



## LOCOMOTIVE CLUB of GREAT BRITAIN BEDFORD BRANCH

**Newsletter No 106 – March 2014**

### DIARY

**Thursday 13 March** 7.30pm - LCGB St Albans  
Carlisle: Railway Mecca (Soccer Outpost) - Colin Briggs  
at Chiswell Gn. United Reformed Church Hall, Watford Rd, St Albans

**Sunday 16 March** Rocks by Rail Museum  
Open Day Cottesmore, Oakham, LE15 7BX

**Monday 17 March** 2.00pm - RCTS Northampton  
75 years of the S.N.C.F - Michael Bunn  
at Wellingborough Museum, Castle Way, Wellingborough, NN8 2XB

**Fri 21 March** LUL Victoria Line visit - FULL

**Fri 21 - Sun 23 March** Severn Valley Railway  
Spring Steam Gala with five visiting engines.  
The Railway Station, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 1BG

**Sat - Sun 22 - 23 March** 10am - 5pm Sat, 4.30 Sun  
London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra  
Palace,, London, N22 7AY (free bus from Ally Pally NR)

**Tuesday 25 March** 2.00pm - RCTS Hitchin  
Railways of Paris (inc. the Metro) - Michael Bunn  
at Ludwick Way Methodist Church, Welwyn GC, AL7 3PN

**Wed. 26 March** 7.30pm Sandy Transport Society  
A Night at the Movies - Frank Banfield  
at Sandy Conservative Club, 19 Bedford Road, SG19 1EL

**Sat 29 - Sun 30 March** GCR Diesel Gala LE11 1RW

**Sunday 30 March** Buckinghamshire Railway Centre  
Steaming day at Quainton Rd, Aylesbury, HP22 4BY

**Tuesday 1 April** 7.30pm **LCGB Bedford**  
46 Years on British Railways from Nationalisation  
to Privatisation - Live - - Jack Turner  
at St Johns Hall, St Johns St, B'f'd, MK42 0DL (nr St Johns Stn)

**Sat 12 April** Luton Model Rly Exhib - **We'll be there.**

**THANKS** to all contributors. **PLEASE** send something for the newsletter – even if it's just one photo or a few lines. We're looking for YOUR thoughts and experiences. Material for April by Thursday 28 March 2014, please. *cheers, Geoff*

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[www.lcgb.org.uk](http://www.lcgb.org.uk) - see Bedford pages

**UNSINKAGLUG** 3 wet sites. **Latest on 9 Mar Thus**



**Penrhyn - Harlech** The combined road-rail toll bridge on the Pwllheli line started moving when piles were being driven for a replacement bridge. See big steel tubes in middle of photo [Copyright North Wales News] . Network Rail hopes for a new rail bridge **in several months**. Fingers crossed.



**Dawlish** West of Exeter, Devon this location is notorious for big waves. After the low wall was breached, the water landed on the ballast which was then dragged into the sea. So later waves hitting the wall and arcing onto the roadway consisted of water plus rocks! Gawkers not amused. **Repair target 4 April.** But that's not all in the west - the Bristol - Taunton line is still flooded near Bridgwater. **No news!**



**Unstone** Midland main Line North of Chesterfield. A hillside turned to porridge after all the rain is just walking slowly towards the tracks. Colliery waste like Hatfield! Some trains cancelled, others diverted via Barrow Hill. **Cleared 8 March**

## RAVENSTONE WOOD JUNCTION - A BRIEF HISTORY 1940s – 50s

John Parker

You can see from the photo the box is in a rather remote place 1 ½ miles from Piddington Station in the west and 3 ¼ miles from Olney Station in the east. It was where the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway joined the Midland's Bedford to Northampton Branch. See also connections map on right.

The Bedford-Northampton line opened on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1872 for pass/goods, but the Ravenstone Wood box did not open until 29<sup>th</sup> June 1891. The time my notes cover is from the 1940s. A friend's father worked box from 1937-38. At the time he came as a Class 6 Porter/Signalman off the L.N.W.R. line from Rugby – Market Harboro' at Theddington Station. He ended up as a Class 1 Signalman being able to work 36 boxes from Irchester North - Baybrook on the Midland Main Line and the boxes up to Lloyds North on the Manton – Syston line, also boxes to Thrapston on the Kettering – Cambridge line and last of all the L.N.W.R. Peterborough line. His father used to bike to Ravenstone box from Kettering, get your road map out and have a look at his likely route there and back. Take your pick!

If the times and shift were right he would get a slow up goods at Kettering and get dropped off at Wellingborough then bike to Olney station then along the cess (track) to the box; ok on a fine summer morning or afternoon but how he managed it in the wind/rain plus snow in Winter Heaven knows.

He was offered a railway cottage in Olney but he turned it down because his parents, who were getting on in years, needed help getting out and about.

In the 1930s two men worked he box, the first shift was 11am – 7pm, the second shift 10pm – 6am. From 7pm -10pm and 6am – 10am the box was switched out; the two Signalmen never met.

From 1940 – 1947 the box was manned 24/7. What is not showing in the photo is a line off to the right just beyond the box on the right-hand side. There is a question mark on this siding as to whether it was put in on the Bedford side of the box or the Piddington side, near the box steps. The siding was put in in 1942 and taken out in 1944-45.

The correct name for this ordnance depot is Yardley Chase. It stretched from Ravenstone wood box for 1½ miles to Piddington box on the right hand side of the two lines. It gives you an idea of the size of the depot and it's importance. I have been able to look at some of the box registers; sadly nearly all of them are in a poor state and the Signalmen did not log the Loco numbers down with the times. That is one of the reasons the L.M.S. started to put Loco numbers in big figures on the Loco's tenders at the grouping onwards.

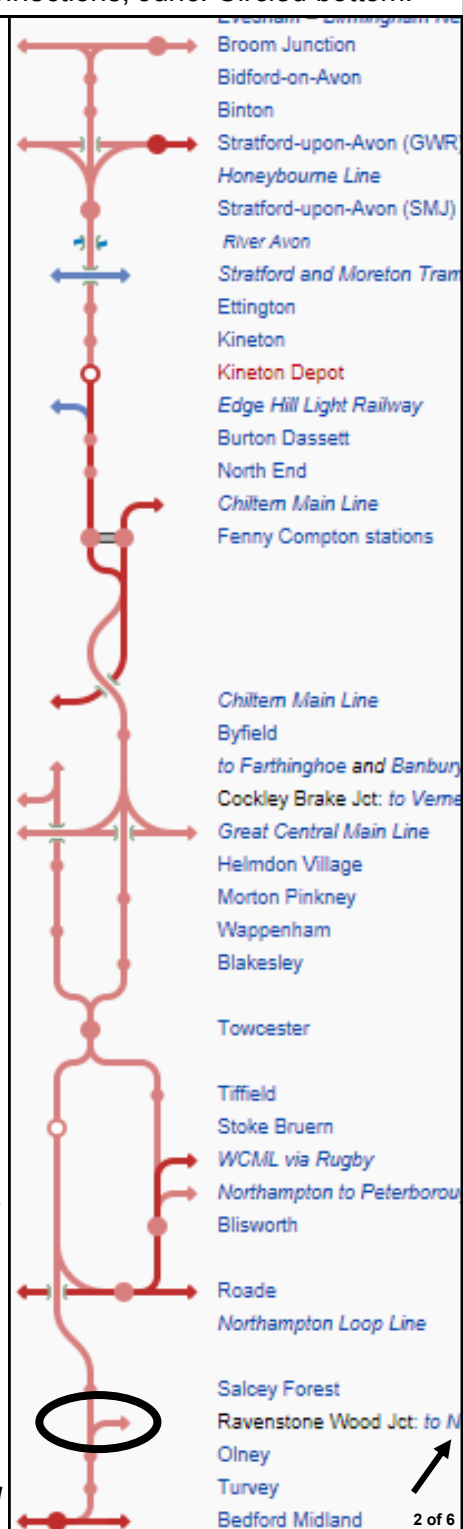
One register has Loco numbers written in by a Signalman called Clark. I have also written the word "branch" by some of the times, meaning coming off or going on the S.M.J. line. "Up" is towards Bedford and "down" is going toward Towcester or Northampton. The local passenger trains were worked by 0-4-4- tanks 1272-1273 from Bedford shed and a L.N.W.R. 2-4-2 tank engine from Northampton shed. Some days there would be 5 goods off the S.M.J. between midnight and four a.m., returning empty late afternoon. The fast Somers Town freights were nearly always worked by Kentish Town 4Fs, 8Fs did not start working on the two branches until late 1944.

I have not put in all the local passenger train times and numbers to save some space. Also, Burton Dassett was a large ordnance depot near Fenny Compton.

[Thanks to Sharon Kiff (typing) and Phil Bell (track diagram) GT]

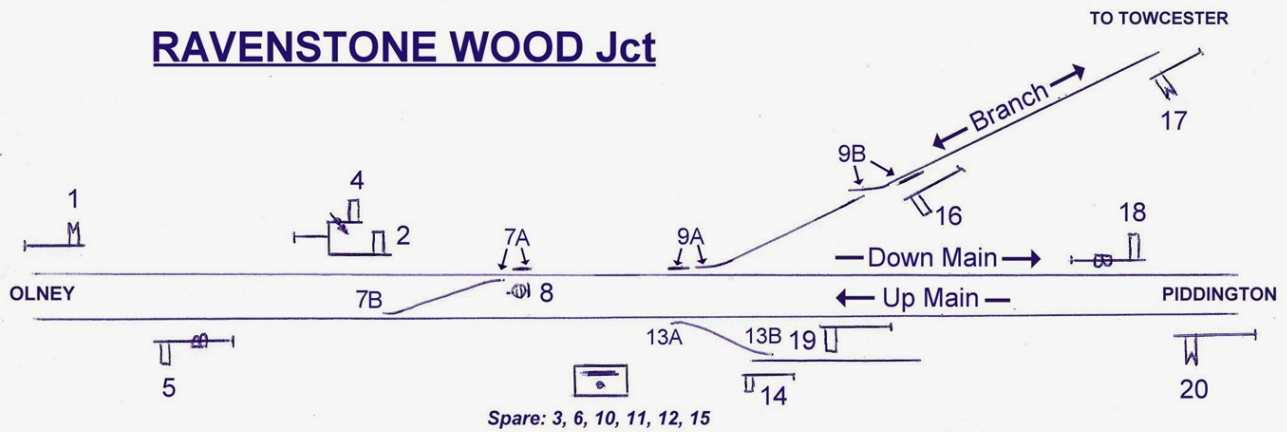


▲ - The junction on 11 April 1952. Right to Northampton, left to the SMJ. [DWF Cook/ J Parker Coll'n. ▼ - SMJ Connections, Junc. Circled bottom.





## RAVENSTONE WOOD Jct



### RAVENSTONE WOOD JCN BOX 14<sup>TH</sup> June 1944

TIME	DOWN	LOCO	TRAIN
2.54 AM	"	4138	SPECIAL – NRTON
3.05 A/R PURPLE – A/R WHITE 3.43 AM			
5.40 AM BRANCH	"	3506	BEDFORD – GLOS;-
6.11 AM BRANCH	"	3105	E.C.S. BURTON DASSET
9.18 AM BRANCH	"	4333	L/E STRATFORD
9.18 AM	"	1273	LOCAL PASS;-
10.49 AM BRANCH	"	4233	BARNWOOD GLOS;-
3.10 PM BRANCH	"	3506 §	SEE NOTE
§ - OLNEY – TOWCESTER TRIP FREIGHT STOPPED AT BOX 3.15PM BRAKES FAILED ON ENGINE* TRIP ENGINE WILL TAKE TRAIN FORWARD. CRIPPLED ENGINE RETURNING TO BEDFORD. See 1.40pm up train below.			
4.18	"	1273	LOCAL PASS;-
5.12 PM BRANCH	"	4095	WEED KILLING STRATF:-
5.26PM A/R RED – A/R WHITE 6.06PM			
9.18	"	1273	LOCAL PASS:-

TIME	UP	LOCO	TRAIN
1.42AM	"	3474	SPECIAL BED:-
3.09AM	"	D/H 3971 3989	FAR COTTON NORTH:-
4.32AM	"	4362	PICK UP FREIGHT
6.23AM	"	1273	LOCAL PASS
11.24AM BRANCH	"	?	AMMO SPECIAL
12.01PM	"	D/H 3721 4367	SPECIAL BEDFORD
1.40PM BRANCH	"	3873 §	TRIP OLNEY * See note in down trains *
4.10PM BRANCH	"	3910	GLOS – SOMERS TOWN
6.50PM	"	1272	LOCAL PASS
7.02PM	"	3969	SOMERS TOWN



▲ -Graham's favourite 1F haloed in the Roundhouse

"On Saturday 8 February I was on a driving turn at Barrow Hill for the LNER event. It was extremely windy but otherwise dry and there were many visitors there to see the A4's including 4464 Bittern in action. During my turn I drove Barrow Hill's resident 0-6-0ST Peckett 2000 and 4464.



▲ - Happiness is clearly 4464's regulator for Graham

▼ - Sunday's classic line-up by David Scudamore



▲ - Yesteryear's East Coast Racer by Paul Jeffries

"After a good night out and an Indian meal with a group of the regulars on Saturday night I followed my normal routine of maximising the value of my HRA Inter-Rail Pass by calling in at the GCR en-route home to Somerset on Sunday morning.

I normally travel on the first DMU departure and return on the following train from Leicester North.



This week I was delighted to see a Class27 ▲ replacement for the DMU hauling two director's saloons'. I decided to ride this train both ways (I do have heritage diesel tendencies!!).

The trip was full of atmosphere but it got still more interesting. As we approached Swithland Sidings the train was rerouted because of a major rail



incident with a number of mark 2 carriages ▲ derailed and on their sides. The guard advised that the scene had been specially set up for the filming of a future episode of the BBC Casualty series.



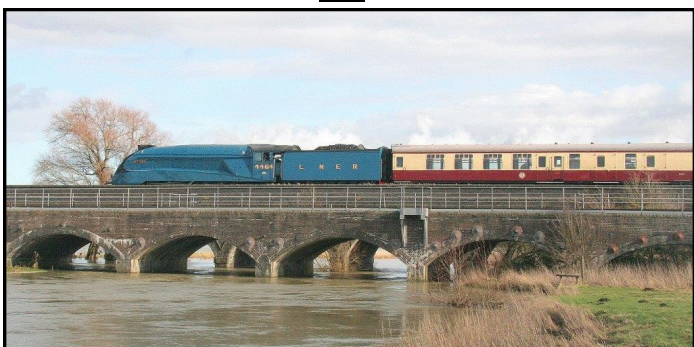


**THEY JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH** Even when they were on show way up North at Shildon, Several people from round here went to see the A4's: On 18 February **David Scudamore** took this smashing ▲ night shot whilst our very own Venerable Bede **Bill Davies** sent this:-

In the end I made it to see the fabulous 6 at Shildon having to endure the inadequate provision of a 2 car 'Nodding Donkey' to get us from Darlington, which, having announced that it would leave from the South End of Platform 4 immediately passed straight by the crowds causing everyone to rush down the platform to the other end.

My main reason for going was to hear the question and answer session around a panel of 5 former Top Shed fireman, 4 of whom I had worked with whilst I was there from 1970 - 1974 when they were drivers. It was a great pleasure to meet up with them again after so many years and whilst I had heard a few of the antics and stories before a lot was new to me and very entertaining it was too.

As for the locos, they did look superb despite the crowds. And also from **Bill**:-



Can I claim that A4's are the most frequent preserved steam locos to pass through Bedford. Certainly 9, 19 and 22 have been through leaving 7 as a potential for the future maybe. Yet another picture of Bittern, this time making it's way across the River Great Ouse at Radwell Bedfordshire. As to be expected John 'the train' Daniel ex Bedford is on the regulator. ■ [and to make matters worse, theres a class 2 rumour that one or both of the North American members may stay! Where will it all end? GT



**Dave Halstead** went to East Beds Model Railway Society's Exhibition at Stratton School Biggleswade on 8 February. ▲ - Here is "Hartburn", a 4mm/EM 18.2mm gauge layout based in the Morpeth/Rothbury area of Northumberland.

The event was well attended although smaller than my last visit some years ago. There weren't many bargain book or magazine stalls!

There was a good variety of layouts from "N" gauge (a USA one was good) up to "O" gauge layouts of Bedford Depôt and "Pointless" - a 2-track coal stage layout with no points!

My highlight was a Ffestiniog Railway layout based on Tan-y-Bwlch in the early 1900s. It was a good likeness but lacked some visual accuracy.



▲ - **Michael Field** saw Colas 56078 at Aviemore on 17 February with the big Kirow 1200 crane which has installed the Strathspey Railway's new river bridge. This is 6Z56 Aviemore to Mossend.



## BUILDING WORK



**Bill Davies:-** By taking my safety into my own hands I dangle my camera out of windows of trains to take pictures, ▲ - On the way to Brighton the new Thameslink Depot at Three Bridges. Apparently this and one at Hornsey will displace Cauldwell Walk at Bedford which is to close once the new units are all in service after a life span of a mere 11 years. Of course there could be a change of heart when they get fed up of taking units for maintenance 80 miles from Bedford to Three Bridges.



**Geoff Biggs:-** After 30 years Luton's Inner Ring Road is to be finished. ▲ - Looking North, the road is to be shoehorned between the chalk ridge of High Town and Luton Station. Platform 1 (up slow) visible. It then passes through a concrete tube thoughtfully provided under the big car park before swinging away to cross the railway at a dual-carriageway Crawley Green Road ▼. Here's the new bridge for the second carriageway. The unguided busway uses the right-hand span. Sorry that my camera-dangling doesn't match Bill's but it was raining.



▲ - The **Ecclesbourne Valley Rly** was host for the UK testing of this giant Pile Driving mechanical beast. Built in Italy and at nearly twice the power of its predecessor, the Pile Driver has been purchased by Derbyshire Company Van Elle Rail who are based at Pinxton. Once successful trials are completed, the pile driver will be in operation on the Great Western rail region installing 15,000 overhead gantries on as part of the rail electrification programme..



To end we have two from our BLO **Robin Patrick.**

▲ - 66720 approaching Gascoigne Wood with 6C09 0845 Immingham - Eggborough Power Station on 19 February.

▼ On 22 February 73050 crosses the River Nene with a carpet of snowdrops on the river bank departing Wansford with 1145 to Peterborough. This was NVR's "not three but two 5MTs" weekend and this loco's last turn before overhaul.

