

Derby Etches Park Depot Open Day, Sat 13th Sept: 10.00 to 16.30 an EMT Railway Children Charity event and part of Derby's 175th Midland Railway anniversary with various exhibits and attractions.

<http://www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/information/media/news/Derbys-Etches-Park-Train-Depot-Opens-Its-Doors-To-The-Public/>. Tickets from: www.theticketfactory.com (search 'Etches Park Open Day') or ring: 0844 338 0338.

Forest of Dean Area, Saturday 20th September: Lea Bailey Light Railway Society Open Day (see extensive report in BLN 1213.MR114 and back references) 11.00 to 16.00, two engines running (Post code: HR9 5TY); **Alan Keef** works open day including train rides (BLN 1192 p378) 11.00 to 16.30, (HR9 7LQ); **Clearwell Caves** when the underground incline will be working (GL16 8JR) and also the 15" gauge **Perrygrove Railway** gala weekend - also on 21st (GL16 8QB). At the latter there is a 10 minute frequency service from 10.40 to 16.20 with 7 locos in operation, freights and visiting engines.

Laira Depot, Sat 20th Sept: Cotswold Line Promotion Group FGW HST special from Worcester Shrub Hill (07.30/21.15) and principal stations to Oxford (09.10/19.45) via Melksham to Plymouth (13.00/16.40) returning via Bristol TM and Bath, non-CLPG members £45. <http://www.clpg.org.uk/uploads/Booking%20Form%20June%202014.pdf> or ring 01386 841253. At Plymouth a private visit has been agreed to Laira Depot and Plymouth signal box (expected). Enquiries about these visits to our Malvern member David Guy at david.guy@btinternet.com or ring 07808 768839.

Crystal Palace Subway, 20th & 21st September: Open house weekend. A beautiful grade II vaulted walkway opened in 1865 between the palace (which burnt down on 30th November 1936) and the former six-platform Crystal Place High Level station terminus. The 20th September marks the 60th anniversary of this branch line passenger closure. The subway was used as an air raid shelter in World War II and subsequently fenced off; the *Friends of Crystal Palace Subway* aim to reopen it for community use. Unusual free supervised access and an associated exhibition is available by ballot for 760 people after a successful first similar event last year see <http://www.cpsubway.org.uk/> (and for more interesting information and newsletters) or ring 0120 81330973. Closing date for applications is 31st August, winners will be notified by 8th September.

Scarborough Spa Express, Saturday 27th September: An EMT charity HST tour in aid of Railway Children from London St. Pancras (approx. 07.30) and selected stations to Doncaster for York (11.30) and Scarborough (12.15), standard class return £59. Of possible interest to members is the expected use of the Up and Down Slow line from Sharnbrook Jct. (including the Sharnbrook

Goods Line deviation through Wymington Tunnel) through Kettering P2 to Kettering North Jct. and Scarborough 'excursion' P1 (which famously has the UK's longest railway bench). P1 currently only has two booked trains a week on a Sunday afternoon. Return is via Rotherham Masborough Jct., Beighton Jct. and Tapton Jct. See: http://www.tyseleylocoworks.co.uk/tours/tr_2014_0927.htm or ring: 0121 7084960. The 1,300 yard Scarborough North Bay miniature railway (TA035898) is running this day as should the two cliff railways.

Private Railway Visit, October: A member who wishes to remain anonymous is hoping to arrange a rare visit to an interesting private (non-public) 2' gauge railway near a canal in Stone (Staffordshire) on a weekend in October. Other BLS members are kindly invited to attend, expressions of interest to Paul Stewart (below) with contact email address or if not available, a phone number.

Scunthorpe Steelworks Diesel weekend, 4th & 5th October: From our friends at AFRPS. Of note the buffet car is temporarily moved from their depot to serve Frodingham public platform, the only time the rare track it normally sits on is clear! Trains run from the platform half hourly from 10:00 to 16:00 both days. Day membership is required at £10 per day adult and £3 per accompanied child in advance, or £12 adult and £5 child on the day. Planned locos include Classes 02, 03, 07, 20, Tata Steel rebuilt Hunslet No 30, Highline Loco, 0-6-0 Sentinel and Tata Steel loco 58. Apply to Brigg Tourist Information Centre (TIC) Tel 01652 657053, or by post to The Buttercross, Market Place, Brigg, DN20 8ER. Payment may be made by credit/debit card over the phone, or by card or cash in person - cheques are not accepted. For further information (and for the programme of public steam and diesel tours and brakevan trips) see <http://www.afrps.co.uk/> or phone the TIC.

Isle Abbots Railway, Saturday 25th October: Bromes Lane, Ilminster, Somerset, TA3 6RJ (ST352208). With thanks to Kentrail Enthusiasts Group (KEG), a visit to this extensive complex 7¼" miniature railway at 10.30 to complement our Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Woody Bay fixture at 15.00 (BLN 1213 p287). The layout, shown in KEG's Track Plans of Minor Railways Vol. 1, (BLN 1210 p236) includes an unusual complete circle which is part of two triangular junctions further complicated by a flat crossing. It is intended to cover all practical track; light refreshments are expected. Pay on the day approx. £8, see: <http://www.isle-abbotts.org.uk/aboutia/railway/railway.html>. Queries and notifications to Simon Mortimer at scubatrack@yahoo.com, or ring 07835 739940.

Manchester, Ardwick Depot, Saturday 25th October: 500 *Whistle-stop* timed Siemens FTPE Depot tours are available to prebook from 1st September as part of Manchester Science Festival (date for your diary). Keep an eye on the website, local press and Facebook.

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