



# STOUR VALLEY STEAM

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*Gunby seen on the first members' steam day at Chappel—see E.W. Lawrence's article for further details*



## **EARLY DAYS AT CHAPPEL by E W Lawrence**

*The final instalment of Ted Lawrence's recollections of the early days at Chappel*

### **FIRST MEMBERS STEAM DAY 13th MARCH 1971**

We did it! Within 100 days of taking over a yard devoid of track work and with semi-derelict buildings, our first members' Steam Day was held at Chappel on Saturday 13th March 1971. This was no mean achievement and was the result of a lot of very hard work by many members of the Society. Lovingly cleaned and polished by David Wood, Gunby was in steam, having arrived at Chappel on 10th February. Rides were given on the footplate and in the Pooley Van which had arrived at Chappel on 14th February. It was estimated that approx 300 members and visitors arrived that day, in spite of a postal strike, which prevented us from advising all of the membership.

### **FIRST PUBLIC STEAM WEEKEND WHITSUN 30th/31st MAY 1971**

I think I speak for all of the membership in those early days when I say our proudest moment was the Whitsun weekend of 30th/31st May when we held our first public steaming. The old waiting room was freshly painted to become the Tea Room to be run by Mrs Birchall and her small team of helpers. Robbie Roberts had founded the Bookshop on some old mahogany counters, originally from Woolworths and donated by Mrs Birchall. Dennis Swindale and Bunny Austin, armed with pots of paint, had spruced up the Signal Box. The new doors were fitted on the Goods Shed all thanks to Colchester Branch members. Tony Butcher's Publicity Department had done a good job with the distribution of posters and a press release, as well as getting a plug for the event from Anglia Television in their news programme.

It was estimated that nearly 5,000 visitors arrived at Chappel with 1,500 passenger rides given in the Pooley Van and on the footplate of "GUNBY". Chappel had never seen so many vehicles and thanks to the considerable assistance from Sgt Ransom and the Essex Constabulary at Colchester, the traffic situation was kept under control. BR insisted that we had a crossing keeper to ensure that there were not any visitors crossing the BR Line when a train was due. The BR man allocated for the task was Bert Hunter. Although we had to pay BR for his services Bert was keen to help us and a very good working relationship was established with him right from the start. Bert was a pipe smoker and a pack of his favourite tobacco was given to him on open days as a thank you for all his help.

We hit the headlines that weekend and it was great credit to all the members who made it possible. For those on duty over the weekend it was two very long days and a lot of hard work. But it was all worth it. We have today a Museum to be proud of which none of us involved on that first steam weekend would have imagined was possible without an operating length of line either to Marks Tey or Sudbury to support it.

### **FURTHER LOCOMOTIVES AND ROLLING STOCK**

During 1971 other locomotives followed. Firstly 'Jupiter' a Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn 0-6-0 Saddle Tank purchased by Mr Colin Roberts from Stewart & Lloyds

at Corby (12 Feb 1971). I recall a number of us working on 'Jupiter' very late one Friday evening to complete the painting in the Royal Blue colour scheme of the GER, ready for its final steam tests on the Saturday. I hasten to add it was successful and 'Jupiter' joined 'Gunby' to share the work load on steam days. This was followed by a J94 0-6-0 saddle tank 'Army 90' built by Hunslet and purchased from Shoburyness by a group led by Dick Hymas (22 June 1971). The first coach to arrive was ex GER six wheel Full Passenger Brake Van owned by the Great Eastern Group (26th August 1971). This was quickly pressed into service for the August Bank Holiday Steam Weekend as it offered better (and safer) passenger accommodation.

### **THE STOUR VALLEY RAILWAY - THE BOOK BY B.D.J. WALSH 1971**

It was in November 1969 that I sent letter to a Mr B.D.J. Walsh, c/o The Editor, The Railway Magazine asking if he would allow us to use the text of his article the "Sudbury and Haverhill Line, Eastern Region", which was published in the Railway Magazine for September 1951, as a basis for a booklet about the Stour Valley Line.

In January 1970 I received a very pleasant letter from Mr Walsh who lived in London (with apologies for the delay in reply due to illness) stating that he was more than happy for us to use the article. He also offered to make some corrections, bring it up to date and supply photographs to go with it. So was born the booklet "The Stour Valley Railway by B.D.J. Walsh" and established a friendship of which I have many happy memories.

The first edition when prepared for printing ran to 26 pages. With very little money available I couldn't entertain a large print run or an expensive professional print house. Fortunately one of the Engineering Managers at Marconi also had a home printing business. Cyril Chorley was able to produce a short run of the book using his letterpress facility. This meant that Cyril was able to deliver the first batch of booklets to Chappel for sale on the August Bank Holiday Monday 30th August. These all sold very quickly on the day at 30p per copy.

For the second edition which was also printed by Cyril Chorley and published in the Autumn of 1972 we were able to expand the contents to 60 pages to include additional information supplied by David Walsh including the track diagrams for each station. These I had to redraw from a large sheet of the whole line to give an individual station layout per page of the booklet. I believe these are still used in the current edition with my monogram EWL in the bottom corner of each page.

I quickly realised that David (BDJ Walsh) had family living in Nayland and that he made regular visits to the area. It was on one Sunday morning that I met up with him at Nayland to finalise some details of the publication. Having followed the profession of a Barrister his legal knowledge was subsequently of considerable help. This was the start of a truly great relationship with the SVRPS/East Anglian Railway Museum right up until the passing of David on 13th June 2004. But his memory lives on in the Heritage Centre.

### **AGM SATURDAY 20th November 1971**

It was at this AGM that Len Wells and I swapped places on the committee. I stood down as Chairman to become Vice-Chairman and Len Wells who had been Vice-Chairman took on the role of Chairman. Being a Bank Manager Len was admirably qualified to take the Society forward in the task of raising the large sum of money



required to purchase the line when closure was announced.

#### **TRACK LIFTING AT ALTON APRIL 15th/16th 1972**

This was an exercise which I had misgivings about right from the start. It was the feasibility of recovering the track at the sidings of Courage Brewery at Alton in Hampshire, due to the sheer logistics of removing and transporting such a large tonnage of track and points from Alton to Chappel. It was track which the late Dr R.F. (Fred) Youell had located and negotiated for it to be donated to the SVRP by Courage's. The Committee made a decision that we should go ahead with the acquisition of the track and that as Engineering Director I would coordinate the task in conjunction with Fred Youell. Unfortunately Fred was not the easiest of people to work with or contact. His disappearing off on another task shortly before the weekend of 15th/16th April made it very difficult to finalise details with him. To successfully carry out the operation we needed the help of about 40 members, two heavy lorries, a mobile crane, the help of the Territorial Army with eight army trucks, their accompanying troops and most vitally oxy-acetylene cutting equipment.

Roy Stillwell and I travelled down to Alton in the early hours of the Saturday morning arriving at 7.30a.m. It was obvious when we arrived that the total tonnage of track was way in excess of that estimated by Fred. The lorry with oxy-acetylene cutting gear never arrived and the heavy Lorries arrived much later than intended, with nowhere near enough members (including committee) volunteering to support the task involved. Roy and I stayed overnight at Alton and those of us who helped over the two days worked to the point of exhaustion. It was only thanks to the TA troopers who got stuck in and helped us by shifting and loading their army trucks that we managed to send as much as we did back to Chappel that weekend. I recall that it took at least another two weekend working parties down at Alton to lift and transport the rest of the track back to Chappel. Both Roy and I arrived back at Chelmsford exhausted on the Sunday evening. I ended up off work for week with a form of bronchitis, which didn't go down very well where I was working, having only recently started a new job. It left us both a bit disillusioned about committees who make decisions but do not back them up with the necessary support.

#### **AGM SATURDAY 25th NOVEMBER 1972**

A very pleasant surprise awaited both Terry Gregson and myself at the 1972 AGM. Perhaps the following report that appeared in Stour Valley Steam for Dec 1972/Jan 1973 explains it best :-

#### **HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS**

We are delighted to report that at the recent AGM it was announced that Honorary Life Membership has been granted to Ted Lawrence (ex-Chairman) and Terry Gregson (ex-Secretary) for services to the Society. All who were with us in the early days will know the debt owed to these two stalwarts. The fact that we are at Chappel today is a direct result of their efforts. We wish Ted a happy 'retirement' in the West Country and Terry many peaceful evenings at home without the telephone ringing.

During the time that I was Chairman and Terry was Secretary Terry ran the Billericay branch of Watson, Temple, Talbot and White and I was not that far away



*Army 90, MSL coach and Barrington on 21 April 1973 (Nicholas Smith)*

*Gunby with two Mark 1s in the yard, date unknown (Fred Tanton)*



at The Marconi plant at Basildon. When we had a lot to contend with Terry would often drive down to Marconi's and we would have an SVRPS working lunch together in The Marconi Sports and Social Club Lounge

#### **MOVING FROM ESSEX TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE & THE WYE VALLEY NOVEMBER 1972**

It was in August 1972 that I was offered a very attractive Senior Production Engineering post with Rank Xerox at their plant at Mitcheldean in the Royal Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. With better career prospects and a young family to support it was not an offer that I could refuse and so it was that I joined Rank Xerox in early September moving to St Briavels on the edge of the Wye Valley at the end of November 1972. This effectively ended my active involvement with the SVRPS in any official capacity. However I did still have a project to complete.

#### **STOUR VALLEY ALBUM 1973**

The idea of an album of photographs of the Stour Valley Line was first considered when I was preparing the manuscript for the first edition of David Walsh's booklet about the line. I was only able to include a small selection in the booklet of the wide range of photographs made available by David. It was felt that the rest of the photographs and the many others that must exist of the Stour Valley Line would make an interesting subject in their own right. David Walsh gave his support to the idea and so Stour Valley Album was born. I contacted Dr Ian C. Allen, Dick Mortimer, Geoff King and BR Publicity Department at Liverpool Street to see if they had any photographs which we could use in the Album. An appeal was made for photographs from members in the Dec 1972/Jan 1973 edition of Stour Valley Steam. The response was extremely good with a wide selection of photographs covering the whole of the line from Great Eastern days up until BR days of steam and diesel.

This was not a publication that was within the capabilities of Cyril Chorley's printing facilities and so a suitable printer had to be found. I noticed that C. Langley Aldrich had used a printer in Ely by the name W. Jefferson & Son Ltd for his book "The Locomotives of the Great Eastern Railway". I contacted the Managing Director a Mr T.A. N. Bristol who said that they would be most interested in producing the book for us. I had a schedule to produce the book but initially fell behind in my schedule as in April I had to go to Xerox in Rochester New York State for two weeks as well as only having limited time available before and after the trip. The draft was completed in May 1973 and an initial quote was received in June. After some alterations to enable us to reach our target price I received a hard quotation for 1,000 copies at £668, or 67p per copy. With a sale price of £1-05p per copy this gave us a good profit margin. The production delivery of the Album arrived in January 1974 and was well received by both customers and the press.

#### **FINAL**

So ended my direct active involvement with the Stour Valley Railway Preservation Society. Infrequent trips to Chappel were made possible when visiting our parents in Collier Row and Brentwood. However in September 1975, together with my family, I was seconded as Resident Engineer at Xerox Headquarters in

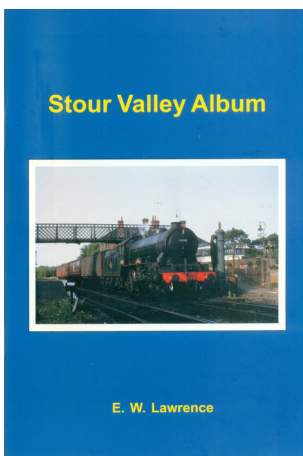
Rochester, New York State for 14 months. During this time Peter Thompson kept me well informed with reports and photographs of developments at Chappel as well as receiving Stour Valley Steam.

After moving further west to 6 miles north of Plymouth in 1986 visits to Chappel became quite rare. A rather sad visit was on 23rd September 2006 for the scattering of Peter Thompson's ("mon ami Peter") ashes in Chappel Yard. Subsequent to my retirement I have become far more involved at a distance with Chappel again through modern technology and the medium of Emails. This has been either working with Rob Boyce or Mike Stanbury with regard to historical notes and photo location identification, culminating in an expanded and updated Stour Valley Album this year. Likewise I have been scouring my archive of newspaper reports and photographs from the early days for Jaki Collinson to use in the Museum.

#### FOOTNOTE

The preceding notes do not set out to be a comprehensive history of the early days at Chappel but the background of how I got involved in railways and at best a potted history of my involvement. I don't pretend for one moment that those of us involved had an easy time, anything but; there were many difficulties to overcome. We made mistakes (nothing too serious) as well as having the odd disagreements. For all those directly involved in negotiations, organising working parties, restoring locomotives, rolling stock and running Chappel it put a great strain on family life. At times it seemed to some of us that Chappel ran our lives. However whatever sacrifices were made by all involved in those early days it has been worthwhile, as there is now a Railway Museum that none of us could have imagined possible without a section of railway line to support it.

There are many members who made a very valuable contribution to our success at Chappel in the early days. Sadly many of those are no longer with us to see the Museum that has grown out of those early efforts. Unfortunately some 40 years on trying to remembering all those names is a little difficult, so I trust you will forgive me for those omissions. Their names would make a Roll of Honour. To all those involved I say a big 'Thank You', as it was an incredible team effort.



*Ted mentions the new and expanded edition of Stour Valley Album, which is still available from the Visitor Reception at Chappel. If you cannot get to the Museum, you can order online through the Museum website at <http://www.earm.co.uk/books/>*

## JON NUTBEEM: IN TRIBUTE

Jon's recent passing has provoked many memories over the past few months, and has caused much reflection on his involvement with the Museum, which extends longer than some may think. - which includes myself!.

Being heavily involved and with so much going on of late, the memory banks have become somewhat obscured over time - suffice to say that Jon and his family's appearance and involvement is challenging to establish, but I dare say that those precise details will emerge in due course, and I offer apologies in advance for any omission or errors.

Jon presented a 'larger than life' character, and was part of the Gang engaged in many aspects, where the most notable achievement's was retrieving track from the British Sugar company's sidings at Bury St Edmunds along with Kris Kristons and a few others - most of which went into the track arrangement for the Restoration Shed construction in the early 1980s. Some of it has just been dug up as it was sinking!

Back in 1985, Margaret his wife was conned - sorry - persuaded into providing bacon butties and tea out of the back of Jon's company van when we rescued the footbridge from Sudbury and re-erected it at Chappel, and as time went on he became involved with various committees and became Chair of the Museum for some years, and has in some respects been a hard act to follow.

With the appearance of the N7 in the mid 1970s, Jon played host to the owner in the shape of the venerable Dr. Fred Youell who was an eminent Professor of Permanent Way and was key to the installation of the junction on the branch line at Chappel - which still bears testimony to his involvement with the more modern traffic over it - although we pay an annual maintenance charge, where it's cheaper to leave it in than rip it out and lose its 'Grandfather rights'.

Jon became part of the team that kept the place going over the years, and Margaret, his son Clive, and daughters Paula and Anne became part of the scene on many occasions, helping in the buffet or shovelling coal or ballast!

One memorable and notable accolade that is not really well known, was when the N7 went to Steam on the Met in 1994(?), where Jon was the one and only person to ever fire a steam loco to Stanmore. The N7 ran a special organised by the Betjeman Society who had some anniversary celebration of Sir John Betjeman and his associations with Metro-land. (Google it), and as the N7 had been shedded at Neasden depot in its past history, it was an entirely appropriate loco to do it. The Met line extension to Stanmore was originally operated as an all electric railway, and this was the one and only time a steam loco had been on it - and it's never been repeated since.

More recent years saw an annual canal boat holiday, where there were experiences too numerous to mention!

Needless to say, he will be sorely missed, so RIP Jon.

Now Margaret can clear the loft in peace!

*Next page (top) Jon leading the Home Guard at a Forties Day  
(lower) with Margaret at a Cider Festival*







*Jon in the role of  
Sir Topham Hatt,  
the Fat Controller,  
one he filled for many  
years*

## **LES RUSSELL: IN TRIBUTE**

In early February Les Russell passed away at the age of 96. For many years Les worked on the vintage coaches and permanent way, and in later years assisting with the buggy park at Day Out With Thomas events. He was also membership secretary for a number of years, and assisted the then Traffic Manager Martin Stubbins with compiling rosters for operating staff. His late wife Joan also joined him at the Museum and at various social functions from time to time, including on coach trips and at the famous Annual Dinners at the Eight Bells in Bures. At her first time at such a dinner, Joan is recalled as frowning as the vast number of party poppers were left off, and trying to stop Les from participating. Then a party popper landed in Joan's soup - with the result that she too joined in with gusto! We offer our deepest sympathies to his three sons, seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Just a couple of comments from those who knew and worked with Les. From Martin Stubbins: "a nice genuine guy, very thorough". From Peter Robinson: "I have fond memories of our days staffing the buggy park on platform 1 during Day Out With Thomas events, with Les in his trademark orange coat".



*Les Russell in the Mess Room*

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

As the new year kicks off it was time to get out of the pub and get back to work. First thing that we attacked was the pit road, a section of track in the restoration shed recovered from Bury St Edmunds sugar beet factory that has been on my to do list for years. The team Wednesday group dug out the fishplates and fixings and on the second week of January we ripped all 72 feet of track out and started digging. By the end of the day we had dug out a hole about a foot deep, (All the track was previously laying on was contaminated clay) laid out the terram and backfilled it with a mixture of hardcore and ballast.

On Sunday we had all the MOD concrete sleepers handballed in and 2/4 rails in. They had to be handballed in as well due to the lack of space to get machinery inside the shed. The following Saturday we started the day handballing the last two rails in, screwed it all down and began jacking and packing. By 1900 Saturday we had the 04, No.11 and the cattle van over it. Over time it will want lifting again once it has settled.

But why leave it all open and not backfilled? There are two reasons, one is to allow easy access for maintenance to take place on the locos, this would mean good access from below. The second reason is it's easy to take the track out if and when the museum has some money to put an inspection pit in.

It was nice to see a big team on P-Way again. Thanks to all! From doing all of the behind the scenes like dismantling the fixings and cleaning up all of the studs with a die, to dragging rail out, to digging, it all made this renewal rapid. A good job jobbed.



## **ENGINEERING NEWS by Allan Robinson**

As with my last report the engineering team have been fully engaged with the various infrastructure projects on site. This work includes the following :-

- In the exhibition hall the completion of the raised walkway ,screwing down the decking, making and fitting of handrails & railings, the wooden decking has had 2 coats of floor paint , installing lighting and power is progressing ,the entrance path to the N/W corner door has been laid.

- The first part of moving the Ashby coal yard to its new location next to the Exhibition hall has been completed with the moving of the office it is hoped to complete the moving of the remaining bits at some point later this year.

- The old Thomas shop has been removed ,it is planned for it to be used on the Southwold Railway: this has saved us the effort of dismantling it, with this gone the area north of the exhibition hall can be re-landscaped which will allow us to move the restored wagons into the exhibition hall.

Meanwhile progress has moved on apace with the new Heritage Centre, the structural steel-work is in the progress of being clad with special fire proof plaster-board ,this will allow the internal walls to be constructed. Team Wednesday have made a start on this job.

The team have also been assisting the P-way dept with replacing the sinking track on the loco road in the Restoration Shed.

## **SITE DEVELOPMENTS by Peter Robinson**

Reading back to an article I wrote in 2022 regarding the long-term plan, it is encouraging to have achieved some of the headline goals in the timescales hoped for, including the Exhibition Hall track connection in 2023 and the start of works on the new Heritage Centre in 2024. The aim of these site developments is to invest in the future of the Museum, by both better preserving our collection and by making that collection more accessible to our visitors.

Touching on the Exhibition Hall first, works have steadily progressed with the completion of the central mezzanine platform, works on the exterior entrance pathway and a start on the electrical systems. The annex area helped provide additional space for the Small Trains Day, and an excellent piece of teamwork saw the class 317 car winched into the shed ready to take its place as Santa's grotto for our Christmas events, already showing the benefits that this development brings to the Museum.

Looking into 2025, we are aiming to push ahead with works on the Exhibition Hall so that we can welcome our visitors to explore the contents within on a more permanent basis. Some key steps in achieving this will be the transfer of the first vehicles to the static display road (currently scheduled to be the WD box van, Pooley van and Special Cattle Van) as well as completion of the necessary services and ancillary items such as handrails on the platform to ensure visitor safety.

Meanwhile development of the displays and interpretation material continues in the background. If you would like to assist with these aspects, then I'm sure Jaki Collison would welcome your support. We are hoping the Hall will be able to feature prominently at the Essex Electrics Exhibition in April and our Rail 200 event in July - watch this space!

Turning next to the Heritage Centre, the original building had sadly outlived its temporary planning permission, having provided our small exhibit and office facilities for over 13 years. Throughout 2024, the structure was stripped, largely through the efforts of Team Wednesday, saving the still good timber for reuse. With the site prepared, construction of the replacement building kicked off in September, with the floor, cladding and windows fitted before the end of the year.

Over 2025, the internal fit out of the new Heritage Centre will continue as volunteer time permits, with associated works on the drainage systems during the spring, with the aim to tidy up the apron area outside the Exhibition Hall into a condition that is more welcoming to our customers. As I write this, the old Thomas Shop previously in the area has just been removed and is destined for a new life with the Southwold Railway, allowing these ground works to begin.

All this progress is testament to all those who continue to support the Museum, in whatever ways you can - thank you!

### **PLUMB LOCO by Pete Martin**

Well here we go again! As the old year recedes into the mists of time, the new year plummets onto the horizon, where we reflect on the ongoing achievements with the new Exhibition and Heritage facilities and a plethora of other things ongoing as I write, where the new facilities will enhance the Museum's standing and make the place more of a visitor destination.

Behind the scenes, more recent infrastructure happenings with the relaying of the sunken loco road in the Resto Shed have taken place. And thanks are due to everyone involved, without which it wouldn't have happened in the short period of time it did!

Apart from being involved to one degree or another in much of it, the predominant focus over the past few days has been on some of our vintage plant (not the botanical variety!). I refer to our Permaquip HCT on track self propelled hydraulic platform from Romford OHL depot, Bedford TM ex-Army truck, Ex BR Cambridge Goods 9 ton Rapier crane - all of which we rely on to perform various jobs in and around site.

Our Bedford TM army truck let the side down with a clutch problem, the repairs to which caused the air to turn blue on several occasions, together with various injuries incurred due to its supposed 'ease of maintenance' and accessibility. Well that's what I was told by Gordon, our ex-squaddie, who was around in the 1980's when they were introduced. Obviously, the bloke who designed it didn't have to work on it!

"Oh, you want a clutch - err, ok, we'll put it there". Aggggh!

For the more discerning military enthusiast and aficionado, the vehicle was built in 1987 and according to military archive websites which identified its military registration (44KE66), was based at various sites, the last being 562 Sqn RCT (Royal Corps of Transport). We purchased it from an ex MoD surplus establishment in 2012 and it spent a time at the workshops in Colchester DSG (Defence Support Group) being mended by the apprentices of the time, before coming to Chappel.

Although it may not be of railway relevance, it is nonetheless a classic vehicle with local connections and provenance, and is worthy of conservation in its



own right - especially as you can still get most of the bits to mend it!

Which is more than can be said for the 'Permaquip' HCT, where the exhaust fell off it and other mechanical issues started to manifest themselves. Built in the late 80's, this machine was one of 22 built by rail equipment suppliers Permaquip for maintaining the overhead line. Originally based at the Romford OHL depot along with half a dozen others, they were only really seen at night after the local populous had gone to bed and were then kept awake by the sound of wailing sirens, shouting and hollering above the noise of the machinery!

It is a hydraulic powered machine driven by a Volkswagen engine - but it turns out, not the one shown in all the manuals! Whilst the exhaust system was being attended to, it was decided to change the engine cam belt as the age of the old one was unknown, and if it broke in service, the unfortunacy with more modern IC engines - it's goodnight Vienna, and go to the new engine shop. And that's when the fun started, where the proper workshop and manufacturer manuals we got with it, showed it to be one of Volkswagen 6 cylinder engines. However it clearly wasn't as it wasn't as it was only a 4 cylinder configuration adapted for use in the machine, but as to which type - well that was anyone's guess!

Various suggestions came forward that it was out of a multitude of Volkswagen car types, but we couldn't identify any numbers to directly substantiate what it actually was until we started to strip bits off it. As the key component that needed changing was the cam belt, this was examined in minute detail to ascertain any numbers on it - which were indiscernible due to wear, but closer examination showed various traces which were deciphered.

After getting square eyes Googling and visiting a local car shop numerous times, the numbers were cross referenced and eventually a new belt kit was found - but there were 2 types of tensioner. And guess who had the more expensive rare one? No prizes given there!

In between things, our 20 year old New Holland tractor has an ever deflating tyre after the wheel rim got bent, and pending a replacement rim, has been fitted with an inner tube. Hopefully the price of it won't get Trumped, as guess where it's coming from.....

Yes it's coming from the good ol' USofA!

That's the trouble with all this ancient equipment. The 40 year old Permaquip has proprietary equipment as a bespoke item like the engine and adapted for purpose, but when it comes to DMU's, old BR diesel locos, parts get rarer and more challenging to obtain. What was on the shelf years ago isn't there now - and in many instances, the places with the shelves (and the knowledge) have also gone.

To some degree, a steam loco has certain advantages being more 'agricultural', where if it don't work, you can 'it it wiv an 'ammer or make a noo bit in yer shed - but even that has its limitations where if the scope of work is beyond our capacity, na done becomes reliant on outside resources. This has been exemplified by the more recent quotation or guesstimate from the contractors working on the N7 boiler which has been on hold for some time pending further financial input.

As an update, the stage one key objective is to get this iconic machine's boiler back into one piece so it can be reunited with the rest of it so at least it looks a complete exhibit and people can see what it is. The rest of it we can sort out later. So, anyone got £150,000?

Open to all offers!

More soon no doubt.

Happy New Year and thank you for all your support and interest.



*The Class 317 coach in  
the Exhibition Hall*

*The framework for the  
new Heritage Centre  
before the cladding was  
applied*



*The site of the former  
Thomas shop after  
clearance*



*(Above) The Loco Road in the Restoration Shed after relaying*

*(Left) The Permaquip having been repainted whilst undergoing mechanical repairs*

### **TEAM WEDNESDAY REPORT SPRING 2025 by Tony Foster**

At the start of this reporting period there were a lack of projects that the team could be directly involved in.

The team worked with Allan Robinson on tasks around the museum estate and also working with some members of the restoration shed group.

Work has included some carpentry tasks on the cattle van and the horse box. This has involved cutting new floor boards, creating door runners and also fabricating new floor drainage runs in the cattle van.

Plumbing repairs in the platform 2 café kitchen.

The goods shed doors have been repainted. The pub coach has had an external tidy up.

One compartment of the LTS part coach has been completely repainted.

A Defibrillator course was organised by TW member Dave Lunn.

Two sets of wooden handrail capping have been made, fitted and stained for use on the handrails on the elevated walkway in the exhibition shed.

The new Heritage centre- TW have been involved in fabricating studwork panels for certain areas of the interior space. Also involved in creating an exterior

lean-to frame. This will help to make an uncompleted section of the heritage centre more water resistant before the final exterior cladding can be added.

A bench residing in the goods shed has been renovated and has received a new coat of paint. The bench legs have been strengthened with the addition of discretely placed brackets on the underside of the bench. Work has recently commenced on another bench that was in in the storage shed. Preliminary prep work has revealed a GER date stamp for 1900.

A new project is starting that will involve TW, subject to agreement for funding. A 12 ton box van body will, once extracted from the storage area, be renovated for use by the catering group as a store for their equipment. This will replace the van body currently located by platform 2 which is in urgent need of restoration.

Back to the 12-ton box van, industrial grade brambles and saplings were cut back on three sides to allow access to the van.

The contents of the van, which were rubbish sacks containing salvaged rock wool insulation that TW had removed from the old Heritage centre last year, have been removed (the resident rats were not happy!) TW very recently have moved these same bags of rock wool again! This time moving them to the old, departing 'Thomas shop' building!

We have also prepared another box van body prior to it being moved from the same site for possible restoration in due course. A large number of full and empty oil barrels were removed and placed in several of the other van bodies. Several pallet loads of heavy crane parts were cleverly pulled out sideways through the van door by Gordon using the tines of the JCB Fork lift, operating in a confined working area. Finally, an inch thick layer of rat droppings was removed from the van floor!

Rod has been busy with a number of electrical projects. He has installed a some overhead lights in the running shed. He has brought an electrical supply into the exhibition hall and has added a bank of sockets. This source of power has been taken from the electrical supply cabinet outside. This exercise also entailed refurbishing the existing cabinet switchgear.

Power was removed from the Thomas shop. An electrical supply cable was retrieved from the old heritage building and was rerouted with Tim's help to the Thompson building. Rod also re-laid a cable to service the two lamps along the path to the main entrance of the Thompson building.

## **BRAINTREE & HALSTEAD MRC by Gordon Humphris**

Well here we are again, The summer and winter months are almost a memory. The Halloween and Christmas Events went well as we headed into the new year. It was a busy time for the Club and its members as we had the small trains day in October. Once again this proved a great success for both the Museum and the Club. Exhibitors, Traders and the public all enjoyed the day. After discussions with the Museum's event team, we have decided to shift the date to August this year, not only making event days more spread out but also means that event clashes, which might impinge on our own event, might not occur. It will also mean that more layouts and traders might be available for the event, making it even bigger and better than the previous two years.



So lots of improvements to all the Club Layouts in all the scales, from N to G Scale. The small N gauge layout as you enter the main club room is being restocked with Thomas and Friends trains and scenics, new arrivals to look out for are Percy with a goods train including those troublesome trucks, and Toby the tram has also arrived to join the fun!! This layout will be permanently operated as "Sodor" to entertain the kiddies on their arrival into the big room! Moving up the scales work improving the other layouts in the main room with "Kelvedon" and "Branstead Quay" continuing to have improvements made to their operations, be it repairs or new track being laid. The new build layout is progressing nicely with track being laid on the new baseboards. In the O gauge room, Chappel High Road, is constantly being fettled, the Signal Box has been populated with a frame, instruments, signalmen and lighting. Work has been done in the Engine Shed with scenery and electrics being completed. Finally, anyone entering the Thompson Building cannot fail to notice the completion of the track circuits on the Garden Railway, weather permitting, it was operating during the last three big events days, some more rolling stock has been purchased to enhance the public's experience.

So Easter is the next time that the Club is gearing up to, in the meantime, members have been visiting various shows either with layouts or as visitors to many parts of the country, the O gauge Team went off the Hamburg for a couple of days. New members have joined us from outside and inside the Musuem which is all good news for the Club. Can I remind readers that any enquiries with regard to the Club should be directed to the Secretary Jim Unsworth ([jim@theail.co.uk](mailto:jim@theail.co.uk)) and

Events business to Steve Knight ([kitmasterbloke@gmail.com](mailto:kitmasterbloke@gmail.com)) thank you.



*The new Garden Railway  
nearing completion*



## CLASS 309: THE STORY SO FAR by Brad Wright

I can recall my first *Stour Valley Steam* article written a couple of years ago for the 309 Exhibition held in the old Heritage Centre in 2024. I specifically wrote that "no, we can't have the vehicles here!" At that point in time, it did seem like an impossible dream to have the 309 call Chappel home, but here we are not two years later and how things have changed! I'm sure most readers are aware now, but in May 2024 the Museum welcomed the newest vehicles to the collection, two vehicles from one of the last surviving Class 309 units, no. 309624. Its history and journey into preservation is a long and complicated one, so I thought I would write about its journey home, and the role I had to play in bringing it home - the long way round.

For a brief introduction, the British Rail Class 309s were a series of two and four car Mk1 based electric multiple units, first built in 1962. They were pioneer trendsetters of their time, the first EMUs to be built for a designed maximum speed of 100mph, and the line they would call home. The Colchester to Clacton line was the first main line to operate at the now standard 25Kv AC overhead line voltage in the country. As built, the units were outshopped in coaching stock BR lined maroon, the only EMUs to carry this livery. They all had iconic curved wrap around front windscreens and sliding vent windows, and a few had 'griddle' self serve buffet cars. They were well regarded by crews and passengers alike. In 1983 a multi-million pound refurbishment scheme was launched to extend their lives. The first unit re-appeared in 1985, in the rare but distinctive 'Jaffa Cake' livery, before a year later Network SouthEast took over midway through the overhaul programme. Any vehicles outshopped after 1986 were delivered in the bold and equally striking Network SouthEast livery. This refurbishment also removed the curved glass and rebuilt the interior. The units then continued in service without fuss right up until withdrawal from the Anglia region in 1994. Seven units were then exiled to Manchester to cover for a shortfall in stock and plied their trade around the northwest before finally being withdrawn in 2000. Several preservation attempts were tried at this time, including one by the late Museum member Peter Thompson.

Now a bit about the Museum's set, 309624. It was outshopped in December 1962 from York and delivered to Clacton soon thereafter. It led a fairly unassuming life, not being one of the griddle or two car units. While some of the 309s had major additions and set reformations, 624 kept the same four vehicles from build until withdrawal. These were BTDC (Battery Driving Trailer Composite) 75965, MBS (Motor Brake Second) 61928, TSO (Trailer Second Open) 70256 and DTS (Driving Trailer Second) 75972. 624 was one of the last sets to be refurbished in 1987, which meant it skipped the short lived 'Jaffa Cake' livery and went straight from BR blue and grey to Network SouthEast livery. When retirement from East Anglia came, it took part in the *Clacton Sunset* farewell railtour which several Museum members travelled on. It was spared from scrap, being one of the seven sent to work in Manchester, selected to carry a unique 'Manchester Airport' livery that was applied at Ilford. This unit would then run the first press trains on the new rail link to the terminal station.

Come 2000, its time was up and along with the six other Manchester units it was sent for storage at MOD Shoeburyness. However, it would be given a further reprieve as along with classmates 616 and 617 it was selected by Railtrack to be converted into a 100mph test vehicle, the three units being sent to Eastleigh Works

for a full C4/6 overhaul. 309624 emerged as 960102, reclassified, and modified by way of the removal of the TSO vehicle and the front gangway connection. It was paired with 309616 (now 960101) and the pair were sent to Old Dalby test track for the test work to begin in late 2001. 309617 was not so lucky, being the sacrificial spares donor, providing parts before being cut up at Eastleigh. 102 worked in a pair with 101 testing pioneering ETCS (European Train Control System) signalling. The vehicles were fitted with digital signalling displays in the cab which were one day designed to replace conventional lineside signals. However, the project ran over budget and was shelved after only eighteen months. ETCS technology is only starting to be rolled out on major projects in 2024, over twenty years later! So the 309s really were pioneer test vehicles.

But back in 2002, with the cancellation of the ETCS project, 101 and 102 were again sent back to Shoeburyness for storage to await their fate. They were held there until 2009, when finally a preservation attempt was successful. Both 101 and 102 were bought by AMPS Rail and sent to the Electric Railway Museum at Coventry. While there 101 was repainted into the 'Jaffa Cake' livery and regained its identity of 309616. 102 stayed in its departmental blue and white scheme, a portion painted over with a darker blue to imitate the BR blue and grey livery, but otherwise it sat untouched. It was used as staff accommodation, with 616 being the main museum and cafe. However, this was sadly not to last as in 2017 the ERM was forced to close. 102 was sold to raise funds to transport 616 which ended up at a new home at the Tanat Valley Railway in Wales. It remains there to this day, still serving its role as 'The Clacton Cafe', albeit very far from Clacton!

Meanwhile 102 was moved again, this time to the Lavender Line in Sussex. It was intended to restore the set as hauled stock with their Class 09 diesel shunter. However, after the Covid pandemic a review of stock on site was undertaken and it was put up for sale in July 2021. This is where I come into the story. I saw this unit up for sale and after making some inquiries and finding out that there was no other serious interest other than scrap, I set about doing my best to continue its story in preservation. I set up the Clacton Express Preservation Group and started fundraising. Original SVRPS member Andy Byford saw the plight of the unit and decided to get involved. He agreed to finance the original purchase of the set, and subsequently one move. We had been negotiating with another Anglian heritage railway to bring it back to the region, but this sadly fell through.

Therefore a short term 18 month agreement was signed with the Lavender Line to allow us to engage with other sites and negotiate a future for the set. The race to find a new home was on! Chappel had always seemed like a great idea: however the issue of space was always a major factor to consider. Nearly a year of careful negotiations yielded a positive outcome however, as it was suggested that two out of the three vehicles could call Chappel home. Originally it was to be both driving trailer vehicles, with the Motor vehicle ending up at another site, but when this fell through at the eleventh hour it was changed so that the Museum accepted BDTC 75965 and MBS 61928. These were donated by Andy to become Museum assets as we all agreed that this was the best way to secure the pair's future. DTS 75972 was left without a home until a last minute offer came up from the Rushden, Higham and Wellingborough Railway and it was sent there where a small team are now looking after it and slowly restoring it to work as a push-pull piloting vehicle.

So what now? As mentioned before both vehicles arrived in May 2024 (see photo in the last issue). Work was immediately set on weatherproofing the set as

unfortunately the BDTC suffered major vandalism attacks while in storage at the Lavender Line. Eight main windows were smashed along with several doors, and the front window. The vehicle had a roof which was severely peeling and starting to leak, and the test train livery was now twenty years old and failing badly. The broken windows allowed a lot of water into the vehicles and subsequently rotted the floor quite badly in places. The vehicle looked incredibly rough, but mechanically it is still in quite good condition after limited use since the test train work. In July it was chosen to be the 'face' of the Beer Festival, having a limited repaint of the front sanctioned to tidy the appearance and make it look good in photos at the upcoming event, where it was parked on the Main by the entrance. It also got its long overdue reclassification back to 309624. After that, it got a six month slot in the shed for waterproofing works to begin. The entire body has been stripped and some major areas of concern were tackled, including one of the door pillars. All of the smashed frames were removed from the body sides, cleaned up and prepared for the new glass. This order was placed over Christmas. At the same time the front of the vehicle was done up in NS livery for display which has generated a lot of interest. With the arrival of the new glass scheduled when this issue goes to press, it has also been decided to press ahead with the full bodyside repaint. The vehicle will be outshopped soon in full 1987 original Network SouthEast livery, as it was when it was first refurbished. MSE was chosen as this livery is the only correct scheme this vehicle can carry in its current body and internal condition that is also applicable to this region. It also complements our other electric exhibit, 317345 - which is also in NSE livery - perfectly.

It is quite remarkable how quickly fortunes for 624 have changed. It has been faced with the very real possibility of disposal on five occasions, but it has just about clung on and now is in the strongest position it has been in preservation. As for its current future at the Museum, once the glass is in 75965, it will come outside, hopefully in time for the Winter Beer Festival, and it will be 61928's turn in the shed to get the same weatherproofing work, before both go on full public display for the first 'Essex Electrics Exhibition' this coming April. This will be the first opportunity for many members to take a look inside the vehicles, as it is hoped to have all the required repair work complete on the floor by then. Its key role at the Museum will be a large static display. It has a key story to tell in the history of electrification and in the testing of modern signalling systems. I have often been asked if the pair could run as hauled stock here but we don't have the right circumstances on site currently to consider that. I am always of the attitude 'never say never', but these things have to be carefully discussed and considered based on many factors.

Personally, I've got an immense sense of satisfaction having 'beaten the odds' and been successful in saving these vehicles from being disposed of. It was a long and very difficult road to see through, with many doubting the vehicles would survive but I'm glad I stuck with it. I am incredibly grateful to the Trustees at the Museum for accepting the donation of the pair and subsequently working together on the restoration. In particular I want to thank Brendan Sothcott, Aimee Archer, Rob Varletta and everyone else who has contributed to the physical restoration. The Clacton Express Preservation Group has remained active, as a support group and dedicated fundraising, volunteer and publicity channel for the vehicles. Lots of interest has been generated, including several national publications writing feature articles and recently a segment on BBC *Look East*. The pair should have a bright future at Chappel and soon both should be exhibits the Museum is proud to display. You will often find me several days of the week down in the Restoration Shed tinkering away on the unit, so do come and say hello and take a look at the progress so far.



*(Above) Stabled on the Main north of the crossing, 5 September 2024 (Dom Shaw)  
(Below) 977965 in the Restoration shed, with the front in Network SouthEast livery, 21 December 2024 (James Cole)*



## ARCHIVED RECORDS by David Reeve and Graham Wing

Our filing system concentrates on administrative records, rather than artefacts. It stretches back to the old SVRPS days of the 1970s, up to the present time. It is sub-divided into broad topics such as Finance & Admin, Minutes, Education, Correspondence, Health & Safety, Estates, Permanent Way, Marketing, Membership and the Museum Branches. Our aim is to get the Museum's administrative records, which go back to 1969 (or earlier in the case of some LNER/BR plans) in one place for reference purposes. Please contact us if you require such information, as we might be able to help.

Finally, I would like to repeat our usual plea for Museum -related records or ephemera to add to our Collection, where they may well fill in some gaps in it. We are especially keen to complete our collection of SWEB Romford Model Railway Exhibition Programs and A5 Flyers - especially the early years. If you have anything you would like to donate, ideally contact David Reeve at [d\\_e\\_reeve@hotmail.com](mailto:d_e_reeve@hotmail.com) or please leave at Visitor Reception marked "FAO Archiving" and leave your contact details with the documents.

## RECYCLING THE HERITAGE CENTRE by Ian Rushbrook

You may be aware of the new litter bin holders now on platform 2 and around the yard by the goods shed and The Viaduct pub. After permission from Allan Robinson the big piles of timber from the knocked down Heritage centre were sorted through and suitable timber found, the large bucket of removed nails was also sorted through and reusable nails found.

This resulted in enough material to build the five new bins you see on site.

They were constructed roughly to a pattern that Liz Rushbrook spotted at a caravan park we stayed at recently.

The material was cut to the correct lengths and the bin was then constructed with the timber unpainted. We tried painting the bins but Liz got covered in wood preservative doing it this way, so on the next build the timber was painted on one side the bin was then constructed with the painted side of the timber inwards. The rest was then painted, and the lid once constructed were just laid on the top.

We have now found a supply of hinges so modifications will be made to make the lids hinge up as they were soon found to be a bit big and cumbersome to remove for emptying the bin.





## THE ARMY LORRY by Ian Reed

I had been up to the Witham Specialist Vehicle (MOD Sales) site near Colsterworth and thought the Bedford 6 wheel crane lorry would be ideal for the Museum. I subsequently donated the £20k purchase price to the Museum and it duly arrived: however it seemed underpowered on lifting duties and was directed to DSG who were keen to assist.

They took the lorry to their works just off Circular Road North of the old garrison and they did the job as an apprentice project. The three lads did a great job, sorted out the problem with the battery isolator which was preventing the battery charging, sorting out the brakes and giving it a rolling road test as we planned on getting it roadworthy. They also found that the hydraulic cylinder for the Hiab main arm had been put in upside down which explained the lack of lifting capacity.

As an extra they even put the lorry through their paint shop and gave it a refresh. I attended a small ceremony at the DSG site where the three apprentices were photographed for their house magazine with their boss and I represented the Museum and thanked everyone for their assistance. I have checked my photograph collection but unfortunately it was only late in 2012 I started using a digital camera so cannot find a record of the hand over.



*The lorry is seen to the left, with the plaque commemorating the repair by the apprentices at DSG Colchester. Both photos taken in February 2025 by Pete Martin*



## THE LIFE STORY OF OUR GOODS SHED by Phil Ainsley

Overshadowed by more recent museum developments, the Goods Shed still surprises visitors and some visitors say “Wow”, it’s a surprise with its tall roof and a good-sized open space it has character and is suitable for last gatherings.

My story starts with a newspaper advert calling for construction tenders Cambridge Chronicle 17 October 1890 for the second station and goods shed, which we believe was completed around 1891/2. It retained its original use until goods traffic was withdrawn on 13th July 1964, so this year is an anniversary of that some 60 years ago. After its closure, it became Edward Davis’s Potato Merchants sack store. It became a tenant of the Stour Valley Railway Preservation Society (SVRPS) when it took on the tenancy of the station and yard.

Without an income from that letting, one wonders if the buildings at Chappel; would have survived. With no income most redundant railway structures were demolished to lose a liability and lessen maintenance. Incidentally, the merchant was Cambridge-based, and our station and Stour Valley line were supervised by the Cambridge Area Traffic manager (not local Colchester management), was it a case of favours for a mate, or maybe income proved enough to satisfy the accountants?

East Anglia has a higher proportion of surviving goods sheds because they support the agricultural trade and are valued as large structures in less-built-up areas. Elsewhere, good sheds and their expansive yards were prime candidates for redevelopment, notably for car parks or metal shed superstores. Local examples in Essex include two recent losses recently at Marks Tey in 2020 a fire that destroyed Wivenhoe in 2015, though both EARM and a local Arts trust tried to save it in part, or as a whole.. There are still surviving examples: Harwich and Maldon West as commercial premises, Rochford as a popular entertainment venue. An exhaustive list is available from Historic England “ The Railway Goods Shed and Warehouse in England”.

“A shocking tale.” Was the title of the earliest report about the shed, written in the Essex Standard newspaper dated 19th October 1895 A local troubled resident committed suicide and his body lay in the shed until collection, there have been reports of ghostly sightings.

Of more recent times, it is more associated with happiness, notably most of our operation events. The beer festival is the premier social event held inside but also has hosted weddings which started in earnest in 2003; although currently they are not suitable for promotion, it is to be hoped new revenue can be raised using the venue in the future.

When SVRPS first rented the station and 3-acre site; the shed was the focus for its engineering activities. This ceased 40 years ago in 1984 when machines were moved out to the then new restoration shed. Since then notable works since then have been the glazing of the windows provision of a new entrance and access ramp in 1996, replacement of 17 ft high doors by TW in 2006, roof repairs in 2012 replacement of lighting and interior painting. The use of disused sheds around the country are diverse, they include the obvious offices, and industrial units but also art galleries, breweries, farmers markets, gyms, and swimming pools. In Essex examples include at Rochford an entertainment venue, a small Roydon shed is currently up for sale, Harwich and Maldon West commercial premises, and of course our own museum.

For younger readers, it might be useful to explain of the use of the building. Railways had to carry all types of general merchandise by law (Railway and Canal Act 1854), Loads could be as small as an egg or as large as an elephant. This requirement, finally removed in 1967, demanded much of the railways because road competition had no such requirement. Goods sheds were visited by a 'pick-up freight,' a slow goods train stopping at every depot on a line, delivering and collecting loaded wagons at each one as required. At Chappel life would have been rather unspectacular, with two pick-up goods trains calling on 6 days a week, one in each direction. Allied to activity in the yard would until 1923 be number taking in the Railway Clearing House hut which was in regular use ( note new display recently applied inside).

Freight traffic explains the presence of various good vehicles in our yard, on one of the left-hand access doors are cast iron wagon plates. In 1952, for example, some 1,120,118 wagons were owned by British Railways. Thinking ahead, the building is in reasonable shape, but enhancements could be made, especially for non-operating days. A challenge is posed to readers - how can these stories be told? Video presentation, examples of merchandise but all easily removed into a storage location when in "operating mode" How about a mechanical horse or 1960s-dated vehicle for display? In conclusion, maybe it is time to improve our second biggest original heritage asset and to continue to care for it, it's more than a shed.



*(Left) The Goods Shed seen from the south end of platform 2 prior to the Museum's occupation of the site: photo taken in August or September 1967 by D. C. Hands*

*(Right) The Goods Shed seen from platform 3, now with the addition of the doorway and ramped access. This view taken on 27 June 2021 by Craig Greenslade*



## RED IS THE COLOUR by Geoff Hutton

*Written in January 1994*

So, farewell Class 309s. And hello 312s and 321s although already we know you well. Hardly a fair swap, you might say. Whatever their merits, these latter units could never be mistaken for full blooded express passenger trains. The Class 309s could rarely be thought of as anything else.

The Red Electrics, we called them - we denizens of the Colchester Royal Grammar School. The B1s were still pounding up and down to Liverpool Street on the Parkeston Quay boat trains in the summer of 1962 when the New Units appeared on the scene in preparation for through electric working from London to Clacton and Walton. To obtain a different perspective on our evening train watching habits at Chitts Hill, we pedalled our bikes up the track leading to Whitehouse Farm. This crossed the London to Colchester main line just west of Stanway sidings - a curious set of facilities dating from Great Eastern days, whose original purpose remains a mystery to me. Bumping along the rutted surface we soon reached the brick overbridge - and there they were. Two sidings full of brand new maroon electric trains, British Railways' first 25kv a.c. express multiple units, their smooth dark lines nestling comfortably amongst the shrubbery adjacent to the up line. They were much better looking than the stock then working from Colchester to the coast - somebody had actually designed the cab windows, rather than just sticking panes of glass in a coach end. When we got to ride on them a few months later, we could see and feel the differences there as well. Double glazing cut down on the noise - even if it did fill up with water after a few weeks and need redesigning! The Commonwealth bogies gave a smoother ride - but threepenny bits did not stand on their edge quite as promised (Marks Tey was a good place to test this one). But they were comfortable, spacious, fast - and unique to the Great Eastern. As I flit through the memory banks, various images of the 309s emerge. Returning from shed bashes around London, and standing by the (empty) drivers' cabs, watching the speedometer needle nudging 90 as we plunged through Ingatestone, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon ... leaning out of a door window at Colchester North, saying goodbye to a girlfriend as I returned to Reading, our cheeks wet with tears ... swinging over East Gates level crossing and down alongside the Colne to Wivenhoe, taking the children to Walton-on-Naze ... returning from the coast, brushing sand from the buckets and spades off the seats .... drinking ginger beer in the Griddle Car (circa 1968) ... catching a mid-afternoon Clacton train home from work, first stop Romford (giving the almost sensuous experience of not stopping at Stratford, Ilford and all those bloody little stations in between ...).

And finally - peering at Mark, Dickie and Colin over a pile of beer bottles and Gazetteers on The Clacton Sunset, January 15th 1994, as we hurtled down Parsons Heath bank and up through Colchester on a 95 minute run from Norwich to Liverpool Street. We were sitting on a real train, with tables, compartments, leg room, slam doors and windows that you could stick your head out of at 100mph. We are the poorer for their going.

Well - not quite finally. The following Saturday was their last day in service. The wife and daughter had gone shopping, and the boys had disappeared, so I went to Chelmsford and caught the last 309 up working from Clacton, and returned on the final run, the 18.00 from Liverpool Street. Dickie was in the front

coach, and Mark, and various other EARM luminaries. After a faultless run from London, I stepped off the train at Chelmsford, and watched the tail lights disappearing into the dark towards Springfield.

But it is no good looking backward all the time. It was the first time I had used - as opposed to passed through - Chelmsford station for many years, and I was very impressed with its rebuilt state. It was a nice County Town complement to the splendours of Liverpool Street. So some things were improving!



*Car 61942 of two car Class 309 unit No. 309603 is seen in platform 5 at Colchester in February 1967: note the original maroon livery, the 'GE' prefix to the car number and the curved windscreens of the cab (David Reeve)*

**STOUR VALLEY STEAM** is edited by Mark House and Rob Boyce for the East Anglian Railway Museum. The closing date for submissions for the next edition is **15 June 2025**: if submitting by email please send to [rob@bramford.plus.com](mailto:rob@bramford.plus.com)

### **LAWRENCE BEECHING**

As this issue closed for press we learnt of the sad passing of Lawrence Beeching, for many years a stalwart of Team Wednesday. An appreciation will appear in the next issue of Stour Valley Steam



## MARKS TEY STATION FOOTBRIDGE

*Over Christmas the deck of the footbridge at Marks Tey was replaced, the old one having become time expired. Jaki Collison was on hand on 25 and 26 December 2024 to take these photos.*



**BACK COVER PHOTO:** a semaphore signal stands at Sudbury on 26 August 1974. The railings in the foreground are now on the line of the track into the platform of the slightly relocated and rationalised platform that is now in use.  
*Photo by Stephen Swingwood.*



*Veteran Class 20 locomotives 20901 (originally D8041, built 1959) and 20905 (originally D8325, built 1968) are employed by Balfour Beatty on the 'drain train'. They are seen here in Dom Shaw's photos in the branch platform at Marks Tey on 24 and 26 January 2025*





