

# STOUR VALLEY STEAM



No. 176  
Autumn  
2024



*(Front cover) Vivienne Stringer and Jayne Summer on platform 1, and  
(above) Deputy Lord Lieutenant Nigel Spence and Vivienne Stringer.  
Both photos taken on 30 June 2024 during the Chappel 175 celebrations  
by Greg Kiteos*



## CHAPPEL VIADUCT

By Władysław Mirecki

In the 30 odd years between first conceiving and executing this project, my work as it had progressed became purely watercolour. As I had won major prizes in watercolour, I saw no reason to discard the tried and tested although this 'concept' would have been the perfect time at which to make a radical change.

In planning how to set out the overall composition I had to find the tallest piers which would be over the river, and ensure it all fitted in. I didn't want to reach that point and have to extend the sheet.

As this was repetitive, I tried marking out the arches using a template. But this didn't work. I didn't realise templates needed be so precise. Here is a case in point about change. I could have introduced some print method, certainly for the main drawing. But I thought each individual arch is different and each must stand up on its own.

The choice of season was a no-brainer. At the height of spring or summer you wouldn't see anything but for greenery. So, they're late winter, early spring. The distance from the viaduct, I just can't remember how that came about but it had to remain fixed. This could be quite tricky if you came across a tree. To stand in front or behind? And the ground in the willow farm is not even by any means. Then there's the brambles.

The drawing of the arches are not truly in perspective. After abandoning the stencil, I resorted to various tools and finally chose a compass with which to

*At the official opening of the exhibition in the Goods Shed on 14 June 2024, visitors admire the 64 paintings (Craig Greenslade)*



work. But it means there is no fore shortening on the arches, which should be elliptical and not hemispherical. As I worked from the top of the viaduct to its bottom, my viewpoint altered but I didn't account for that. If I knew how, I'd have used a drone set to a precise height and distance. But even then, it would have been snagged by trees.

It took me a while before I found a way to paint the bricks. At first the brick courses were a bit vague and anyway didn't matter very much as arches 29 - 32 were short. It was when the piers became more exposed and therefore prominent, I needed to get more precise. I finally ended up using 2mm flat for the short courses and 4mm for the stretcher bond.

The angle of the sun on the East side is different to the West. On the East the light is coming from the south late morning and the Viaduct is in deep shadow with just a slither of the inner pier face lit up. On the West side, the light is coming from the south-east. I wanted to describe the relieving arches on the piers to add interest and so

the contrasts are not so high in order to allow more detail to be shown.

This was a nice project to be doing and was in part a reaction to my 2018 Solo Exhibition, the first since my stroke, although I'd continued to supply shows or part shows to the Piers Feetham, London, Browse and Darby, London and the Arborealists. I didn't have to wrack my brain as to what to paint next. Also, I conceived this a non-commercial venture as I wouldn't like to see them split up so the pressure to paint in order to sell was not an issue.

On meeting the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Adrian Corder-Birch at the Opening I was reminded that like him, I've always loved Industrial Archaeology and indeed the only club I joined when at Kingston Polytechnic. So, does that make me somehow schizoid? An Arborealist and Industrial Archaeologist?



*Edna Battye and Władysław Mirecki at the opening of the exhibition (Craig Greenslade)*



## ROAD STEAM MARKS 175 CHAPPEL ANNIVERSARY

Richard Hemington

Some 20+ years ago, when relatively new to road steam, Mark Honeywood and I organised several road runs on behalf of the East Anglian Traction Engine Society (EATES) using the Great Eastern name. With my Ransomes engine firmly back on the road after an extended rebuild break, and now a regular visitor to Chappel, it seemed time to have another go at a Great Eastern road run.

The Museum had been a base for several earlier steam road runs. Now that I've been enticed back to working at Chappel, it was easy to sound out and get support for another run based at EARM.

The date chosen, Saturday 6 July, nicely filled the gap between the local Aldham Rally and Weeting Rally a bit further north. This provided a suitable excuse to join in the Museum's celebrations marking Chappel viaduct's 175<sup>th</sup> year. We got publicity underway and EATES kindly adopted the run and agreed to sponsor the coal.

A number of local engines were unfortunately unable to attend. One, a nice Foden wagon, was actually on its way from Chelmsford to Chappel for the run when it sadly snapped its rear axle. Despite this, four engines braved a disappointingly poor forecast and took part together with a Stanley steam car, a 1971 Scammell and several Ford Model T cars.

Fowler road loco 'Sir Douglas' had steamed to Chappel direct from Aldham Rally, whilst my Ransomes arrived from Aldham via Colchester where it took part in Garrison Day (the Army Forage Dept took delivery of the engine in 1916 and disposed of it from Colchester in 1920). The Foden tractor 'Mighty Atom' and the Stanley car steamed in from Acton near Long Melford, with the ever-immaculate Fowler roller 'Highlander' making up the numbers.

Several years ago, I had cast new 'Boudicca' nameplates for the Ransomes. The engine came to me in 1996 carrying its well-known but wussy Mendip Lady name given in the 1970s when preserved in Somerset. The name never appealed to me, especially as the engine's non-preservation years were all in the Eastern counties. The Colchester connection prompted the Boudicca name - there are several engines named Boadicea but not the now-preferred correct spelling as recorded by Roman scribe Tacitus. The road run provided a suitable excuse, at last, to attach the new name.

Most engines were prepared within the museum before setting off to start the road run from outside the front of the station. The previous day had seen torrential rain which was still doing its best on the morning of the run. Sadly, soggy ground conditions on the recreation ground below the viaduct prevented all but the cars from venturing onto the grass for the planned photo stop (although the Foden tractor did make it to the viaduct on a hard track).

North East Essex contains some quite good hills so it was a good test to start the 12-mile circular route from Chappel with a stiff climb up out of the Colne valley before swinging round through attractive scenery to the half way point at Earls Colne. I'd hoped to line engines up for our lunchtime break in the High Street but, asking if traffic wardens could 'turn a blind eye' for a few hours resulted in a firm 'no' (I shouldn't have asked!). Looking for alternative parking areas, I found the nearby yard of the former Hunts foundry - engines would have looked good amongst the Grade 2 buildings, but not easy as now residential. Hidden down a side

road, I'd missed that our chosen lunch pub had a rear car park - parking problem solved when the Lion offered to barrier it off for our sole use.

The car park entrance seemed a bit narrow, and became increasingly tight every time I thought about it, but everyone got in and parked up easily. A hose was run out to top up engines over the break. The pub was happy to welcome the 30 or so damp participants who dried out and kept the kitchen and bar staff busy during our visit.

Suitably refreshed, and with sunshine now replacing the rain, the run continued north through White Colne and along narrow lanes with several more short sharp climbs to surprise engine crews and make the engines work before returning to Chappel.

Back at Chappel, engines parked up within the museum. The event concluded with an enjoyable BBQ and beer evening for run participants and museum volunteers at the 'Viaduct Tavern'. Thanks go to all those who took part and contributed to a grand day out, particularly the East Anglian Traction Engine Society for adopting, publicising and providing coal for the run, and not least everyone at EARM for being perfect hosts in accommodating both the engines and their crews in the build-up to the event and over the weekend itself.



*Ford Model T WC1084, Ford Model T BJ8265, Ford Model T BF7485 and 1932 built Foden timer tractor MJ369—with the viaduct in the background, 6 July 2024  
(Steve Knight)*

## **STOUR VALLEY STEAM**

*Closing date for submissions for the next edition is 15 February 2025*

*- by email to [svs@earm.co.uk](mailto:svs@earm.co.uk)*

*- by post to the Museum, marked for Stour Valley Steam*

## **175th Anniversary Chappel Viaduct and Gainsborough Line by Martin Gibbons and Kath Beck (Chappel and Wakes Colne station adopter)**

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024 marks 175 years since the Colchester, Stour Valley, Sudbury and Halstead Railway opened the railway line, and Chappel and Wakes Colne Station. The viaduct is the largest brick structure in East Anglia which carries the Marks Tey to Sudbury line across the Colne valley. Railway engineer Peter Bruff oversaw the building of the viaduct which was built in bricks made from clay taken from the Mount Bures cutting.

To celebrate this important milestone, representatives from marketing were very pleased to work for six months with local community groups who formed a liaison group to plan a very successful weekend of events, including a special day on the museum site on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

These groups included the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership (ESSCRP), the station adopters from Bures, Chappel and Wakes Colne, Chappel and Wakes Colne Parish Councils, Chappel Primary School, local residents, Gainsborough House in Sudbury, and Greater Anglia. Through our work we have strengthened our partnership with the local community, and raised the profile of the museum to a wider audience.

To kick start the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on 14<sup>th</sup> June, the museum was very proud to host the opening of an exhibition of 64 watercolours of the east and west views of the Chappel Viaduct. These were painted by local artist, gallery owner, and long term EARM member, Wladyslaw Mirecki. Born in Chelmsford, Essex of Polish parents Wladyslaw Mirecki is self-taught, having painted all his life, including periods while working to gain his science degree at Kingston Polytechnic, London (1975-78), and as an industrial designer. The exhibition remained on display on our Goods Shed until 18th August 2024.

### **The build up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

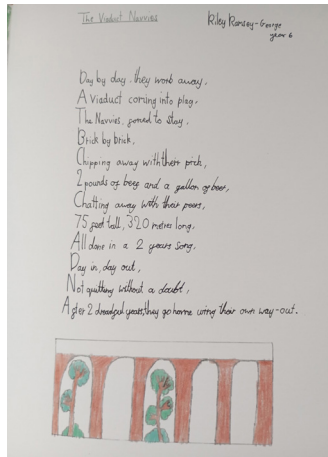
Through the liaison group the museum formed a strong partnership with Chappel Primary School. The ESSCRP funded a prize to be awarded in a competition for children to design an anniversary logo, which we included in our publicity.

The children at the school were learning about how the navvies built the viaduct and railway. We arranged for them all to visit the museum over three days. To help make their learning realistic, our volunteers, Phil Ainsley (School and Guide Coordinator) and Chris Player, dressed up as navvies, and acted as models while the children drew them. They showed the children the tools the navvies would have used in the 1840s, told them about the life a Navvy led and showed them pictures of work that needed to be done to build a railway. Following these visits, children wrote poems about the navvies. They also imagined what a navvy may have written in a diary and drew pictures that were published in a commemorative booklet funded by the National Community Rail Partnership.

The children were very pleased to see their art work on display in the Goods Shed.

These visits have resulted in Jaki Collison and Phil Ainsley meeting with the head teacher to arrange a yearly programme of visits for the school children to the Museum.





Artwork from local schools and the logo for the celebration weekend



## The weekend!

The liaison group developed a detailed plan of events for the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend. It was designed to meet a wide range of ages and interests. All events were very well attended. The walk was led by Hugh Turner a relative of Peter Bruff the viaduct engineer. The music hall train was very popular.

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

A special day of celebration for the anniversary of the Marks Tey to Sudbury line based at the East Anglian Railway Museum.

On 2 July 1849 the first engine to travel to Sudbury set off from Marks Tey. Villagers there had built an arch of flowers for the engine to pass underneath. However, the arch was too low. The engine completed the journey festooned with flowers. To celebrate this memory, it was agreed that Kath Beck, Chappel and Wakes Colne station adopter and Jayne Sumner from the ESSCRP, ably assisted by Steve Wills from Greater Anglia could present the driver of the 12.22 to Sudbury with a posy of flowers.

The remaining celebrations began with an opening ceremony at 1.30pm. Alan Neville, Stakeholder, Community and Customer Engagement Manager from Greater Anglia opened the ceremony. He spoke about the history of the line, and how the viaduct had survived World War 11 and the Beeching cuts intact, and still in use after 175 years. He praised the work of the ESSCRP, station adopters and welcomed the strengthening partnership with the EARM.

Alan was followed by the Mayor, Cllr Lesley Scott-Boutell. The Mayor spoke warmly of the work of volunteers and how they meet the needs of their differing communities. The 175 celebrations had brought together different groups who made new friendships leading to a greater understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities; the stronger involvement of schools, scouts and support groups, and a celebration of the wide range of skills used by volunteers.

Sir Bob Russell, President of the EARM welcomed the closer links between the school and the EARM, highlighting that hopefully the children waiting to sing might lead the celebrations of 200 years of the viaduct and Gainsborough line in 2049.

The choir from Chappel Primary School led by their teacher Robyn Murray sang beautifully. They sang songs from Oliver, The Greatest Showman, and read some of their poems and extracts from the diaries of the navvies.

Nigel Spence MBE, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex, a steam train enthusiast, thanked the children for their brilliant singing. He said they would remember the day for a very long time. He too reminded them that they may be involved in celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

During the speeches, Isaac and the steam engine crew lined up No.11 at the level crossing. A red ribbon was strung across the crossing ready to be cut by the Mayor, Mayoress and Chris Eaton BEM. Chris was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2024 for his long service to the villages of Chappel and Wakes Colne, not least by running the post office and village shop.

The cutting of the ribbon signalled the opening of the family picnic with games on the field behind the Goods Shed.

Operations ran two trains, our No.11 Steam train with the open wagons and our ever-popular Waggon und Maschinenbau GmbH Diesel Railbus.

Our Viaduct Pub was open serving the Chappel 175 Anniversary beer brewed by Colchester Brewery, which sold out in record time!

Richard Hemington kindly maintained his traction engine in steam along with another engine which added to the attractions of the day.

The Halstead and Braintree Model Railway club rooms were open where they ran different train formations from over the years.

The Marketing team would like to thank all the volunteers who helped to organise and run the event making it an amazing success. We had lots of positive comments and thanks on social media and via emails to the Museum. It was the best -attended event so far this year.

Overall this was an amazing event for the Museum and to quote our Chairman Pete Martin

*"The phenomenal amount of positive interest generated during the proceedings, has given a fresh light and a greater understanding to many people of what we have achieved - and are continuing to achieve - as well as raising the profile and support of the Museum in the local community. Thanks, and h's off to everyone for bringing it all together"*

Let's hope some of us are around to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 25 years' time!

We will be working with the same groups on Rail 200 as in 2025 we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. Nationwide celebrations are being planned!!!

*No.11 with driver Harry Brooks moving into position for the ribbon cutting ceremony, complete with the Colchester Brewery Chappel 175 headboard (Rosemary Prestney)*







*Vivienne Stringer, Steve Wills, Jayne Summer, Kath Beck, Alan Neville and Paul Webster on platform 1  
Wladyslaw Mirecki, Sir Bob Russell and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Nigel Spence  
(Both Greg Kiteos)*





*Some of the audience listening to the speeches (Rosemary Prestney)*

*Val Sayer, Mayoress Jessica Scott-Boutell, Mayor Lesley Scott-Boutell and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Nigel Spence (Greg Kiteos)*





## NEW JUNCTION AT CHAPPEL & WAKES COLNE by R F Youell

*Peter Martin sometimes dines at Huffers cafe in Sudbury. He was recently passed an article by one of the staff there, which was sent to her father at the Halstead Gazette on 15 November 1984 by Dr. R F (Fred) Youell). Here it is to enjoy!*

Halstead readers should not read too much into this title - no it is NOT the reopening of the Colne Valley and Halstead line! There has been far too much demolition and building over it to make it feasible.

It IS however definitely a Junction!

Ever since the Stour Valley Railway Preservation Society took over the old station yard at Chappel to convert into a depot museum and workshop, a lot of hard work has gone into restoring the site to its old glory of steam train days.

Unfortunately all that BR had left of the Sudbury branch was a single line with no loops or junctions of any kind - what is known by the term 'basic railway'.

This meant that when the Society wanted to bring in coaches or locomotives it had to be done by slewing the BR line at night, and putting it all back together when finished with, a long, dirty and tiresome job. *(At this time the Sunday service did not start until the afternoon in winter months, so of necessity the slew had to be done on a Saturday night.)*

Four years ago British Rail were approached and asked if they would agree to a permanent connection.

There were difficulties of course - rigorous safety measures have to be taken when a junction connects two entirely different railways. There was the probably large cost, method of operating over it, and lots of other things to be borne in mind.

British Rail have been up to their eyes in the work involved in electrifying Harwich, Norwich and other places, and a new junction on a very minor branch line had to take its place in the queue.

There was a way out, however! Some of the Society members were professionally qualified on permanent way, and there was an almost limitless supply of unskilled or semi-skilled manpower for things like pushing and shovelling, and grunting at the right times!

So the new Chappel Junction became the first on a BR passenger line to be a joint effort between BR and the Preserved Railway. Parts of the old junction were painstakingly collected - some marked LNER 1941 - and assembled into the junction, which - when finished - was less worn than the rails already on the branch. There was in fact very little wear and tear at all after 43 years.

The Society members under their Permanent Way Superintendent put the junction together to text book standards, and it was passed fit for use by BR.

In order to avoid holding up the traffic to Sudbury, the junction was put in on the night of 27/28 September 1984. The British Rail Inspector from Witham, of course, had to be in charge with his expert assistants. The Society provided most of the hard work.

A 20mph speed limit was enforced on the Thursday and that morning tons of ballast were removed with a BR safety man on duty to supervise. That night, after the last train had got to Marks Tey, the combined operation started. Out came the old rails and in went the junction. It was completed in half the time estimated. On the next night, 28/29 September, the connection between the new junction and the Society line was put in, again with many hours to spare on the time allowed.



The negotiations had taken up to four years, involving Liverpool Street, Stratford, Witham, Colchester and Norwich offices, York Regional Headquarters and - because it involved a passenger line - the Ministry of Transport Railway Inspectorate.

The BR men in charge did the Society members the honour of treating them like equals. Within a short time the speed limit came off, and the best comment is that the junction looks 'part of the furniture' - as though it has always been there.

The first train of vehicles for restoration and display were delivered on the night of 14th December. It comprised two passenger vehicles for adaption to restaurant cars, two restored oil tank wagons from BP, and lastly a restored District Railway Underground coach of 1938 build. The latter coach had to be fitted with special runner trucks at both ends to avoid the trouble caused by Underground trains having no buffers and couplings that would fit BR stock.

So the junction has been christened this week.

Valerie Balls of Colchester and Mrs Christine Thomas of Halstead put the finishing touch to the junction. This is a change as these two ladies are usually on guard and footplate duty, but they can turn their hand to most things.

It is 25 years this coming June since the first 4' 8½" gauge railway was reopened by a preservation society. The amateurs have had the hard work of coming up to the standards of work and safety of the professionals that has made Britain the safest country on rails in the world. It has taken a long time, but after this baptism of fire the local Society deserved the comment "not at all bad for amateurs".

Much of the work was in the dark and not easy to photograph. But readers can imagine the satisfaction with which the BR Inspector and men from Witham depot, and the Society platelayers, sat down in the early hours to consume plates of hot food and mugs of steaming tea and coffee. It had been well earned all round.

*Work on the installation of the junction*



## EARLY DAYS AT CHAPPEL by E W Lawrence

*Another instalment of Ted's memories from the earliest days at Chappel*

### STATION SIGNS

Most of the station name boards and nameplates on the poster boards had been removed some years before the SVRPS took up tenancy at Chappel. A new name board was required for the front of the station, to give some indication that the station was alive once again and not any longer an un-staffed halt. Constructed on a 2 inch X 1 inch frame it was covered in sections of hardboard to give a sign 2 ft 6 inch X 9 ft finished in dark blue background and white lettering (per BR Eastern Region) using marine paint with the legend:-

**STOUR VALLEY RAILWAY  
CHAPPEL  
& WAKES COLNE**

This was made in my garage at our home in Chelmsford and transported to Chappel on the roof rack on my Riley Elf ! The difficult part was erecting it on the front wall of the station as it had to be raised some twelve feet up the side of the wall. Ropes were dropped from the windows of the Ladies' Waiting Room and attached to the sign. The sign was then hauled up the wall until it was at the right height and then tied in position, I then ascended a ladder to secure the sign to the wall. A coloured photograph of the front of Chappel Station with the sign appears on page 30 of the Ian Allan publication 'On Great Eastern Lines' by Peter Swinger.

Blue and white Stour Valley Railway nameplates were made in hardboard for the poster boards and a Chappel & Wakes Colne nameplate made for the platform seat. A pair of Chappel name boards were made for the signal box. To complete the scene a range of posters was obtained from BR and the various preservation lines. These all added to the atmosphere that the station had come alive again and was being used.

### WEEDKILLING

In these days of modern technology and highly efficient weed killing trains, our modest efforts to keep the weeds under control in Chappel yard will sound amusing. A large sack of Atlacide (sodium chlorate with fire inhibitor) was obtained for a reasonable sum. The next thing required was a means of applying it over a large railway yard. The year was 1971 and my Mother had just acquired a new washing machine. The old gas washing machine was up for disposal, the important feature being that it was a large drum with a tap. This was duly transported to Chappel and mounted on a platelayer's trolley. Filled up with the required mixture and with the aid of a watering can, weed killing commenced. The trolley was pushed along the track after each can full had been dispensed then the can was refilled for the next stretch of track. Primitive, slow and tiring, (I know - I was doing it) but it was a cheap way of getting rid of the weeds when the Society had very little money.

### INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL SERVICES IN CHAPPEL STATION

One problem we knew we would encounter on occupation of the station buildings was the lack of an electrical supply. Chappel Station had only ever had oil lamps for lighting. We were fortunate in that one of our first members was Dick

Hymas. Dick was involved with his family business of Electrical Contractors and offered to carry out the installation of electric lighting and power circuits and arrange for a mains supply to the buildings. This was all carried out for the cost of materials only, which was very much appreciated at the time with money at a premium.

#### **TRACK FROM MARGARETTING HALL 1971**

It was in 1971 that Geoffrey Roughton from Upminster advised me that there were some disused sidings at Margarett Hall, Essex. These dated from the First World War and had been buried in undergrowth until they saw the light of day when a new gas pipeline was laid in the summer of 1969. Enquiries revealed that the sidings were no longer owned by BR, but had been purchased by R.H. Currie Farms. After discussions with Mr Currie it was agreed that we could have all we required for less than the scrap price. To access the site I had to get the key to the gate from Mr Currie to be able to cross the main line by a private overbridge, the sidings being fenced off from the main line.

On the Sunday 9th May I organised a second working party which comprised of members from Chelmsford, Bishops Stortford, Colchester and Ipswich. At about 11-00a.m a car was seen travelling at speed down the lane leading to Margarett Church. On reaching it the driver jumped out and ran along a farm track over the fence and across the main line to where the working party were engaged in dismantling a set of points. He announced that he was a BR official who had received a phone call stating that part of the London to Colchester main line was being removed. After explanations that this was not the case he left quite satisfied with a parting comment that the Police had been informed.

*Roy Stilwell and Trevor Martin erecting fencing in Spring 1971 (E W Lawrence)*





By the time that I had arrived from the opposite end of the sidings it was to witness a Police Mini van followed by a Squad car pounding down the lane to the level crossing from which disgorged two Plain Clothes Officers and a uniformed Sergeant and Constable. It appeared they had been advised by the lady crossing keeper that a gang of men in broad daylight were removing approximately two miles of the main London to Colchester railway line. After a brief conversation where it was mentioned that a number of members of the Essex Constabulary were in the working party, the arm of the law left, but not before visiting Mr Currie just to make sure that we were on legitimate business. The working party had gathered behind me with the tools they were using, axes, picks, mattocks and slashing hooks which could all be described as offensive weapons in the wrong hands. Later on the Police were noted visiting the crossing keeper's house. The result of the two working parties' efforts was nearly 400yards of track (13 tons) 4 tons of chairs, screws and fish-plates being acquired which were then transported to Chappel to complete the shed loop.

*(to be continued)*

### **Plumb Loco by Pete Martin**

Once again, I am reminded by Hon. Ed that time moves on to approach another scribing session, where it is becoming increasingly challenging to pick the prime juicy bits from the many happenings - some of which are transcribed by others elsewhere in this prestigious publication, and has once again been a 'last minute.com' composure!

I suppose one of the most significant items that has provoked much interest recently is the appearance of 2 vehicles of a class 309 EMU, where during my 40 year sojourn mending trains at Ilford depot, it could be said that I did have some dealings with them, although it was fairly limited. The most vivid memories of them predominantly involved occasional equipment overheating due to various power control sequence faults, and one or two other incidents. At the end of the day, they were Clacton Depot's babies, and any failures in the Ilford area, we were instructed to 'Get them off the patch as far as Chelmsford, after-which Clacton can rescue them'! Such failures were rare, but I did rescue a couple of LNER sugar bowls and various items of Great Central cutlery off one which got dragged into Ilford to get it out of the way when it broke during the evening peak.

From a historical (or hysterical) point of view - and for the uninitiated - the railways in late 1950s saw many projects and technological advancements with their transition from steam to more cleaner modes of traction. The inner suburban services had already seen much advancement in 1949 on the Shenfield - Liverpool Street lines with their electrification to 1500volt dc on an overhead line principle. These services utilized the class 306 Shenfield units, originally designed by the LNER back in the 1930s, and were heralded at the time as a breath of fresh air for the commuter with their open saloons, comfy chairs and air operated doors akin to the underground stock. (see Channel 4 archive Classic Trains Suburban Dreams of 1997 on You Tube).

As time moved on, the tentacles of the electric overhead string spread to Southend, Chelmsford and beyond to the LTS and North London lines. Other technical developments were taking place elsewhere in the country with the introduction of what later became the standard 25,000 volt ac overhead system, and the extraordinary

profusion of electrification projects are documented elsewhere.

The Clacton Liverpool Street service was one such section of the erstwhile Great Eastern services to receive the attentions of the design project committees. The extension of the existing electrified system saw the introduction of what were to become the class 309 electric trains utilising the new 25,000 volt ac system. The existing services to Chelmsford, Shenfield and Southend sections were converted from 1500v dc, along with the 92 class 306 units, 32 Southend units which had to have transformers and their own rectification equipment fitted in order to accommodate the new system.

The Clacton service extension was heralded in 1961/2 as something of an executive offering, where the introduction of the Clacton units portrayed an air of elegance with their 'art-deco' designed panelling in the griddle cars which retained an atmosphere of an executive club. In many respects, they were initially viewed as the Great Eastern's answer to the Southern Railway's 'Brighton Belle' trains, where the Griddle cars and bar did very good business - especially if the train was delayed en route by some other occurrence! At the time, they were a pioneering trendsetter in the fact they were the first ac powered 100 mph electric multiple unit, and formed the basis for many other future design concepts.

The configuration of the 309 Clacton train sets is well documented elsewhere, with the main batch being built as 4 car sets with 2 car variants for the Frinton -Walton Branch, so I'll leave you to Google all that! In their latter years, they were heavily modified and lost some of their glitz and features, and they became

*The first car of the two after arrival at Chappel (Peter Robinson)*



just another commuter train, where their history became rather chequered with the sectorisation and privatisation schemes of the late 1980s and early 90s, and is well told elsewhere.

Suffice to say, 624 unit ended up being used as a mobile test facility on West Coast electrification schemes, and it has a history in its own right - even as it is. As history rolls on, it is a survivor and has a story to tell - not only of what it did - it is a story of the people that were involved with it in its last years - like who named it 'Bessie' inscribed in the cabs, and who was it that signed the artwork on the underframe?

Whilst it maybe that it'll never be practically restored to its former 'as built' glory, or run in anger again (we haven't got an extension lead long enough!), it forms the basis to portray part of our local rail history and it's continuing evolution, where it - and the rest of it's now long departed classmates - are still remembered by many in the locality - and it's those things which really count.

More soon no doubt, so why not pop along and have a look. There's a lot goin' on - but don't stand around for too long, or you'll be given a job!

### **PERMANENT WAY NEWS by Josh Fortescue**

This year on P-way has been busy so far. From finishing touches to the winter projects just gone, to the start of new projects, whilst also planning for this winter's work. Maintenance has also got to be done once a week including jobs like, track patrols, point oiling, gauging, fishplate oiling, sleeper changing etc.

The priority at the moment is to finish the exhibition hall trackbed and the yard apron. All that is left is to correct the curve entering the new Exhibition Hall, and gauge the inside track panels to the new walkway. All that is left to do on the Yard apron now is to backfill what is left and surface with the correct material. Most members, especially shunters, will remember the old junction that used to be in the centre of the apron that used to be full of dirt and a pain to switch over. With the help of many dedicated and willing volunteers we rectified that in the winter just gone by relaying and renewing the junction in a more convenient location. The junction will remain open (not backfilled) to avoid any difficulty switching it over again.

Volunteers have done a fantastic job so far in jacking over and gauging the "dead road" in the exhibition hall ready to house our fantastically restored rolling stock accessible via a newly installed walkway. Furthermore with the delivery of many tons of ballast, as I am writing this, I plan to ballast the entire railway before the end of the year. Some of you may have noticed the lack of ballast everywhere on the railway and it has been on my radar for quite some time. Ballast is needed for drainage, walking on and most importantly, weight. Having what's called a "ballast shoulder" prevents track buckles or kinks developing in the track.

There is plenty of work available so please don't hesitate to get involved. I plan for a re-rail on the main and a renewal in the restoration shed this winter. To do this I will need volunteers to complete these projects in time for next year's season, so if you like the sound of it, please get in contact with me at: [Josh.fortescue@earm.co.uk](mailto:Josh.fortescue@earm.co.uk)

Thanks for everyone's efforts so far.





*(Left) the line leading down to the Exhibition Hall, and (right) the new points installed on the back road (both Josh Fortescue)*

### **Team Wednesday report by Tony Foster**

I will start off this TW update by finishing off the story regarding the demolition of the old Heritage building. Along with other members of the museum's volunteer groups TW continued with some of the jobs involved in disassembling the Heritage building. This work took until the beginning of May to complete. Plasterboard was carefully stacked inside a large skip. All involved struggled to remove the floor coverings which appeared to have been bonded to the plywood floor! Timber studwork was carefully dismantled for further use after the necessary de nailing work. Flooring support timbers removed, dismantled and de nailed for use elsewhere.

The exterior frame sections of the old building were finally exposed. These sections were collapsed by gently pushing them overusing the Hiab vehicle, releasing more timber to recycle.

What appears to be evolving is the TW team giving assistance where appropriate, to other departments, such as the MR. Repairs to all three doors in the MR station were carried out and a small area of flooring was replaced. The damage was caused by rainwater ingress. More trees felled along the MR track as a few more were found to be diseased. Lynn a new volunteer to the team has tidied up the main MR station flower bed.

The exterior painting of the LTS coach is complete and a start has been made in renovating the ceiling and compartment walls. The drop lights have been re-varnished and complement the exterior paint work. The brass work on the doors has also received attention. The North London Brake has had some signage added, drop lights have been renovated and likewise brass work has been given some

attention. On the subject of antique coaches TW helped with refreshing the Victorian coach set: cleaning the paintwork, polishing the brass work hinges, handles etc prior to the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

As I suggested earlier TW are assisting other groups: some TW volunteers have fabricated a set of sturdy access steps for Class 309 group and in time visitors may use these steps to inspect the interior renovations.

We have made four display boards for the events management team.

For the curatorial team a group have created from recycled timber a barrier to protect the Passimeter unit on platform 4/5 once construction starts on the new heritage centre.

For the Resto group we have replaced the five-water damaged, 2.4 by 1.2 metre ceiling panels. The panels were prepped and painted in the exhibition shed and then walked across to the Restoration Shed and fitted into the DMU coaches. The work was made slightly more difficult because the ceiling retaining screws are of the older style 'slotted head' and are more time consuming to work with.

The Viaduct pub has undergone a repaint for the Summer/Autumn season. The damaged feather boarding has been repaired.

We have tackled a number of maintenance jobs around the site such as fixing the leaky gutter above the café kitchen, door, repairing the platform 2 toilet door, and replacing the door lock. The double doors have been put back in the foyer of the Thompson building. They do not impede access to either the main model railway layout or the temporary Heritage exhibition spaces. They will also help to keep the area slightly warmer in winter. A new donations box has been fabricated for the exhibition shed. A problem with an uneven part of the floor in the south signal box has been addressed.

Eric the engine has had a bit of a tidy up and defects remedied.

Rod continues with his programme of changing light fittings, bulbs/tubes that are more efficient around the site and disposing correctly of redundant lighting stock. He has reconnected the MR station to the museum's main electrical circuit. He is currently placing more 13-amp sockets into the cupboard in the Exhibition centre.

## **ENGINEERING NEWS by Allan Robinson**

Not much been going on in the way of engineering in the restoration shed recently as a big effort has been to push on with the various site development jobs. There has been a good team effort in concreting the support pads and erecting the public walkway in the exhibition hall, as can be seen in the photos it is nearly ready for the decking to be fitted. It can also be seen the old Heritage Centre has now gone and the site cleared ready for the foundations to be cast for the new building in early August. Big thanks to all involved in the task of demolishing the old building, and the old rotten boundary fence has been replaced with a concrete one. Some work has gone on in the restoration shed: old rivets have been removed from Lamport's boiler in preparation for new ones, the Simplex is being reassembled and it is now back on its wheels, the BR brake van, DMU trailer car, SCV and the WD shunter are all progressing. Jubilee, No 11 and Frederick have passed their boiler exams and are now good for another year.



*Some of the various projects being undertaken*





## **BRAINTREE AND HALSTEAD MODEL RAILWAY CLUB**

### **by Gordon Humphris**

Plenty of goings on at the Model Railway Club since the last report and reading that report we look to continue to thrive both in visitor numbers and new members joining us, indeed at time of going to press we are now 35 strong. Since the last magazine with been open for DOWT, various steam days and the 175 celebrations which went very well. The O gauge section have enjoyed exhibiting on the show circuit and installed a new crossover section to increase better movement and operational abilities particularly from the MPD to the main running lines. In the Main Club Room, work is progressing nicely with the new 00 gauge modern image layout with electrics and tracklaying ongoing which will be of interest to the visiting public. Updating and refreshing of the N gauge layouts is continuing as well as the usual maintenance of the Exhibition Room layouts is keeping them operational for the public's viewing even when the main club area is closed.

The Garden Railway Project, now with improved weather!, has made excellent progress and by the time of this going to press should have the trackbed felted, with tracklaying and test runs in progress, it is hoped that it will be running in some form for the August DOWT with many of the characters enjoying the sunshine for the first time.

Wednesday opening in conjunction with the Museums is proving popular with visitors as well. Often we will ask for the entrance doorbell to be used as activities by members may need public guides or supervision but the system works!! The Club recently held its AGM, which was well attended. Our Secretary Steve Knight has stood down from the role, he has taken on the role of Exhibition Manager, a job he is well suited to with a wealth of experience. His place has been filled by Jim Unsworth. Rob Page and Paul Roche have stepped down from the Events Management but will continue to assist Steve in his new Role, they will continue to complete their tour of duty up until the Small Trains Day, as it's their baby this year!!

The rest of the Committee remains in position, Martin Sansum stays Chairman, myself keeping the job as Treasurer and as the administrative HoD representative for the Club. As we are talking about committees, could all enquiries from other departments please direct all enquires to the Secretary in the first instance except for events business which will now be directed at Steve Knight. The Club has a good website and contact: [bhmrc@earm.co.uk](mailto:bhmrc@earm.co.uk).

We know as this goes out to members etc. we are looking forward to our big day out on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, hoping to break attendance records yet again, before you know it, Spooky Thomas and Thomas Santa will have us back in action, as well as all the other event days we will open for. We look forward to members, their families and the public enjoying the world in miniature.

**REMEMBER!**  
**Small Trains Day & Model Railway Show**  
**Sunday 6 October**



*(Above) work on the garden railway and (below) a layout in operation*



## Miniature Railway Update by Robert West

Over the course of this year, some significant developments have been in the works for the miniature railway. From the passengers' point of view, the most obvious change has been to the station waiting room, where customers wait for their ride. Various items, some from the now-demolished Heritage Centre, have been added to keep younger children amused. The mock loco cab, a couple of 'Guess the Secret' displays, and a selection of toys are now present, intending to make the little building a permanent children's activity area. This is now open each Wednesday and weekend, even if the minirail is not running.

Behind the scenes, other changes are also underway. A number of new hands have expressed interest in joining the minirail team, including a few Team Wednesday members, and several people have recently qualified to act as supervisors or drivers. We are always welcome to anyone who wishes to help, as it takes a minimum of two people - a driver and a supervisor - to run the minirail, even on quiet days. On busier events, such as Day Out With Thomas, three hands are often needed to keep up with demand. All these volunteers must be rostered as part of the museum staff as a whole on each event, so having people who can work on both the minirail and the big trains as required is a strong advantage.

At the time of going to the press, our new petrol locomotive 'Ivor' is being prepared for entry into service. Some minor mechanical adjustments were found to be necessary since he arrived on site, and a full set of paperwork - instruction manual and exam questions - needed to be drafted before driver training could begin. But most of these have now been dealt with, so it won't be long until dates can be set for volunteers to start learning how to operate the newcomer. Many people are enthusiastic about driving 'Ivor', and he has already been tested on a full rake of 5 passenger coaches, so he should make a valuable addition to the minirail, easing the burden on the current locos 'Ricardo' and 'Frederick'.

Once 'Ivor' is fully run-in, and there are ample hands available to use him, it should be possible to spare 'Ricardo' for some remedial work. This little electric loco has served the minirail - both MR1 and MR2 - for 20 years now, and it has been some time since he last had a full overhaul. Being battery-powered, 'Ricardo' is ideal for summer Wednesdays and quieter weekends, but he has also come to the rescue whenever steam loco 'Frederick' has been out of action for any reason. This reputation has made our 'Old Reliable' a firm favourite amongst some of the minirail hands.

As to the question of improving or extending the minirail in the near future, some discussion has already been held on the matter, with a number of proposals being put forward. Each of these are to be thoroughly evaluated, with pros and cons weighed up, before any decision can be reached as to how and when the minirail can be developed further. Obviously, any changes would need to be planned around all the other developments currently taking place on site. But, suffice to say, we are 'on track' to begin work soon, whatever direction it may turn out to be.

*Photos on next page: top is the new locomotive Ivor, and lower is Ricardo with Ryan Gant. Both photos by Robert West*





## Memories of the “Clacton Units” by Nick Ridgway

My immediate family lived in Springfield, north of Chelmsford, from 1960 to 1966. After initially travelling to see us regularly from her home in Cheam, Surrey, my maternal grandmother joined us nearby from late 1961, a little after my sister was born. My father used to work in London on Saturday mornings then, and my first exposure to what I now know as the Clacton units was meeting him off a new train that arrived on the country-bound, curved platform at Chelmsford one Saturday lunchtime (one could buy a platform ticket then). It was distinctively painted in maroon like the loco-hauled coaches, unlike the other electrics that were in dark green, and had curved, wrap-around cab windows.

The maroon livery suited them, I have always thought.

Between 1963-66 my grandmother used to take my sister and I occasionally on a Saturday to the seaside at Walton-on-Naze. The same maroon electrics used to take us there - funfair rides on the pier, fish-and-chips for tea, and a train ride both ways. Marvellous.

What always happened is that the station public address system would open up and a male voice would bellow, in the local vernacular, “’Is ‘i’ Chelm’ford, ‘is i’ Chelm’ford, ‘is trine (i’) for Hatfield Pev’rel, Wit’-am, Kelv’don, Maaarks Tey, Col-ches-ter, Hythe, Wivenhoe, Arlsf’d, Great Bent-ley, Weeley, Thorpe-le-Soken, Clacton, Kirby Cross, Frint’n an’ Walt’n. Passengers for Kirby Cross, Frint’n an’ Walt’n travel in the front four coaches. Passengers for Clacton travel in the rear.”

There were three distinct patterns of Clacton unit during the ‘60s: a four car unit with a buffet car, a four car unit without a buffet car, and a 2-car unit, which, if it were included in the formation, was always at the London end with the pantograph pointing to the country. The train divided at Thorpe-le-Soken, with the front portion heading for Walton and the rear going to Clacton. There was always a bit of bumping and jolting at Thorpe in each direction as the trains were divided and combined.

Above the doorway near each vestibule was a small sign that said, “THIS WAY TO THE BUFFET CAR”. I struggled to understand how “they” always knew that the buffet car was in that direction - until I realised that, operationally, the buffet car was always in the Walton portion, at the front. The Clacton portion always consisted of a four-car non-buffet unit and most of the time, a two-car unit as well. The two-car units looked a little odd, as there was a full cab front to full roof height, then immediately behind it the roof was lowered to accommodate the pantograph.

At a Chelmsford Branch talk many years ago, Ernst Birchler, who was behind the conceptual design of these units, stated that the two-car units had the same traction equipment as the four-car sets. The thinking was that during the morning and evening peaks, an eight-car train could be boosted to ten with the power equivalent of twelve vehicles, improving their power-to-weight ratio so that they could stay out of the way of other trains. I doubt whether this concept was ever fully realised. He also told a story about the time when they wanted to see how fast they would actually go. Apparently, three two-car units were coupled together in Colchester carriage sidings whereupon they set out “cars” (Colchester vernacular for “empty coaching stock” trains) for London onto the main line and let them rip. He said with a grin that they had to shut off power well before Marks Tey!

There was an operating instruction that no two two-car units were ever to be coupled pantograph-end to pantograph-end, as the upthrust from two pantographs

close together would certainly distort and possibly damage the overhead electrical wires.

Originally designated "AM9" when built, they were re-classed "309" under the modernisation scheme known as Total Operations Planning System, abbreviated to TOPS, under which everything was computerised (incidentally, when it broke down, some wag came up with "Back Over To The Old Manual System", comically abbreviated!).

In the seventies I used to travel from Chelmsford to Shenfield occasionally on a Saturday to see railway-minded school friends for the day. The train could sometimes be a class 306 3-car unit, which shuttled between Shenfield platform 4 and Chelmsford, it taking refuge in the up lay-by siding (not there anymore) to let an up Norwich express to go by before going back to Shenfield, or if I was really lucky it would be a 309. They were painted BR blue-and-grey by then. They had headcode boxes that usually read "1F54" or "1F56" or something similar: the "1" meant express passenger train, the "F" I believe referred to the Clacton and Walton route, and the other digits were a reporting number with odd numbers being for the country direction and the even for the London ones. It was a thing of joy to stand in the vestibule near an intermediate driver's cab to watch the speedometer through the window. As we tore past the level crossing at Ingatestone the speedo was usually over 90mph. The row was intense and they rocked and rolled a bit. 95, 96... anymore? 97... And then the brakes would go on for Shenfield where I would alight, usually with a big grin on my face. We never quite "hit the ton", though.

One Saturday morning I saw a 2-car 309 towing a 3-car 306 unit arrive at the country platform at Chelmsford. I still don't know what was going on. Although it was claimed that all Eastern Region units would couple and could be used interchangeably there would have been issues operating the sliding doors of a 306 from the cab of a 309, and the side buffers for the 309 would have been extended to match the 306. Perhaps it was another "cars" working.

One of my school friends, Trevor Garlick, used to commute to our secondary school in Chelmsford daily from his home in Frinton, all covered by a travel grant by Essex County Council. He could get a bit of homework done on the train in each direction.

At about that time the wrap-around driving cab windows were replaced with flat ones. I heard that no two of the wrap-around ones were exactly the same shape and that there were maintenance problems in keeping rainwater out of the driver's cab.

In the eighties, the units were modified. The buffet car disappeared from the Walton sets to be replaced by an open second. Then, two vehicles were added to the two-car sets to make them up to four. Then the novel Essex Express badging appeared, together with an internal re-fit and the now nostalgic, "Jaffa Cake" livery of dark brown stripe over the windows, a fawn bottom and the smashing orangey-bit stripe in the middle (with apologies to the Cadbury chocolate company).

The final livery, to me, was the Network South East "raspberry ripple". Some worked out of Manchester for a while to serve Manchester Airport. I believe a few got repainted into Regional Railways livery, which in itself was a little uninspiring although today an historic one.

Then one day, like all the other slam-door stock on the national network, they were all gone.

I loved them.



How could “they” do this?

Museum Trustee, the late Peter Thompson, started a campaign to save one of the units for preservation. I subscribed what I could at the time to his fundraising efforts though after some months he declared it a lost cause (unusual for Peter) and returned every penny that I had sent him.

Recently a driving trailer vehicle and an intermediate motor second arrived at Chappel, following an intense and very productive negotiation between the supporters’ group and the Museum. The vehicles probably won’t run in trains here though once restored they, together with the class 317 vehicle, can be put on display somewhere special to tell the story of electric traction in East Anglia. For in many ways, they have all come home.

For me, it’s like the return of a long-lost relative: the return of those trips to the seaside; the return of playing “in-and-out-the-windows” between the columns of the canopy at the promenade at Walton; the return of the rides on the pier and of the fish-and-chips afterwards.

And ice cream. Don’t forget ice cream.

Thanks, Nan.

Let’s do it again next Saturday.

*309604 is the trailing unit in this view of an Up service passing Ilford flyover  
(Reg Batten)*



## EVENTS NEWS by James Cornell

We have successfully completed the first half of 2024 and have already hosted several wonderful events. Our first independent event, K9s Ride the Train Lines, was held in April and was a resounding success for a first time out. This event aimed to promote our dog friendly venue (excluding DOWT days). The event was well received, with many delighted canine participants, particularly those who received complimentary treat bags upon arrival. Furthermore, the event proved an excellent opportunity for the Guide Dogs stand to utilise our venue and trains for puppy training purposes. Additionally, Clark's Farm Greyhound Rescue secured provisional homes for six of their rescue dogs during the event. A big thanks goes to Chloe Stride for her involvement and help in organising this event.

The Annual Transport Extravaganza in May was another highly successful event. For the first time we achieved maximum capacity for exhibitor bookings on both days, compared to just the Sunday in previous years. Unfortunately the weather conditions were unfavourable, resulting in a slight decrease in exhibitor and visitor attendance compared to the previous year. Nevertheless those who attended had an enjoyable experience, and we received numerous positive reviews on Google and TripAdvisor. We are grateful to our partners from the AJN825 preservation group for their support, which enabled us to showcase a record number of buses from various eras. These buses provided a rolling timetable and offered two different routes for visitors to explore.

Our focus then shifted to a June packed with events. Father's Day was a resounding success once again. Regrettably due to sensitive circumstances within the local community, we made the decision to cancel the supercar segment of the event as a mark of respect. While it is unlikely that the supercars will return, we continue to host gatherings for classic and vintage vehicles, such as the Roman Roadsters club.

June also marked the inaugural Public Service, Commercial & Emergency Vehicle Day. This event was specifically designed to accommodate larger vehicles that could not be showcased at the Transport Extravaganza. Although it was our first attempt, we were delighted with the turnout, which included a diverse range of vehicles from various categories. The participating exhibitors expressed their enthusiasm and mentioned their extensive network of contacts who would be eager to support the event next year. Furthermore we were honoured to have the presence of the Essex Fire and Essex Police Museum, who provided interactive experiences such as dress up opportunities, object handling and merchandise. They have graciously agreed to extend their support to us once again next year. Our next independent event will be our annual Small Trains Day, organised by the Braintree & Halstead Model Railway Club: last year this was our most attended single event day and it is always a great value day out.

Attentions have now focused onto brainstorming and planning of our 2025 event calendar, which will include a focus on Rail200, where we celebrate 200 years since the beginning of railways. I wish to thank all members who have contributed and continue to contribute to our events programme and work towards the benefit and forward progression of the Museum.

*Rear cover photo by Alan Simpson shows the DRB in platform 2 seen from Main Box on 30 June 2024—the smoke is from No.11 passing on the main*



*(Above) The 04 in platform 3, with former London Transport RML2492 and AJN825 next, seen on 27 May 2024 (James Lloyd)*

*(Below) On 29 July 2024 the 'Waterside Wanderer' railtour ran from Fenchurch Street to Griffin Wharf [Ipswich], Clacton, Walton and Colchester Town before returning to Fenchurch Street. The tour is seen here in Wivenhoe Woods with D6515 [33012] 'Lt Jenny Harris RN' leading London Underground's 4TC set and GBRf 66793 on the rear (G D King)*





